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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Wendy Beth Meller entitled "A Critical Literacy Case Study: The Journey from Pre-service Exploration to In-service Implementation." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

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A CRITICAL LITERACY CASE STUDY:

THE JOURNEY FROM PRE-SERVICE EXPLORATION

TO IN-SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Wendy Beth Meller

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation was a qualitative case study undertaken within a critical/feminist research stance. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the critical literacy journey of one first year teacher, as the teacher and I co-constructed our understandings of that process. Specifically, the study examined if and how a first year teacher who explored critical literacy during her teacher preparation would develop and implement a critical literacy curriculum. The participant was a first grade teacher in an urban classroom. Data generated during the participant's pre-service year included eight reflections, eight text connections, and two surveys. Data generated during her first year of teaching included eight planning meetings, fifteen observations, three interviews, and a collection of lesson plans and class products.

Findings revealed that the teacher in this study consistently perceived critical literacy as being valuable for teachers and for students. Over the course of the study, she changed her perception and became more comfortable having conversations related to two "taboo" topics: homelessness and race. Data revealed five obstacles this teacher faced throughout this research as she tried to implement critical literacy: other teachers' attitudes; parental influences; the developmental age of her students; a lack of books; and limited time. There were three main sources of support throughout this process: the researcher, the teacher's knowledge about critical literacy books, and her students' reactions. Read alouds were the primary element in this teacher's critical literacy curriculum. She pursued conversations with her students based on social issues; yet those conversations were situated primarily in the context of children's books. This teacher was just beginning to develop her critical literacy approach and to understand what that entails.

The following general conclusions were drawn from the findings: (a) implementing critical literacy is difficult for new teachers; (b) developing a critical approach to literacy instruction is a process; and (c) new teachers are capable of moving toward critical literacy practices. The findings indicate that implementing critical literacy as a first year teacher is a difficult and complex process, which requires time, support, and reflection.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Where is Michael?" "When is Michael coming back?" "Is Jessica White or Black?" "My uncle just got out of jail and is living in a halfway house." These questions and comments came from my own kindergarten and first grade students in Philadelphia and New York City. Michael was a bright, articulate first grader who stopped coming to class midway through the school year. It took about a week until I received notice that he had been moved to a different shelter which was zoned for a different school. Michael never returned to my class and my students felt his absence. Jessica was a smart, strong, White, kindergartner living in a low-socioeconomic African American neighborhood. She resided in a shelter with her mother who was escaping an abusive relationship and had a restraining order against Jessica's father. Noticing that Jessica's skin color looked different from the rest of the class, many of my students started to compare the colors of their skin. My first grader Jashaun showed me a book in his desk one day. He proceeded to tell me that it came from his uncle who is now in a halfway house after spending time in jail for stealing a wallet, even though, according to Jashaun, he was not guilty. As a new teacher, who happened to be like most other teachers in U.S. schools (i.e., White, middle class, and female), I was continually faced with student issues that were often distant from my own knowing, my own background, race, and ethnicity. The internal struggles I faced in being confronted with the complexities of their lives has become the impetus of my research.

My teacher preparation program never addressed issues of race, culture, and difference. When I started teaching in urban schools, I responded to these issues of difference based on instinct. My students continually brought up issues such as those described. I had children who were born from mothers addicted to crack, students with family members in jail, and children living in shelters or being raised by a grandparent or foster parent. I never had the opportunity to

address these issues with other educators and relied on my own instincts and professional judgment. When I returned to graduate school to pursue a Ph.D in literacy education, I discovered children's critical literacy literature. I recalled my experiences as a new teacher and felt that critical literacy would have supported me in having those difficult conversations. Looking back, I now see the missing piece in my own education: developing a critical perspective.

Today, as a literacy educator preparing teachers for diverse settings, I see the importance in having critical conversations with students and looking at the role language, power, and difference play in educating young children. I wondered how a new teacher with a similar background to my own would have critical conversations with her students after exploring children's critical literacy literature during her teacher preparation. I chose to design a qualitative case study within a critical/feminist research stance to gain an understanding of a critical literacy journey for one first year teacher as the teacher and I co-constructed our knowledge of that process. Throughout the research process, I met with this first year teacher bi-weekly to co-construct the critical literacy lessons she would implement. I then observed her weekly read alouds and any follow-up activities that took place. My own role throughout this process was one of participant observer as I sought to raise the consciousness of this first year teacher.

Background

Student Demographics

There are more than 24 million children under age six in the United States. Forty-two percent live in low-income families, and 20% live in poor families. The National Center for

Children in Poverty (NCCP) (2006) states that the proportion of young children living in low-income families is rising. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of children of all ages who were poor increased by 11%, and specifically the number of children under age six who were poor increased by 16%.

In terms of family structure, NCCP (2006) states that 50% of children under age six and in low-income families live with a single parent. However, another 50% of these children also live with married parents, providing evidence that it is not just a single-parenting issue. When looking at country of birth, NCCP data show that 60% of children under age six born to immigrant parents and 39% from native-born parents qualify for low-income status. The largest percentages of children living in poverty, however, come from urban and rural areas. They state that 52% of children in urban areas, 52% from rural areas, and 33% of children in suburban areas live in low-income families. Young children in the United States lack stability as well. NCCP (2006) shows that 23% of children under age six in low-income families moved in 2005.

In looking at the cultural/racial make-up of children in the United States, NCCP (2006) provides the following data: 63% of Latino children, 65% of Black children, 26% of Asian children, and 29% of White children below age six, live in low-income families. However, they say that although Latino and Black children are disproportionately low income, Whites comprise the largest group of low-income children under age six. The National Association for Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (2004) reported projections from the Bureau of Census indicating that the number of minority children will rise more rapidly than the number of White children. Evidence of that growth is provided by NCES's report on Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Public School Students. This report stated that the percentage of racial/ethnic minority students enrolled in the nation's public schools increased between 1972 and 2005, primarily due to growth in

Hispanic enrollments (U.S. Department of Education; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). Overall, NCES reported that 42% of public school students were considered to be part of a racial or ethnic minority group in 2005, which increased 22% since 1972. Strizek, Pittsonberger, Riordan, Lyter, and Orlofsky (2006/2007) reported for NCES that U.S. public schools have a population of 60% non-Hispanic White, 18% Hispanic, 17% non-Hispanic Black and small percentages of other groups. Sixty three percent of our public schools also had students designated as limited-English-proficient (LEP), while 11% of all public school students were LEP. Ninety-eight percent of public schools also had one or more students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Teacher and School Demographics

The data show that children in U.S. schools have diverse characteristics. Many live in poverty, some are non-native speakers of English, and a growing number come from a variety of cultural and racial backgrounds. Teachers however, do not have the same characteristics. Strizek, et. al. (2006/2007) report for The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) that among public school teachers, 83% were non-Hispanic White. Only 8% were non-Hispanic Black, 6% were Hispanic, and there were small percentages of other groups. Principals are also represented as 82% non-Hispanic Whites. NCES reported in The Condition of Education that in 1999-2000, 87% of teachers worked in public schools and that females made up 75% of the total teacher workforce (U.S. Department of Education; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

What do these demographics tell us about the face of U.S. schools? Many student characteristics outlined above are considered to be risk factors. NCES (2004) stated that children without family risk factors, such as poverty, experienced a larger gain in reading and

mathematics mean scale scores than their peers from the start of kindergarten through 3rd grade. Being "at-risk" means that students need strong, knowledgeable, consistent teachers to help them overcome the challenges they face. Yet, NCES (2005) reported that at the end of 1999-2000, about 16% of the teacher workforce "turned over," either transferring schools or leaving the field. Not only are they leaving the field, but public school teachers in high-poverty schools are twice as likely as their counterparts in low-poverty public schools to transfer to another school. NCES's (2004) report states that the number of family risk factors (household below poverty level, non-English primary home language, mother's highest education less than a high school diploma/GED, and single-parent household) is negatively associated with children's gains in reading and mathematics. As the number of family risk factors increased, children made smaller gains. Black children also demonstrated smaller gains in reading and mathematics than White, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander children. NCES (2004) stated that after accounting for all factors, race/ethnicity and the number of family risk factors are independently related to children's gains in reading and mathematics.

"A critical issue in teacher education is the mismatch between racially homogeneous teachers and students from increasingly diverse backgrounds" (ukpokodu, 2004, p. 19), which is evident based on the preceding statistics. This supports the finding that "many student teachers report feelings of helplessness in confronting issues of cultural difference because of their limited exposure to anything other than White, middle-class cultures" (Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006, p. 9). In order to address these issues, the U.S. education system needs to seek alternative solutions for the recruitment and retention of quality teachers from diverse backgrounds. Children's literature that emphasizes critical issues such as race, poverty, and difference can offer pre-service teachers opportunities to confront those issues before being on

their own in the classroom. It also provides them with a starting point for having dialogue with others rather than feeling empty handed and alone as I did when those issues arose. Having these critical conversations can become one of the many layers of critical literacy. I chose to examine how a first year teacher from a White, middle-class background will implement critical literacy strategies in her classroom after exploring that concept through the use of children's literature during her teacher preparation.

Purpose and Research Questions

My own experience during my teacher preparation and early teaching career provided limited opportunities to engage in critical conversations. As a doctoral student, I began to incorporate a critical perspective into my graduate teaching assistantship in a teacher education program and in my supervision of intern teachers. This program was at a large, southeastern university that specifically prepares teachers to teach in urban settings. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of a critical literacy journey for one first year teacher who graduated from this teacher education program, as the teacher and I co-constructed our understandings of that process. Specifically, the study examined if and how a first year teacher who explored critical literacy during her teacher preparation would develop and implement a critical literacy curriculum. I sought to discover how critical literacy took form in her teaching; what happened to her perceptions; and what influenced this process? Because I never knew about critical literacy books when I was teaching, I wanted to explore what the use of this genre of books would look like in a real urban elementary classroom with a teacher of similar background to my own. Since I already had developed a relationship with my participant, I designed a study that acknowledged that my voice would have a prominent place in the research.

Based on this purpose and utilizing a critical feminist research stance, a first year teacher and I co-constructed answers to the following questions:

(1) What happens to a first year teacher's perceptions of critical literacy from pre-service preparation to in-service teaching?

(2) What influences impact this teacher's development of critical literacy perspectives?

(3) How does this teacher implement critical literacy?

Significance of the Study

The study has significance in the field of literacy education based on two reasons. First, in reviewing the literature, I found that few studies have been undertaken that are similar in purpose and design to the research I completed. I found a number of studies that explore critical literacy practices in elementary classrooms (Chafel, Flint, Hammel, & Pomeroy, 2007; Comber, Thompson, & Wells, 2001; Kempe, 2001; Paugh, Carey, King-Jackson, & Russell, 2007; Simpson, 1996; Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006; Vasquez, 2001). These studies examine the questions teachers pose, the literature selected, children's conversations and actions, the environments and the curriculum. Many of these reports also include descriptions of the researchers' processes of co-constructing critical literacy practices with teachers.

Other studies (Barnes, 2006; Hatch, 2006; Lalik & Potts, 2001; Lazar, 2001; Leland & Harste, 2005; Leland, Harste, Jackson, & Youssef, 2001) report on urban teacher preparation programs that include critical perspectives. These programs typically prepare pre-service teachers to work with students from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, sometimes emphasizing social justice. The reports in the literature present pre-service teachers' perceptions and program components.

I also found a limited number of follow-through studies, most of which were prompted by the International Reading Association's National Commission on Excellence in Elementary Teacher Preparation for Reading Instruction (Flint et al., 2001; Hoffman et al., 2005; The International Reading Association, 2003). These reports specifically examine teachers' development from pre-service into in-service, focusing on their expertise in reading instruction.

However, after reviewing the literature, I did not find any studies that follow teachers from pre-service to in-service specifically exploring their beliefs and understandings of critical literacy use. I believe studying this transition is especially important because of the critical nature involved in this practice. Hoewisch (2000) and Stevens and Bean (2007) note that pre-service teachers develop their underlying assumptions about teaching and literacy and construct their professional identity early in their preparation. Stevens and Bean (2007) found that pre-service teachers may find it difficult to take up a critical literacy stance while in-service teachers feel isolated in their first years of teaching.

Austin and Morrison (1961) found that one of the biggest problems in reading teacher education was the lack of ability for professors to assess if what they taught their students was transferred from theory to practice. Their last recommendation was for colleges to "establish a program to follow-up their graduates with a view toward determining to what extent their preparation has been adequate and what weaknesses, if any, exist in the students' training" (p. 157). These factors indicate that as preparation programs incorporate critical pedagogies, there needs to be follow-through to assess and support new teachers, particularly in their use of critical practices. By designing this case study to follow a pre-service teacher into her first year of teaching, I am contributing to efforts to close the long-standing gap in knowledge about what

new teachers carry forward from their preparation, especially preparation that includes critical perspectives on literacy development.

Second, the availability of children's literature accurately representing people of diverse races and ethnicities has become more widely available, especially for use in the classroom. Keifer, Hepler, and Hickman (2004) stated that before the 1970's, not many books representing diversity were available to a mainstream audience, particularly books representing African Americans. However, thanks to small community presses, the Civil Rights movement, the establishment of book awards to authors and illustrators of diversity, and the Secondary Education Act of 1965 which provided more funds to school libraries for the purchase of multicultural literature, the availability of such books has increased. Unfortunately, according to Kiefer, Hepler, and Hickman (2004) the proportions of authors and illustrators of diverse backgrounds still does not match the general population. Still, having knowledge of and access to these books became an important part of my study because multicultural children's literature was often used in the lessons I observed, and learning how to help new teachers utilize children's literature could be an important outcome of this study.

The results of this study may help teacher educators think differently about the ways in which new teachers implement critical literacy, specifically how new teachers' perceptions, and other influences contribute to its implementation. Few studies have explored this aspect of critical literacy. This study is an effort to close the gap in knowledge about what new teachers carry forward from their preparation when it includes exposure to critical literacy perspectives. It contributes to the literature by providing a careful analysis of the journey of one teacher from pre-service exploration to the implementation of critical literacy activities during her first year of teaching.

Limitations

Conditions that were not in my control may have influenced the outcome of this study. Despite the dedication and enthusiasm of my participant, my total data set was reduced because some of our planning meetings and my observations were cancelled. My participant frequently used cell phone text-messaging to notify me of last minute cancellations. We rescheduled when appropriate or waited until the next planned visit. All visits were dependent upon a continually changing schedule based on classroom routines or school-imposed changes. A total of eight planning meetings took place. One meeting, however, was cancelled because of a school-based literacy meeting and another because my participant felt the need to discuss personal issues with me rather than lesson planning. I also observed classroom read alouds and extension activities a total of fifteen times. Still, six planned observations were cancelled. Three observations were cancelled because the class had to take a test, either curriculum-based or district-mandated. One was cancelled because parents were scheduled to visit for a Thanksgiving luncheon, and another was cancelled because the class was scheduled to work on a project in the Title 1 computer lab. An additional observation was cancelled because my participant was sent by the district to new teacher training. More planning time may have increased our co-constructed understandings of critical literacy. In general, cancelled meetings and observations negated time for follow-up discussions and planning for future lessons, which can be seen as a limitation to the study.

My relationship with my participant is another element that may have influenced the outcomes of this study. I selected a participant I had previously supervised during her year-long internship. Although I had a working relationship with her, I realize that this prior relationship was based on a hierarchy of roles that may have influenced the way my participant interacted

with me. There was also a built-in comfort level between us that may have led her to confide in me beyond the scope of the study. The participant in this study also received specific instruction from me based on critical literacy the previous year during her internship. This instruction was included as part of the pilot study for this research project. During this study, we both referred back to that experience. The outcomes of this study may also be influenced by the decision to choose a first year teacher from a cohort of interns I supervised and taught in the past. Another limiting factor is that I chose to act as a participant observer during all sessions, planning meetings and classroom observations, creating a situation that some may consider limiting to the study.

Cancelled planning meetings and observations, having a prior professional relationship with my participant, and my role as a participant observer are all factors that may be considered limitations to this study. However, these limitations did not take away from the rigor of the study. I was in my participant's classroom collecting data on a weekly basis for approximately 15 weeks. At times, I observed more than one lesson a week. I not only observed read alouds but follow-up activities such as writer's workshop and other projects. Our planning meetings were in-depth conversations that often lasted more than an hour per session. There were some instances where we would have a planning meeting early in the day, I would observe the lesson, and later we returned to our planning meeting. I collected data with my participant during school time, on her lunch breaks, and after school. Jennifer (pseudonym) was extremely flexible and gracious with her time, allowing us to make up for cancelled sessions and extend pertinent discussions.

In addition, although my close relationship with Jennifer may be seen as an impediment, that relationship made it possible to collect insights that would not have been available to a

detached observer. Although there were limitations to this study, the quality of this research was improved by extended close contact, extensive data collection, and rigorous analysis.

Organization of the Dissertation

The remainder of this study is organized into four chapters. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, including the theoretical framework; Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and data analysis procedures used in this study; Chapter 4 presents the findings; and Chapter 5 concludes the study with implications and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"What is the nature of reading? What are its social functions and effects? How is it learned? And how is it best taught?" (p. 185). According to Luke and Freebody (1997b), these questions have been at the center of continuous debate in many countries over the last 100 years, at least since legally mandated state schooling began. This literature review addresses those questions and establishes theoretical, empirical, and practical contexts for my study. The first section of this literature review explores three prominent theories of reading: modernist reading theory, transactional reading theory, and critical literacy reading theory. In the second section, I explore specifically how critical literacy, the perspective at the core of my study, transfers from theory to practice. In the later section, I discuss four areas on a continuum related to practice: critical pedagogy, children's literature, teacher preparation, and critical literacy in the classroom. The review of literature provides the foundation for understanding different viewpoints related to literacy instruction, emphasizing critical perspectives that serve as a focal point in my research.

Theories of Reading

In this section, I provide an overview of three theories of reading. I organized this overview based on Serafini's (2003) taxonomy of modernist, transactional, and critical literacy reading theories. Using three perspectives provides a means to make distinctions among different ways of understanding reading processes and teaching children to read. As each reading theory is presented, elements that make the theory distinct are highlighted, instructional practices associated with the theory are explicated, and critiques from alternative perspectives are discussed.

Modernist Reading Theory

Elkind (1997) describes modernity as being built on three unquestioned assumptions about the world. The first is "progress" in which there is a natural progression of forward movement in a positive direction. For example, in reading, children start learning phonics principles before moving on to reading for comprehension. Reading is therefore taught step-by-step in a prescribed fashion. "Universality" is the second underlying concept of modernity, meaning that "nature was assumed to operate according to universal laws that could be discovered by diligent research" (par. 9). In terms of reading, this means that there are universal laws of learning that hold true across all children in all settings. The third assumption is "regularity," which means that nature is lawful. The task of science is to uncover this lawfulness. In the context of modernist education, testing provides insight into children's intellectual abilities and achievement. After taking such tests, children's scores in the distribution of the normal curve of probability determine their placement in reading programs. Based on these assumptions, according to Elkind (1997), modernists believe that children should progress through each grade uniformly. They do not need to apply personal experience or creativity to their school work in order to succeed; and national standards are used to assess all children based on a uniform progression. Instructional practices for reading within a modernist perspective typically derive from commercial reading programs, a balanced approach integrating phonics and whole language, leveled texts, and commercial reading incentive programs. According to Serafini (2003), many of these approaches embrace the perspective that "there is one correct answer, one main idea, and it is the reader's job to uncover it if she is to be evaluated as a competent reader" (par. 23).

Describing the role of the federal government will provide some insight as to how modernist thought plays a role in today's education policy and practice. Hatch (2007) explains that the federally sponsored No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 that is driving education policy and practice in the U.S. "is rooted in the concept of scientifically based research" (p. 8). NCLB was designed to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap. This law led to the amendment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) which was the principal federal law affecting kindergarten through high school education. The U.S. Department of Education (2004), states that government policy is now based on four pillars: accountability for results, expanded parental options, expanded local control and flexibility, and an emphasis in doing what works based on scientific research. Instructional practices are therefore deemed acceptable for use in the classroom if the research behind them is supported by the federal government. This scientific research, according to Allington (2006), must meet the following criteria: use of rigorous, systematic, and empirical methods; adequacy of the data analyses to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn; reliance on measurements or observational methods that provided valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and acceptance by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

NCLB impacts reading instruction through the activation of these criteria in the Reading First component of the law. Allington (2006) describes the Reading First component as an extension of Title I remedial reading programs. Within this program, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2004), federal funds are "available to states to help teachers in the early grades strengthen existing skills and gain new ones in effective, scientifically based

instructional techniques" (p. 4). Federal funding is provided to schools for the purchase of instructional programs that are scientifically based and have met the previously described criteria. If the instructional programs do not meet the scientifically based criteria, schools do not receive Reading First funding. I will now describe how modernist methods, which embrace the one correct answer, one main idea, standardized approach to reading, are implemented in classroom practices.

Instructional Approach

Serafini (2003) describes a modernist perspective of reading as being based on the following: meaning is located in the text and can be uncovered through close textual analysis; comprehension is a result of cognitive processes and has little to do with the social context of the reading event; there is one pure essence (main idea) of a text that only competent readers have access to; and reading of a text can be evaluated for correctness. Becoming a successful reader, based on this perspective, is achieved by decoding texts accurately and reading them aloud on demand, which is often followed by answering predetermined-response questions. This process occurs through formal reading instruction encompassing a universal set of skills. Such instruction emphasizes meaning making as being derived solely from the text. Reading, therefore, according to Serafini (2003), is "defined as the ability to decode text, read aloud fluently, and comprehend the main idea of the story" (par. 16).

Commercial reading programs and workbooks associated with a basal anthology are often associated with a modernist instructional approach. According to Elkind (1997), these programs have been designed for standardized learning styles, based on the premise of "universality," meaning that children are alike in many ways and can be taught in unison. A

modernist instructional approach also provides students with minimal exposure to authentic children's literature because of the need to complete specific activities during the reading block. During reading time, students are preparing book reports, completing worksheets, or working on writing exercises. Read alouds are separated from reading skills instruction, thus further limiting students' time with authentic literature. Serafini (2003) states that a balanced literacy approach is also associated with a modernist perspective. This approach combines phonics skills with whole language instruction. A modernist perspective also embraces commercial reading incentive programs that incorporate leveled texts, based on readability formulas (Flesch, 1974; Fry, 1977). Such programs require children to read only the texts determined to be at their instructional level, which is assessed through a computer-based quiz. These computer-based quizzes assess reading comprehension based on a set of literal recall questions. Once students pass the quiz, they proceed to the next level and also may be awarded a prize for their accomplishments. This leveled approach is based in the modernist assumption of "progression" that was described earlier (Elkind, 1997).

Because modernists believe that meaning is located in the text, inferences and personal connections are disregarded. Students, according to Luke (1995) "read the truth" (p. 96), in that the text is to be accepted as the correct and sole answer, rather than seek their own interpretation or opinion. According to McDaniel (2004), "in general, children in the United States are taught not to question the status quo and to accept and obey the voice of authority" (p. 473). They are also taught to believe that there is only one answer and when that answer is in "print" it is correct. Based on these elements, Serafini (2003) believes a modernist perspective of reading instruction adheres to a "particular formula" (par. 22). This formula is based on what Elkind

(1997) refers to as the "ladder of education" (par. 8), meaning that students uniformly climb from step to step.

Theory Critique

According to Allington (2006) and Allington and McGill-Franzen (2004), because of continued criticism over the years, many people now believe that public education in the U.S. has failed and drastic change is needed. In response, there now seems to be no end to the supply of ideas about how to fix the education system. Allington (2006) believes this perception of a failed system has contributed to the national standards movement, in which high-stakes testing is viewed as a way to improve schooling. Yet, according to Allington (2006), the National Research Council along with other organizations "opposed using standardized test data in making decisions about an individual student's achievement" (p. 22). Standardized test data are only one form of assessment and will provide only limited information on each student. This form of assessment disregards many facets of student learning. Additionally, Allington (2006) noted that because of NCLB's expanded federal influence "a number of state education laws now demand 'rigorous, replicable, scientific evidence' to support the design of reading instruction and the selection of reading materials" (p. 1). This demand shifted curriculum and instruction decision making, which used to be locally controlled, to a federal level. Schools now employ programs that seek a universal approach to education rather than addressing the needs of diverse learning styles.

Serafini (2003) voices his opinion about the influence of the federal government and its modernist stance. He believes this theoretical framework influences schools to embrace "an outdated understanding of reading, the reader, and the role of the social context in the

construction of meaning" (par. 8). Elkind (1997) describes this outdated perspective of education. He says the modern assumption of a common child is that all children of the same age will profit equally from the same education. However, he believes that children of the same intellectual ability will have wide differences in their ability to acquire different skills. Reading readiness alone varies because children come from different homes, have different exposures to text and environmental print, and have different pre-school experiences.

Luke (1995) posits that "reading instruction is not about skills but is about the construction of identity and social relations" (p. 95). Rather than embracing a universal skills approach, he views reading as "a social practice, comprised of interpretive rules and events constructed and learned in institutions like schools, and churches, families and work places" (p. 97). Therefore, students' personal interpretations, experiences, and creativity become part of their learning process. According to Serafini (2003), the modernist emphasis on literal comprehension and decoding, the reduction in the use of authentic children's literature, and the political pressures to raise tests scores have restricted the definition of reading, thus ignoring recent research and more current literacy theories. What modernists fail to recognize, according to Luke (1995) "is that reading is always tied up with the formation of moral values and identities, political ideologies and beliefs, and the construction and distribution of particular kinds of textual practice, authority, and power" (p. 100).

Because of today's conservative political educational agenda, Serafini (2003) argues that teachers are often forced to adopt reading programs that tell them how to teach, regardless of their beliefs and understandings. McGill-Franzen (2005) concurs, stating that

> administrators and teachers in low-socioeconomic status schools are forced to buy one of a dozen or so "core reading programs" all of which are poorly validated for the target

> population and none of which have demonstrated effectiveness with children most at risk… Poor children, particularly low-achieving poor children, and their teachers are thrust into a "forced choice" standardized curricula that, at worst, may limit opportunities to achieve grade level (p. 366).

These programs are continually being implemented, even though according to Allington (2006), "little scientific research exists that demonstrates any package or program works consistently and reliably" (p. 14).

The problem is even more complex because we now have teachers trying to implement practices *based* on their beliefs while adhering to standardized approaches that *exclude* their beliefs. Serafini (2003) is concerned about a modernist approach to reading because teacher beliefs "play a dominant role in the resources they choose, the instructional practices they employ, and the environment they create in their classrooms" (par. 13). He argues that if teachers lose their sense of ownership, we run the risk of losing their motivation. Kozol (2005) agrees, stating that the U.S. education system is intellectually rejecting its teachers, rather than supporting them. Allington and McGill-Franzen (2004) are "more convinced than ever that instead of offering packaged programs, we need to concentrate our efforts on enhancing the expertise of teachers" (p. 24). Especially since "it is teachers who teach, not materials" (p. 24).

Discussion

Today, as postmodern thinkers challenge modern thought that emphasizes formal instruction and uniformity, there is hope for an era that embraces alternative approaches and individual autonomy (Jalongo & Isenberg, 2008). Hatch (2007) states that postmodern thinkers "have exposed the inseparable connections between knowledge and power and opened the door

to alternative ways of thinking" (p.10). He believes "postmodernity will not go away just because conservative political leaders and scholars have risen to positions of power" (p. 7). Those responsible for reading instruction need to remember that people are different. Children differ and should be treated as individuals. They come to school with different experiences and knowledge, and we should attempt to meet them at *their* starting point and take them to their next level of development (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers also differ and need to "buy into" what they are teaching if it is going to be effective. Allington (2006) and McGill-Franzen (2005) both believe that teachers' expertise must be considered as a key factor associated with student achievement. Serafini (2003) notes that "there are other competencies that readers need to develop in a democratic society" (par. 19), competencies that go beyond decoding the text and finding that "one" answer. Alternative theories of reading exist such as transactional reading theory and critical literacy reading theory which both support student development while engaging teachers' and students' knowledge within and beyond text.

Transactional Reading Theory

In contrast to modernist views, Rosenblatt (1978) views reading from a transactional perspective. According to Cai (2008), Rosenblatt's theory of reading "explores how readers read, interpret, evaluate, and criticize literature" (p. 213). Serafini (2003) describes the construction of meaning during reading as being an internal, cognitive process that occurs as the individual reader transacts with a particular text. Transactional reading theory seeks to understand reading as an event. Rosenblatt (1978) positions reading so that all members of society are able "to participate fully in the poetic experience" (p. xi). Her aim was to discover the paths readers took in their initial interpretation of text. She wrote that a transaction designates "an ongoing process

in which the elements or factors are, one might say, aspects of a total situation, each conditioned by the conditioning other" (p. 17).

Rosenblatt (1978) describes the notion of "text" as a set or series of signs interpretable as linguistic symbols. She views text as more than the inked marks on the page or the uttered vibrations in the air. She views text as signs becoming verbal symbols that become words by pointing out something beyond themselves. Furthermore, a "poem" presupposes a reader's active involvement with a text and is dependent upon the responses and interpretations of the reader. Rosenblatt uses the term "poem" to refer to the whole category of aesthetic transactions between readers and texts without implying the greater or lesser value of the poeticity of any given genre. The poem therefore, is also thought of as an event in time.

The reader's activity during reading is a major focus in transactional theory. Rosenblatt (1978) describes the importance of the transaction in which "the text is merely an object of paper and ink until some reader responds to the marks on the page as verbal symbols" (p. 23). She believes there are two different kinds of actions a reader will take while reading: an aesthetic and efferent approach. The non-aesthetic, efferent approach is based on what is left with the reader after the reading, such as what is factual, what has been learned, what solution can be made, or what actions to take. Rosenblatt (1978) gives an example of a child swallowing poison and the mother frantically reading the label to discover the antidote to be administered. The mother will only be concerned with the words, ideas or actions to take. Her attention is focused on what she can do after she finishes reading. Rosenblatt chose the term efferent, derived from Latin, which is "efferre" because it means to carry away.

Aesthetic reading, on the other hand, is about what happens during the actual reading. It is based on what the reader is living through and his attention to the text during the reading

process. It is more about the journey itself and the feelings or emotions that are evoked during the reading. An individual's own history, background knowledge and experience will have an effect on the aesthetic experience with the text. However, Rosenblatt (1978) says there are no hard-and-fast lines that separate efferent reading from aesthetic reading. Ones' mental set will allow or shut out what enters into the awareness of the reading process. Some texts may even go back and forth from efferent to aesthetic as the reader connects with the text. One reader may have an efferent experience with a text, while another may have an aesthetic response. Again, this puts more focus on the contributions of the reader himself.

Rosenblatt (1978) looks at whose voice is important in determining the validity of a text. She sees the reader as the caretaker of the knowledge and experience derived from the text. She wants every reader to be a critic, and she believes the general reader should gain personal satisfaction from reading. Rather than making distinctions among "the informed reader," "the competent reader," or "the ideal reader," Rosenblatt (1978) embraces the "ordinary reader." She said "we should open up the realm of reading so that all members of society are able to participate fully in the poetic experience" (p. xi). According to Serafini (2003), transactional theory places the reader in the central role for the construction of meaning during the reading event. The reader's prior knowledge and experiences help the reader attend selectively to the text. Children's literature in particular, helps children make connections with the world and their own identities. Serafini (2003) believes that during transactional reading "it is the lived-through or aesthetic experience of reading literature, and the ways that literature develops identity and understanding, that become the primary focus" (par. 26).

Instructional Approach

Serafini (2003) describes instructional practices aligned "with a transactional perspective as generally involving whole class or small group discussions and workshops. The focus is on sharing individual interpretations within communities of readers to come to deeper understandings of a particular text" (par. 28). Literature circles, book clubs, partner reading, and independent reading all support transactional reading. Either after reading or during the reading process, students can share their thoughts. These may be generated from prior knowledge and experiences. One's own history, culture, race, background, family, and other experiences will contribute to individual meaning making. Listening to peers' interpretations of a text adds another layer to knowledge building, which can impact future transactions. Teacher engagement is another element of text conversations. Serafini (2003) believes a teacher's role is to support comprehension development and help students understand "the text, their world, and their identity" (par. 28).

Not every student will have the same experience with text. Some readers may close the book and walk away with new knowledge to be used in their next life experience. Other readers may have a stronger experience during the actual reading. It may not always be about what they learn or comprehend but about their connections during reading and how they felt. Serafini (2003) states that during transactional reading it is "the lived-through or aesthetic experience of reading literature, and the ways literature develops identity and understanding, that become the primary focus" (par. 27). The journey will be more important to some, while the destination will be vital to others. Both transactional and critical literacy reading theories view the process of reflection during reading as inherent in knowledge construction.

Theory Critique

Cai (2008) states that transactional theory has been criticized for its failure to embrace critical literacy based on its limitations in addressing complex cultural issues. However, he believes the theory is misunderstood by its critics. According to Cai (2008), transactional theory actually "never excludes or ignores critical reading…While emphasizing the reader's personal transaction with the text, transactional theory acknowledges the influence of social, cultural, and political factors on the individual reader and her transaction with the text" (p. 214). Contrary to what the critics may believe, Rosenblatt (2005) herself stated that "students should be actively helped to develop criteria based on democratic assumptions about the freedom and well-being of individual human beings" (p. 19)

Luke and Freebody (1999), McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) and Cai (2008) see reading from a critical stance as another component to Rosenblatt's continuum, with readers taking on the role of text critic. Students can examine the power relationships between their ideas and the ones presented by the author, thus questioning the author. Cai (2008) sees a connection between aesthetic reading and critical reading. He believes that aesthetic reading may contain critical elements that can be developed into a systematic critical analysis of a text, and aesthetic reading may also betray the reader's assumptions, expectations, and attitudes which need to be addressed so that the reader can learn to read the text critically. Cai (2008) believes that "for Rosenblatt, critical literacy is a personal as well as a political matter because it entails examining one's own aesthetic experience" (p. 214). McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) propose that perhaps a third stance should be added to Rosenblatt's aesthetic and efferent stances: critical reading. Based on reading a text about the Holocaust, McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) describe how the three stances could encompass a reading curriculum. First, there would be an aesthetic

stance to poetry, drawings, or even the emotions that the content evokes. Efferently, the reader would take away knowledge about the number of travesties that occurred. Critically, readers would examine multiple perspectives on the Holocaust – especially looking at dominant systems and political implications. This process would include self-reflection, prior knowledge, and others' contributions.

Transactional theory, based on an aesthetic and efferent approach, is not focused on taking action for social change. It specifically follows the process the reader goes through during an event in time. Readers may take away knowledge from an efferent experience, but that does not necessarily imply taking action to transform the self or the surrounding world. Cai believes (2008) that "more research is needed to see how personal, pleasurable responses may contain potentials to develop into critical reading" (p. 217). However, he notes that "when the transact-to-transform approach bumps into snags, teachers are likely to find transactional theory alone inadequate as a theoretical guide" (p. 213). Teachers need exposure to many theoretical perspectives to situate their understandings of transactional theory and its possibilities. Having a broader theoretical perspective inclusive of critical literacy reading theory can potentially lead teachers to successfully developing and sustaining a transact-to-transform approach.

Dialogue plays a small role in transactional reading theory. Teachers may use dialogue to enact the theory in the classroom, but it is primarily based on the transaction between the reader and the text. This theory does not emphasize the voice of others. This further differentiates transactional theory from critical literacy theory, which views literacy as a social practice. Overcoming oppression, challenging the status quo, and seeking true democracy are defining characteristics of critical literacy theory, yet they are not typically associated with transactional theory. In Cai's (2008) words "the reader may approve or disapprove of the characters'

behaviors or the attitudes, moral codes, and social situations in the story. These personal responses may be charged with social political implications" (p. 215). Yet, seeking action based on those thoughts is not the goal of transactional theory. As Rosenblatt (1978) advocates for the common reader, she does not view their process of reading, efferent or aesthetic, as leading toward praxis to take action for a better humanity. The reader always has the option however to engage the voice of others and/or take action as a result of their transaction. Rosenblatt did not apply restrictions to the outcome of a transaction, leaving its potential limitless. That decision lies in the hands of the individual reader.

Discussion

Transactional theory is a starting point to engage readers in the process of constructing knowledge. Cai (2008) views transactional theory as an essential first step in learning to read critically that should precede other reading perspectives. He contrasts transactional theory with a modernist perspective of reading as follows:

> If we move beyond transactional theory and bypass the essential first step of personal transaction with the text in hopes of developing critical reading ability in the reader, we run the risk of imposing a certain critical point of view on the reader without the reader really understanding and accepting it. It would be a throwback to a text-centered approach that neglects the reader's personal transaction with the text… Only after the reader participates emotionally and intellectually in personal transaction with the book can she really understand and benefit from the teaching of critical perspectives" (Cai, 2008, p. 218).

Cai (2008) believes the reader will only be able to embrace the perspective of the text, the author, and various others once she understands her own transaction. Taking away the possibility of having a personal transaction could revert to a "one answer" way of thinking. Rosenblatt (2005) described her insistence on the term *transaction* as a means of establishing the active role of both the reader and the text in interpretation. She felt that it ensured that we recognize that any interpretation is an event occurring at a particular time in a particular social or cultural context.

Transactional theory looks beyond just the "answer" derived from reading. Its aim is to understand what the process of reading looks like for each individual reader. Each reader is seen as an individual, the opposite of a universal perspective. Within this theory of reading, students' knowledge and experience are valued and become part of the assessment process. Teachers can evaluate the depth of students' connections to the text. In a classroom, the perspective of others helps students see how their peers connect to literature. In this sense, they learn that there is not "one answer" and "one true meaning," in contrast to the modernist view of reading. As students have either an aesthetic or efferent experience with text, they learn to value those experiences. They also begin to reflect on their own identity development, learning how as readers and through reading itself, they are connected to the world. I will now describe a reading theory that has an even greater emphasis on developing student competencies in relation to the world.

Critical Literacy Reading Theory

As I discussed in Chapter 1, schools in the U.S. are filled with diverse learners both academically and in their sociocultural characteristics. Shor (1999) reminds us that over the last 30 years, there have been monumental culture wars in school and society over gender, race, class, and sexual preference. He said that "since the 1960's, these culture wars – a long-term

questioning of the unequal status quo – have disturbed traditional language arts and mainstream discourse" (p. 6). My concern about these issues led me to explore the concept of critical literacy, which emerged during the 1980's and 1990's even though according to Green (2001), what constitutes critical literacy seems to vary within the literature. Serafini (2003) considers critical literacy to be "an approach that addresses the social, historical, and political systems that affect literacy and what it means to be a literate person in contemporary society" (par. 30). This approach can be viewed as one that utilizes literacy to confront those culture wars.

In order to understand critical literacy as a literacy approach, I and many others look to the work of Paolo Freire (Dyson, 2004; Edelsky, 1999; Knobel, 2007; Luke, 2004; Luke & Freebody, 1997a; , 2004; McDaniel, 2006; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004b; Stevens & Bean, 2007). Freire's central approach to education is based on his model of emancipatory literacy. Giroux (1987) describes Freire's model as the "dialectical relationship between human beings and the world, on the one hand, and language and transformative agency, on the other" (p. 7). Based on this perspective, Giroux (1987) views literacy as more than the process of acquiring a technical skill enabling one to read, rather he believes it serves as a necessary foundation for cultural action towards freedom.

According to Macedo (1987), Freire's emancipatory model of literacy represents two dimensions to literacy. First, it entails students becoming literate about their histories, experiences, and the culture of their immediate environments. Second, students must also "appropriate those codes and cultures of the dominant spheres so they can transcend their own environments" (p. 47). Rather than becoming overwhelmed by these two dimensions, Freire (1987) describes how an individual's consciousness through social practices enables him to understand himself. Students comprehend, dream, and make judgments individually, but all of

these speak to having presence in the world. When challenged by a critical teacher, students then begin to discover themselves within the power of their consciousness in the social practice which they participate. They start to understand the asymmetry generated by social institutions as critical literacy helps demystify the artificial parameters imposed on people. Students also will begin to see language as culture including the language they bring to the classroom. Language, therefore, becomes "the mediating force of knowledge; but it is also knowledge itself" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 53). As students learn about the relationships among themselves, language, texts, and the world, they develop the potential to initiate social change.

Critical literacy is considered a social practice. To describe that aspect, I will examine the concept of literacy and its relationship with people. Lankshear and Knobel (1997) define literacies as "socially created constitutive elements of larger human practices – discourses" (p. 96). Humans construct their discourses around text purposes, leading them toward developing and working with certain kinds of texts in certain kinds of ways. Based on Gee's (1991) work, Lankshear and Knobel (1997) see Discourses (with a capital D) as "socially constructed and recognized ways of being in the world, which integrate and regulate ways of acting, thinking, feeling, using language, believing, and valuing" (p. 96). Discourses broken into smaller components become "discourses" (with a small d). Lankshear and Knobel (1997) define the discourse of language, as the act of saying/writing/listening/reading/viewing that enables people to relate to the world. Thus Discourse and discourse are mutually constitutive in meaning making. Lankshear and Knobel (1997) believe this meaning making combined with text use is increasingly "identified with conceptions and practices of critical literacy" (p. 97).

Luke and Freebody (1997b) view reading as a social practice because it uses "written text as a means for the construction and reconstruction of statements, messages, and meanings" (p.

185). From a critical literacy standpoint, these practices become an everyday function tied up in politics and power. Luke and Freebody (1999) add that moral, political, cultural and social decisions about how things should be become the foundation for "cracking the code," making literacy a social practice. Shor (1999) further explains that "the way we speak and are spoken to helps shape us into the people we become. Through words and other actions, we build ourselves in a world that is building us" (p. 1). He sees critical literacy as an approach that challenges the status quo, while language use questions the social construction of the self. Shor and others believe this is how we make sense of the world. Situating literacy as a social practice aligns with Giroux's (1987) view, rejecting the belief that literacy is merely a technical skill acquired to become a reader. Rather, viewing literacy as a social practice places the voice of the reader within the culture wars described earlier.

In thinking about outcomes related to critical literacy practices, Dozier, Johnston and Rogers (2006) point out that critical literacy is about language and literacy and their use to accomplish social ends. They believe in order become critically literate one must develop a sense that literacy is for taking social action. People need to develop an awareness of how to use literacy for their own ends and to develop a sense of agency with respect to their own literacy. Part of that process, they believe, is stepping "outside of one's self and the social and linguistic structures in which one is immersed" (p. 18), in a sense leaving one's comfort zone in order to reflect and take action. Critical thinking takes individuals out of that comfort zone, yet that is only part of critical literacy. Harste (2007) describes the other part as "social action built upon an understanding that literacy positions individuals and in so doing, serves some more than others" (p. 2). This relates to what Lodge (1997) calls the "access paradox," meaning that access to knowledge perpetuates systems of dominance, which will be described later. Green (2001) refers

to critical literacy as an active, yet challenging approach to literacy. Critical literacy practices, according to Dyson (2004), "involve talk that helps participants reflect on given words – and potentially change their ways of acting on and with those words in given social worlds" (p. 156). The more one is immersed in critical literacy, the greater the chance of that person taking social action. I will now explore how such an immersion can take place in the classroom.

Instructional Approach

Returning to the question of how to teach reading, Knobel (2007) reminds us that teaching literacy is no longer about determining the best skill or approach. Readers always read something and have a viewpoint in relation to the self, the text, and the world. The various interpretations of critical literacy may have changed over time, but Knobel (2007) believes one thing remains constant: The "assumption that teaching students how to recognize the ways in which language 'operates' in relation to social practices, social groups, and power can make a difference in their lives" (p. viii). Luke and Freebody (1997b) add that reading is "based on assumptions about a series of contrasts and relationships: between oral and written language; between personal and cultural resources; between mind and society, and among the various ideological practices of schooling" (p. 192). However, they believe that the implications of these often contrasting assumptions can prove challenging to teachers in reference to what they can and need to know to in order to provide effective reading instruction. Taking these contradictions into account, Luke and Freebody (1997b) offer a beginning list of core propositions that distinguish critical approaches to literacy education: reading and writing are social activities; all texts are motivated – there is no neutral position from which a text can be read or written; we learn about appropriate reading and writing positions within the relationships that take

responsibility for our learning; and institutionally purpose-built repertoires of "selves" are represented to us either explicitly or otherwise in all of the texts we read and write. Acquiring a better understanding of these critical approaches can help teachers' develop a broader sense of what is means to be literate.

Delpit (1998), McDaniel (2004), Dyson (2004), Dozier, Johnston, and Rogers (2006), and Freire and Macedo (1987), believe that in order for students to have the opportunity to discover the role of language in culture, educators first need to be reflective and develop an understanding of their own beliefs about the world and about the standard dominant language of the wider community. Yet, Dyson (2004) suggests that teachers "are not always aware of their own assumptions about appropriate social roles and textual structures in literacy events"(p. 155). Teacher education programs therefore, have a responsibility to help teachers become reflective practitioners. While Dyson's (2004) concern may be valid, there are teachers being reflective and engaging in critical literacy practices. Comber (2001) reviewed the literature and found that in classrooms where a critical literacy position is advocated, teachers reposition students as researchers of language; they respect student resistance and explore minority culture constructions of literacy and language use; and they problematise classroom and public texts. There are teachers embracing critical literacy perspectives alongside their students, even though it is not a universal approach. Their self reflection is evident in their teaching practices.

Serafini (2003) believes that the reading processes associated with critical literacy practices are intended to help teachers and students "understand the variety of meanings that are available during the transaction between reader, text, and context, and the systems of power that affect the meanings constructed" (par. 30). During this process, he believes the reader is invited to question issues of power and engage in a "social practice of constructing meaning that cannot

be separated from the cultural, historical, and political context in which it occurs" (par. 12). Texts therefore, are interrogated by focusing on issues of gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. Discussions based on such issues incorporated with carefully selected children's literature invite children to make connections to their lives and communities. Knoblauch and Brannon (1993) believe critical reading and writing helps students understand "the relationships between language and power together with the practical knowledge of how to use language for self-realization, social critique, and cultural transformation" (p. 152).

Contrary to modernist reading instruction, Serafini (2003) notes that instructional practices based on a critical perspective are not predetermined and mandated by commercial reading programs. Rather, instructional decisions are made by teachers as they take into consideration larger social contexts and forces, viewing the classroom space as "part of society, influenced by the political, cultural, and historical forces contained therein" (par. 33). In such settings, literature as well as the media becomes part of the discussions, interrogating issues of gender, social class, race, and ethnicity.

To make the implementation process more understandable, McLaughlin and DeVoogd and Luke and Freebody offer some guiding thoughts to help teachers conceptualize critical literacy. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004a) present four principles that describe essential understandings and beliefs about the power relationship that exists between the reader and the author. The principles are as follows: (a) critical literacy focuses on issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation, and action; (b) critical literacy focuses on the problem and its complexity; (c) techniques that promote critical literacy are dynamic and adapt to the contexts in which they are used; and (d) examining multiple perspectives is an important aspect of critical

literacy. Having an understanding of these principles can help teachers explore power relationships with their students.

Another concept that can support the implementation of critical literacy is Luke and Freebody's (1999) Four Resources Model. According to Vasquez (2001), this model "presents possible practices that children learn in school that differentially shape reading and writing as social practices, depending on which teaching and learning practices are emphasized" (p. 2). Luke and Freebody's (1999) Four Resources Model suggests allowing learners to (a) break the code of texts by recognizing and using fundamental features; (b) participate in the meanings of texts, to take into account each texts interior meaning; (c) use texts functionally by traversing and negotiating the labor and social relations around them; and (d) critically analyze and transform texts by acting on knowledge that texts are not ideologically natural or neutral. In essence, these social practices continue to shape one's knowledge of the world. Interrogating texts and specifically looking at the power relationships that exist between the reader and the author allows students to situate themselves within the world based on being a reader. In becoming literate, Dozier, Johnston and Rogers (2006) believe that literacies serve particular social functions enabling children to acquire ways of interacting with print and ways to understand who they are in relation to others in the context of print. Children will eventually acquire a literacy that fits them well and supports them in developing and participating in a democracy.

Theory Critique

Within the high-stakes climate facing U.S. schools today, critical literacy does not come without criticism. Serafini (2003) states that reading education is a non-neutral endeavor. Nieto (2002) believes this scares people; therefore, power and privilege and how they are implicated in

language, culture, and learning have typically been invisible in school discourse. Serafini (2003) points out that this perspective would not been seen as "critical" if it did not seek to uncover the systems that affect meaning and the analysis of the social contexts of texts, interpretations, and meanings. However, Knobel (2007) recognizes that a critical literacy approach has the potential to constrain and limit students' life chances. Based on Lodge's (1997) "access paradox," Janks (2000) elaborates, stating that if we provide students with access to dominant perspectives, we contribute to maintaining their dominance. On the other hand, if we deny them access "we perpetuate their marginalization in a society that continues to recognize the value and importance of these forms" (p. 176). This continuous cycle creating a top and bottom model leaves one wondering if there will ever be common ground based on access to knowledge.

McDaniel (2004) says that taking on a critical stance can be not only dangerous to students but to teachers as well. Teachers may be criticized for going against the system or for using texts that some stakeholders may find inappropriate. She thinks "people may resist critical literacy because it disrupts the status quo – especially when adults speak *with* instead of *for* children" (p. 480). Classroom order may take on a non-traditional approach as students begin to question their world. The traditional hierarchy of roles shift as power is relinquished, leading toward an equal playing field for both the students and their teachers. McDaniel (2006) believes that "messy, vibrant, and noisy classrooms are perceived by many as out of control and undesirable" (p. 23).

Another concern expressed by Stevens and Bean (2007) is that if critical literacy is taken too literally, it can quickly escalate into teachers merely getting through a time block with students rather than engaging in serious critique and reflection. They believe critical literacy should be viewed as a framework or a view of literacy rather than as a method, approach, or

sequence to lessons. In sum, McDaniel (2006) states that educators must choose their texts and lead discussions with thought and be mindful that adopting a questioning stance is a process and "represents tremendous change" (p. 24). She believes that "implementation of critical literacy is possible, but it is crucial for practitioners to be aware of the consequences, thereby formulating their approaches appropriately" (p. 25).

Discussion

Comber (2001) believes that "what critical literacy is or how it should be constructed are still very much problematic and changing perhaps exactly as it should be as long as teachers are part of the debate" (p. 91). The abstract concept of critical literacy serves to illuminate the many layers and complexities of this practice. In a classroom setting, critical literacy changes the traditional form of instruction, as teachers share knowledge building with their students. Instructional resources such as textbooks, workbooks, tests, and technology are no longer imposed on students; rather they become part of the interrogation process. Examining these resources and their contents allows all members of the classroom to understand how literacy relates to the world. Critical literacy practices help students to understand their role as readers and realize what having access to knowledge means to them as a literate citizen. In my study, I explored how a first year teacher utilized these resources as she taught reading.

Summary

There are no definitive answers to the questions Luke and Freebody (1997b) posed: "What is the nature of reading? What are its social functions and effects? How is it learned? And how is it best taught" (p. 185). As different people coming from different life experiences join

the quest for answers, "one true answer" will never be agreed upon. That does not mean that educators should not strive to develop greater understandings about reading processes, and the roles of text, readers, and the world. Serafini (2003) believes that "in order to make the shift from a modernist perspective to a transactional or critical perspective, teachers must begin to interrogate the theoretical assumptions that support their reading practices" (par. 41). If our students are to become the kinds of readers we want in a democratic society, Serafini (2003) states that reading education in general, needs to go beyond scientific considerations to include social, political, and cultural dimensions. This is because ultimately, as Stevens and Bean (2007) note, "the essence of any definition of literacy is meaning" (p. 18). Meaning does not lie solely in the text; it comes from each individual, their life experiences, society, and the ever changing world.

According to Elkind (1997), America's modernist concept of living in a "melting pot," also implies that people from different and presumed inferior cultures came to America to "be melted down and then poured into a mold" (par. 14) to become a purified American. This perspective disregards many elements that contribute to a person's existence. However, Elkind (1997) believes that in a postmodern world, people from various cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds are celebrated rather than melted down. Postmodernism does not strive for superiority, rather it embraces difference. Schools too need to value and embrace differences in students' academic and social development. The demographic data I presented in Chapter 1 show that students are becoming increasingly diverse in their cultural/racial make-up, while teachers are consistently from White, middle-class backgrounds. Teacher education programs need to address the cultural/racial gap that teachers and students face. Having students from different backgrounds means that there will be different perspectives offered in classroom discussions.

The “one answer” perspective of reading has limitations. Standardized approaches to reading not only devalue teacher insight but they also devalue students and the knowledge they possess.

The teacher in my study confronted cultural/racial differences in her classroom every day. She chose to use books that addressed various social issues for her read alouds. It was her perception of this process that I wanted to explore. Because her students came to school with various experiences and background knowledge, they naturally had different “answers” during their read aloud discussions. How Jennifer responded to their questions and comments became a main topic of discussion during our planning meetings. Jennifer was not seeking “one answer” or “one main idea” during her read alouds. Her theoretical perspective embraced student differences and enabled them have a voice in discussions. She also became a participant in group activities and discussions. In Chapter 4, I will show evidence of how transactional reading theory and critical literacy reading theory became part of Jennifer’s practice. In Chapter 5, I will report direct connections between my findings and my theoretical framework. The next section of my literature review will explore how the dynamics of language, literacy, knowledge, and power are implicated in the classroom.

Critical Literacy: From Theory to Practice

In the next section of my literature review, I will explore how critical literacy transfers from theory to practice. I will discuss four areas that impact critical literacy practice: critical pedagogy, children’s literature, teacher preparation, and what critical literacy looks like in the classroom.

Critical Pedagogy

Macedo (2000) identifies pedagogy as having "Greek roots, meaning 'to lead a child' (from pais: child and ago: to lead). Thus, as the term 'pedagogy' illustrates, education is inherently directive and must always be transformative" (p. 25). The role of critical pedagogy in my study is two-fold. One, my study is based on what Hatch (2002) refers to as a critical/feminist paradigm through which I sought to raise Jennifer's "consciousness of those being oppressed because of historically situated structures tied to race, gender, and class" (p. 17). This occurred through our weekly planning meetings as Jennifer and I discussed her read alouds. We had conversations related to the topics in her books, which were often about complex social issues. Two, as Jennifer reflected on our planning meetings, she in turn had similar conversations with her students, thus providing them with new experiences to raise their consciousness of critical issues. As a teacher, Jennifer's role was to "lead her children" through the stories she read aloud. However, as part of critical literacy, the stories she read were based on critical issues such as race and poverty. Therefore Jennifer raised her students' consciousness through dialogue around books, rather than explicit teaching about critical issues. She utilized critical literacy activities as a way to enact critical pedagogy in her classroom. Because critical pedagogy is based in transformative education, it was an important aspect of my study. The dialogue I had with Jennifer and the dialogue she then had with her students were always two-way conversations that included everyone's voice. Critical pedagogy is based on such interactions with the intent to draw on and create knowledge to help students transform their lives and the world around them.

To better illuminate transformative education, I will provide some insight into Freire's life which has a role in the roots of critical pedagogy. Freire was described by Macedo (2000) as someone who "teaches us and the world – with his hallmark humility – what it means to be an intellectual who fights against the temptation of becoming a populist intellectual" (p. 25). Based on Shaull's (1970/2005) description, Freire's philosophy grew out of his own experiences. He was born in 1921 into a middle-class family in Brazil. As a child in a Third World country, he experienced hunger and fell behind in school because of the listlessness it produced. According to Shaull (1970/2005), this led him to make a vow at and early age "to dedicate his life to the struggle against hunger, so that children would not have to know the agony he was then experiencing" (p. 30). Teaching illiterate adults in Third World countries was his main focus; yet, his methodology and his educational philosophy are applicable to the education of children and adults in the United States today.

Freire (1970/2005) describes the oppressed as yearning for freedom and justice after their humanity has been stolen from them by their oppressors. Rather than strive to become like their oppressors, they need to liberate themselves and their oppressors. To begin this process, transformation is not explained to the oppressed; rather it comes about through dialoguing with the people about their actions. Freire (1970/2005) said that "the pedagogy of the oppressed, which is the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation, has its roots here" (p. 53). In order to develop a critical awareness about the self as not being apart from the world, the oppressed must emerge from oppression and turn upon it. Freire (1970/2005) believes this can be done only be means of the praxis which involves the transformation of consciousness through the process of self-reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.

Giroux (1991) emphasized that “modern pedagogy is organized around books and gaining literacy in reading and writing, centering its notion of education and literacy on the acquisition of skills that are especially applicable to print culture” (p. 62). While conservative educators call for traditional literature (e.g., the great books), liberalists advocate for cultural literacy. The latter prefer “teaching a wide spectrum of cultural knowledge and skills, applied to texts ranging from the great books to classified ads in order to make its recipient a more adequate knower and doer in the contemporary society” (p. 63). Giroux would rather extend both of these views of literacy toward a critical perspective - the discourse of emancipation, possibility, hope, and struggle. He states that critical theory enables students to learn how to appreciate, decode, and interpret images, words, and symbols concerning both how they are constructed and take part in our lives as well as what they communicate in concrete situations. Those images and forms of language become the vehicle for meaning.

Scherr (2005) states that a “critical theory of education needs a theoretical foundation: its possibilities and tasks do not simply result from expectations of politically and economically influential individuals, groups, and organizations” (p. 145). This foundation enables individuals to question social and power structures within their own self-determination and understanding. Scherr (2005) further adds that “a critical theory and praxis of education has the task of contributing to preventing individuals from being reduced to objects of government power required to senselessly comply with social conditions” (p. 148). He also examines the role critical pedagogy plays in a modern society. He sees education as a socially situated praxis that extends beyond the traditional sense of schooling. Knowledge and beliefs of children and adults are influenced by churches, sects, political organizations, and commercial culture. Therefore, education takes place beyond the classroom, providing critical pedagogy through a larger

platform. Its point of contact as Scherr (2005) describes it, is based on the "experiences of individuals, in their discontent with and their suffering caused by the social conditions of living that they are exposed to, and in their fears and unanswered hopes" (p. 148).

A key element of critical pedagogy is Freire's (1970/2005) rejection of what he called the banking concept of education. He describes this concept as filling

> students with the contents of the teacher's narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity. (p. 71)

Within this concept, students approach learning by recording, memorizing, and repeating the teacher's knowledge that was deposited. The students view knowledge as a gift bestowed by those that are more knowledgeable (the teachers). The teacher (depositor) then sees himself as separate from his students. The students' creative power is minimized, and this serves the interests of their oppressors. Macedo (2000) wrote about the risks associated with the banking concept of education. He said that when curiosity is lost in students, they will not be able to transform their lived experiences into knowledge or to use their already acquired knowledge to unveil new knowledge. They will then never be able to fully participate in dialogue as a process of learning and knowing. According to Freire (1970/2005), an education for liberation enables students and teachers to "discover they can educate each other" (p. 72), without losing curiosity.

Based on the philosophy of teachers and students educating each other, Pongratz (2005) describes five tasks of critical pedagogy. First, a critical approach does not accept that dominant culture is inevitable; rather critical pedagogy provides the opportunity to ask questions, reflect, and take action. Second, critical pedagogy is aimed at developing subjectivity. Rather than

seeing knowledge as a one-way transmission, such as Freire's (1970/2005) description of "banking," relations between others enable the co-construction of knowledge. Third, individuals will deal with their own life story, seek meaning in their identity, and critically reflect on their connections to others. Fourth, critical pedagogy considers subjective experiences and life knowledge to be important and includes them as part of understanding the world. And fifth, critical pedagogy enables all to experience dialogue as an opportunity to clarify experiences in order to enable other ways of seeing one's experiences. Pongratz (2005) believes that critical pedagogy empowers people to become actively engaged in their own quest for knowledge.

Discussion

Critical pedagogy centers on Freire's (1970/2005) notion of praxis, which involves the transformation of consciousness through the process of self-reflection and action upon the world. In order to enable students to become change agents, their voices must be included throughout the education process. Rather than teachers imposing knowledge, they can learn from their students. Children come to school with different life experiences and world views which can serve to educate others. The knowledge they possess should not be overlooked in the classroom as students and teachers can learn from each other. This two-way transaction of knowledge takes place between teachers and students and between students and students through conversations. Dialogue is a viable way to introduce new knowledge. However, scaffolding supports that process in that children will rely on their existing knowledge to help them build and understand new knowledge.

In my study, Jennifer's instruction was based on elements of critical pedagogy. Green (2001) believes that "before critical literacy can occur within the classroom, students need the

opportunity to engage in meaningful use of literacy, or in other words, to use literacy in ways that relate to their interests and needs" (p. 12). Green argues that students need to read and write for a range of purposes, with access to a variety of texts, or there will not be a basis for critical conversations about literacy. Students need to talk about and understand the contents of the book before they can interrogate it. Jennifer selected children's books that were based on her students' lives. It was important to her that her student's could make connections to the books she read aloud. She felt they could make meaning from the stories if they connected to them. As a teacher, she reflected on the conversations that took place during the read alouds. She then used her new knowledge about her students to guide her instruction.

The development of Jennifer's critical pedagogy was based on reciprocal relationships that also included my voice as we talked about her lessons and her students' comments. As Jennifer "led her students" through the read alouds, she and I led each other towards deeper understandings of critical pedagogy and critical literacy. To better understand how critical literacy moves from theory to practice, I will now provide insight about one of the tools teachers can use to engage students in having critical conversations: children's literature.

Children's Literature

Children's literature became an important element of my study, especially literature that portrayed under-represented groups. The majority of the conversations that emerged between Jennifer and I revolved around children's books. We talked about the books before and after her read alouds, their availability, their appropriateness, and which questions to pose based on their content. We also had conversations recalling books from Jennifer's pre-service year. Children's books were the main tool Jennifer used to raise her students' consciousness about complex social

issues. Critical pedagogy, as described earlier, is based on Freire's (1970/2005) notion of praxis which involves self-reflection. In my study, children's books served as the foundation of this process. Conversations between Jennifer and I centered on the books and allowed both of us to think out loud as we reflected. Jennifer's students were able to reflect and think aloud as they too discussed the books. Their reflection also extended into their writing. Because the students often had personal connections to the books, writing became an important element in their process of self-reflection. Having critical conversations and reflections in Jennifer's classroom was contingent upon her use of children's books, which will be described in detail in Chapter 4. This section of the literature review provides an overview of the role children's literature plays in teacher education programs and the evaluation and selection of children's books, particularly through a multicultural lens. I have included this section to highlight the importance of and the complexities associated with children's literature.

The Role of Children's Literature in Teacher Education Programs

According to Hoewisch (2000), Pressley (2006), and Hepler and Hickman (1982), books play an important role in children's social and academic development. Future teachers, therefore, need to understand how to use children's books as well as see the benefits of doing so. Pressley (2006) indicates that read alouds help children develop comprehension strategies, expand their vocabularies, and increase their phonemic awareness. Successfully developing these skills leads to increased interest in reading. Being successful while learning to read increases students' motivation, leaving them better prepared to read to learn. Talk around books is particularly beneficial to children. Hepler and Hickman (1982) note that talk helps children remember and it "allows them to work through meanings that might not otherwise be articulated" (p. 281).

According to Pressley (2006) high quality book reading causes increases in children's overall language competence.

In order for them to use children's literature successfully in their classrooms, new teachers need support in knowing how to properly evaluate and select books and how to engage children in text talk. According to Metcalf-Turner and Smith (1999),

> the use of story in teacher education has emerged as an effective strategy to help teachers understand the dimensions of their role in the classroom. This process of reading, listening, questioning, and responding to a story provides a foundation to initiate reflective and critical thinking which, may lead to social action in the classroom. (p. 73)

Reading aloud to pre-service teachers can serve as a model for reading aloud to students, which is the philosophy I embraced as I read children's books to Jennifer's cohort during her pre-service preparation. Cunningham (2005) stated that "teacher read aloud has been shown to be one of the major motivators for children to read" (p. 88). Students often emulate their teachers and in doing so, they are eager to read the books their teachers read. Beyond the read aloud itself, Davis, Brown, Liedel-Rice and Soeder (2005) stated that teacher candidates also "need to become familiar with some of the major issues that students confront in today's society" (p. 177). They need to build their own background knowledge on racism, poverty, gender equity, and religious beliefs, so that they can reflect on their own experiences related to these issues. Teacher educators therefore, need to encourage their teacher candidates to explore literature that reflects our diverse society and help them see the positive impact they can make with their own students.

Unfortunately, Hoewisch (2000) found that children's literature courses in many teacher education programs have been either eliminated or integrated into other methods courses. She believes children's literature courses must include two critical elements:

> One is educational: Children's literature must be seen as a significant educational tool. The other is literary: Children's literature is a valuable, beautiful, and impressive part of literary history and as such is certainly worthy of study and analysis at the university level. (par. 14)

Because these courses are disappearing, teacher educators bare even greater responsibility for such instruction.

Pre-service teachers need exposure to the educational benefits of literature for children, and they also need to be able to evaluate books that contain under-represented groups and diverse perspectives. This would include, according to Hoewish (2000), a "wide range of genres, authors, and illustrators, past and present" (par. 23). She believes that "actual experiences with children's literature and suitable field experiences using literature in education settings are likewise critical for developing pedagogical theory base for instructional decision making" (par. 27). This can include listening to read alouds and small-group discussions, as pre-service teachers share personal responses to the books. Speaking to teacher educators, Hoewish (2000) claims "it is up to us to equip pre-service teachers with the appropriate knowledge and tools to select and share the best children's literature with children" (par. 44). By providing pre-service teachers with appropriate knowledge about children's books, children also gain as they will reach out to such books. Helper and Hickman (1982) posit that "once a teacher emphasizes an aspect of a book, what she has touched echoes through the year" (p. 282). This is why it is so important for pre-service teachers to learn the potential of quality children's literature.

Evaluating and Selecting Children's Literature

Norton (2005) reminds us that "the selection of literature that is of both high literary quality and culturally authentic is a formidable task" (p. 2). To fully evaluate children's literature Kiefer, Hepler, and Hickman (2004) believe, "we must consider the cultural perspective of the writer - her or his personal point of view – in addition to traditional aspects of criticism such as characterization and theme" (p. 109). In order to specifically evaluate literature through a multicultural lens, Kiefer, Hepler, and Hickman (2004) identified the following elements which may help "move readers beyond only a superficial approach to diversity and difference" (p. 110): Diversity and range of representation: A collection of books of any cultural group should present a wide range of representation; Avoidance of stereotyping: The illustrations and content of literature should portray the distinctive yet varied characteristics of particular groups; Language considerations: Stories of minorities should not include terms that can be interpreted as derogatory to particular groups unless essential to the conflict or historical context; and The perspective of the book: The contents of the book should be an authentic representation of that group's experience. Students can be involved in the book selection process when enacting critical literacy in the classroom. They too can become evaluators of text to uncover underlying assumptions.

Fernandez (2006), like Kiefer, Hepler, Hickman (2004) and Norton (2005) believes that selection should be based on high-quality literature. However, she also evaluates appropriateness based on applicability to classroom curriculum. Fernandez (2006) notes that not all published literature contains the story elements necessary for classroom use. Many stories are "good reads," yet they may not be applicable to a specific classroom or grade level use. Evaluation of literature becomes problematic when it includes a criterion based on cultural

authenticity. Fernandez (2006) notes that educators want to be authentic and sure that the factual information is true, but "authenticity is akin to accuracy" (p. 1).

For some educators, authenticity is equated with authorial affiliation. Some may assert that only an author of a particular background has the credibility to write about that culture as a "cultural insider." Fernandez (2006) sees this perspective as problematic. Believing that a cultural insider must be the representative writer implies that cultural beliefs and identities are only acquired through ancestral connections and that those connections enable the writer to have more authentic knowledge than a cultural outsider. Based on this perspective, Fernandez (2005) states that "you or I can never learn enough to become an educated cultural participant of a culture other than our birth culture" (p. 1). Sociologists, contend that culture is learned. It is not innate or part of our physical make up, but is molded through our lived experiences. Therefore, Fernandez (2006) rejects selecting children's literature based on authorship. She states that "critical readers must be allowed to experience all literature and determine for themselves the validity of the stories. By not accepting any literature's authenticity for face value, we are teaching our children to analyze, question, and think" (p. 2). Fernandez's beliefs are aligned with Rosenblatt's (1978) in that what the child brings to the text is as important as the characters and the author. By teaching children to not accept books at face value, they become critically literate.

When evaluating children's literature, it is important to have an understanding of the various perspectives the books take on and what defines a book as being multicultural. Kruse (1992) and her colleagues at the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison "define multicultural literature as books by and about people of color" (p. 1). Based on that definition, they categorize books by the following three features. (1) Inclusive books: These books usually reflect a world full of ordinary

people getting along with each other. Kruse (1992) suggests that White professionals new to multicultural literature find inclusive books easy to use. (2) Books multicultural in content only: These books may represent multiculturalism by portraying the characters as contemporary African American children or incorporating a second language in the dialogue between characters. These books are often created by what some refer to as cultural outsiders whose personal experience is somewhat removed from the ethnic or cultural background of the story. (3) Books multicultural in content by book creators from the same race/ethnic group: These books are created by cultural insiders. They often write from a blend of their experience, family and ancestral traditions, and often include research to support their stories.

Multiple perspectives are included in the creation of children's literature. A teacher should not view them in a hierarchy with one perspective being better than the other. However, in order to help children become critical thinkers, teachers can help children interpret the literature from the perspective of the author, in addition to the content itself and the reader's experience. Diversity represented in literature serves many purposes for young readers. Latinos, Native Americans, along with a wide array of other cultures are represented in children's literature. Regardless if the story mirrors a child's experience or the experience of another, children can develop greater understanding about the world in which they live. Authors of children's books share their voice of experience in many ways. Some may present their story as a cultural insider and others from an outside perspective. However, many children's book authors research the background information for their stories. While engaging children with books, they too can take part in the process of validating the information found in the stories. There are many opportunities to question the author along with one's self. Having conversations based on

children's literature is part of the critical literacy process. These conversations become critical when the text itself as well as the content is interrogated.

A critical literacy curriculum is based on exploring the role of the text, the reader, and the author, as well as issues related to power, language, and literacy. Factors such as the content of the text, who reads the text, and the intended purpose of the text become part of the conversation. In my study, Jennifer selected various children's books with which to engage her students in conversations. The books she selected and the conversations that pursued were related to complex social issues such as race, class, and poverty. Such texts themselves are not deemed critical; rather, it is the conversations that take place around the texts that qualify as critical. Teachers initiate critical conversations through the questions they pose. Such conversations move away from the traditional who, what, why questions, to a deeper level, looking beyond the print on the page. Simpson (1996) and Harste (2000) offer suggestions to help teachers engage in critical conversations around children's literature.

Before a teacher can develop her questions, she must first settle on a book for the read aloud. Traditional texts do not often address complex social issues, making the task of finding the right book even more challenging. In my study, Jennifer often yearned to find texts that mirrored her students' complex lives. She was also consciously trying to find texts that represented her students' race, culture, and gender. Having the right text supported Jennifer's attempts to engage her students in critical conversations. To help with text selection based on a critical literacy framework, Harste (2000) offers the following criteria. He believes in order to have conversations about complex social issues, the books selected for such discussions should meet one or more of the following criteria: They explore differences rather than make them invisible; they enrich our understanding of history and life by giving voice to those traditionally

silenced or marginalized; they show how people can begin to take action on important social issues; they explore dominant systems of meaning that operate in our society to position people and groups of people – helping us question why certain groups are positioned as "others;" and they don't provide "happily ever after" endings for complex social problems. Books that encompass such criteria, lend themselves to critical conversations including text interrogation, challenging the status quo, and questioning dominant forces.

Once the text is selected, the teachers can then think about how to initiate critical conversations. In using children's literature, Simpson (1996) believes that what strategies a teacher employs will depend on the texts he or she chooses, the program, the class, additional resources, and the teacher's own experience. However, multiple strategies can be used at one time. She offers the following suggestions, which correspond with Harste's (2000) criteria, to help teachers develop critical questions during read alouds. She suggests teaching students that characters are not real but are constructed by authors and that stories are not reflections of reality but are selective versions of it. She recommends teaching students that the author positions the reader to respond in particular ways through use of language, point of view, etc., and they can challenge the authors. Simpson (1996) also supports teaching students that an author will leave gaps and the reader can look for what's missing. Lastly, Simpson recommends teaching students that authors write for particular audiences and assume that these audiences have specific cultural knowledge and share certain values.

To engage in critical literacy practices, teachers can refer to Harste's (2000) criteria as they select books for their read alouds. They then can apply Simpson's (1996) strategies to engage students in critical conversations. Books can help teachers and students start and sustain critical conversations related to the role of power, language, and literacy. Simpson's (1996)

purpose for having text conversations with children is to help them become more conscious of how texts work and to become less susceptible to manipulation by what they read and view. She, like many others, views teaching and literacy as non-neutral. However, she notes that not all questions have to be critical – perhaps only few are. The book itself, however, is not what makes a conversation critical; it is what one does with the book that takes it to that level. Serafini (2003) notes that literature can be "used as a vehicle to provide a space for critical conversations, discussions that go beyond the walls of the classroom to include the political, cultural, and historical contexts of the world in which we live" (par. 37). As students begin to make text-to-self connections and engage in critical conversations, they can start to interrogate what it means to be a reader.

Discussion

Children's books have a prominent role in elementary school classrooms. Children develop their language and literacy skills through listening to and engaging with books. They also acquire an understanding about the world through books. Their social and academic development can be supported through text engagement. Teachers, however, have a responsibility to engage children in purposeful text talk. Therefore, they need to be educated on the use of children's literature. Providing teachers with such knowledge should start in their teacher education programs. Modeling read aloud strategies, incorporating such strategies into their field placements, and having discussions about the role of the text, all serve to increase their knowledge about such practices.

Once teachers have exposure to children's books and develop an understanding about read alouds, they need to look beyond the cover page. When employing books that represent

diverse cultures, teachers need to be able to evaluate the available books. They need to look beyond traditional text selection processes. Teachers will need to broaden their knowledge base, examining books with the awareness of possible stereotyping, authorship, the perspective of the book, and accuracy. Knowing how to evaluate books will enable them to find literature to help start and sustain critical conversations.

To incorporate books into critical literacy practices, teachers need to develop questions that initiate critical conversations. These questions should go beyond what is evident in the text and explicitly seek the missing elements and highlight the positioning of the characters. Traditional happy ending stories with white picket fences are not sufficient for engaging in critical literacy practices. To engage in critical literacy, teachers need books that reflect diversity and real life social issues. Mathis (2001) reminds us that being familiar with texts alone will not support student engagement, "teachers need to present texts in meaningful, insightful ways, considering what the author is trying to share about the culture and people therein" (p. 158). Because teachers play such an important role in text engagement, teacher education must be considered. Therefore it will be included in the next section of this literature review.

Teacher Education

Not only educators but researchers are beginning to turn their attention to the crucial question: How should teachers be taught to teach reading? - especially since this area of inquiry has received little attention from the reading research community. According to Anders, Hoffman and Duffy (2000), those involved in teacher education programs find a lack of empirical evidence to guide decisions about program contents, while policy makers on the other hand, are often focusing on the quality of teacher preparation in general. Hoewisch (2000) states

that “preservice teachers develop their guiding set of theoretical principles through experiences in the early stages of their teacher preparation” (par. 7). Stevens and Bean (2007) add that teachers’ identity construction occurs early on in their

> experiences in literacy where language is often stripped of its cultural and political potential. Rather, skills lists, canned commercial programs, and phonics rules predominate to the exclusion of critical literacy and a critique of the institutions of power that disempower teachers’ growth as thoughtful, moral, decisive professionals. (p. 40)

Throughout their preparation and early in their teaching careers, new teachers often have to negotiate multiple and often conflicting expectations from university supervisors, cooperating teachers, students, parents, school administrators, and various others as they are constructing their new professional identities. Stevens and Bean (2007) believe that pre-service teachers may find it difficult to take up a critical literacy stance, especially while trying to implement prescribed curriculum. In addition, in-service teachers tend to operate in isolation during their first years and are often left to their own devices to survive. That being said, the introduction of critical literacy perspectives requires a different pathway in teacher education. Stevens and Bean (2007) state that within the existing political climate, which is most closely associated with modernist thought, there is an obvious effort to silence student and teacher voices with prescribed, pre-canned curriculum packages. However, there are some teacher education programs that do introduce their pre-service teachers to critical literacy practices. Before exploring such programs, I will start with a broader perspective, referring to teacher preparation programs that prepare teachers to teach reading in elementary schools regardless of their contexts.

Reading Teacher Education

In order to respond to the need for inquiry, Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy (2000) present a historical perspective, reporting on the status of the field as they reviewed the research. They identified the following seven thesis statements regarding pre-service teacher education in reading: (1) preservice teacher education has not been a high priority within the reading research community; (2) there has been an increase in teacher education research in the most recent decade; (3) in recent years, diverse research methodologies have been used; (4) we have no coherent, comprehensive data base, or reference point, for preservice teacher education programs; (5) we have continued to struggle with conceptions of teacher knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and habits- how they are formed, how they are affected by programs, and how they impact development over time; (6) we can make few claims from our current research base on what is effective in reading teacher education at the preservice level; and (7) teacher education programs have become more complex, and the labels we use have become inadequate to describe practice. Preservice teacher education represents "less than 1% of the total studies conducted in reading over the past 30 years" (p. 724). With figures so small, Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy (2000) concluded "we have much to say, but few of our claims stand on solid research base rather as practice informed by practice" (p. 727).

Austin and Morrison (1961) conducted *The Torch Lighters* study. Hoffman et al. (2005) declared this study to be the first systematic documentation offered in the United States of pre-service teacher preparation in reading. The following is based on Keppel's (1961) summarization of the findings from the report. Austin and Morrison's (1961) data revealed that only one fourth of the colleges and universities primarily engaged in teacher training indicated that they required formal application to the department of education. Forty percent of the 74 representative

institutions believed that the caliber of students preparing to teach in elementary schools is lower than that of students in secondary education and other academic fields. The data also revealed variation in the amount of time given to teacher preparation in the area of reading. While almost all of the colleges required their elementary education students to enroll in basic reading instruction, only one-half of them included it as a part of a course in language arts. Among the latter group, Keppel (1961) noted, only 60 percent devote between four-and-a-half and eleven-and-a-quarter hours to it; 30 percent give it less time" (p. xiii). This was attributed to the fact that only eleven states required coursework in that subject for certification.

The Torch Lighters study also revealed different opinions regarding objectives for reading instruction. Intermediate-grade reading skills, diagnosis and treatment of reading disabilities, and the teaching of critical reading skills were all cited as being an objective if instructors had more time. The instructors felt they were committed to the "eclectic" or multivaried approach in teaching word analysis skills and opposed excessive emphasis on phonics approaches for word identification. The biggest problem noted by those in the study was the ability of professors to asses if what they taught to their students was transferred from theory to practice. This problem can be attributed to the separation of the reading methods course from the practicum experience. Each phase involved different professors, thus leaving little follow-through on assessing the teachers' implementation of the reading methods once in the field. The major influence on the students' approach to reading instruction was found to be the student teaching experience itself. This signified the importance of the relationships with the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher. In Keppel's (1961) conclusion of Austin and Morrison's findings, one problem that continues to exist is the mismatch between what pre-service teachers

learn in their teacher education program and the reading instruction practices being implemented in their field placement sites.

Morrison and Austin (1977) later conducted *The Torch Lighters Revisited* study "to determine the extent to which their recommendations have been adopted or modified and to determine what additional changes have taken place in teacher preparatory programs" (p. vii). *The Torch Lighters Revisited* returned to the same population to follow-up in progress as well as to review the 22 recommendations they suggested fifteen years earlier. Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy (2000) reported that "14 of the recommendations were in effect, 2 recommendations were reported as somewhat implemented" (p. 723), and several other areas were found to have made little progress since the initial study. Hoffman et al. (2005), stated that Morrison and Austin (1977) also "reported improvements in teacher preparation related to program content and context." Austin and Morrison's (1961) original study was one of the first of its kind in the U.S. This study led to great insight about teacher preparation specifically related to reading education. Revisiting the study highlighted the strides that were made since 1961. However, *The Torch Lighter Revisited* also illuminated the fact that the field still had room to grow.

Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester and Ro (2000) replicated Austin and Morrison's original study. They surveyed a national sample of elementary classroom teachers, building administrators, and district administrators. They found the following similarities between reading instruction in the 1960s and today: Teachers of today and yesterday both (a) work with self-contained, heterogeneously assigned classes; (b) dedicate significant time for reading instruction; (c) provide explicit instruction in phonic analysis; (d) are not overly satisfied with their pre-service training in reading instruction; (e) administer mandated standardized tests; and (f) report accommodating struggling or underachieving readers as their greatest challenge. Important

differences were found as well. They reported that teachers today have more professional training than peers of the past, and they adopt a balanced approach, in contrast to a skills-based approach of the past. Whole-class instruction replaced the three-group reading plan, and programs using both basals and trade books are the norm now compared to the exclusive reliance on basals in the 1960s.

The International Reading Association (IRA) convened the National Commission on Excellence in Elementary Teacher Preparation for Reading Instruction (Hoffman et al., 2005) and found that the average number of semester course hours in reading was greater than six (i.e., two + courses). Despite recent trends toward 5-year and fifth-year programs, 84% of the respondents said their programs had a 4-year baccalaureate program. Undergraduate reading specializations were available to over 40% of the programs, with an average of 16+ semester hours required in these programs. After reviewing the descriptions of course textbooks and course topics, the Commission found that a comprehensive and balanced approach to teaching reading was represented in most programs. They also found that extensive field experiences in teaching reading, prior to student teaching, were commonplace. The vast majority of the teaching faculty in these programs had classroom experience in teaching as well as advanced degrees in reading. Learning to teach diverse learners was identified as a major focus in many programs. Lastly, over 85% of the respondents rated their programs as "very good" or "outstanding." Based on the results of this study, the Commission concluded that "teachers who are prepared in quality reading teacher education programs are more successful and confident than other beginning teachers in making the transition into the teaching profession" (The International Reading Association, 2003, p. 7).

Flint, Leland, Patterson, Hoffman, Sailors, Mast, and Assaf (2001) set out to contribute to the International Reading Association's National Commission on Excellence in Elementary Teacher Preparation for Reading Instruction (The International Reading Association, 2003). They specifically coordinated one of the smaller commissioned studies, the Beginning Teacher Study, which focused on "uncovering the influence and relationship between preparation programs, including reading methods courses and fieldwork, and first-year teachers' decision-making practices regarding reading instruction and pedagogy" (p. 100). While there were eight sites selected for the study, their report presented the findings from two of them: Indiana University (IU) and the University of Texas– Austin (UT). In comparing the two sites, there were some similarities reflected in the data across the graduates. Graduates of all the programs (general education and reading specialization) at both universities were concerned with developing relationships with the school community, encompassing mentors and administration. And, all of the graduates also had positive regard for their teacher preparation programs. However, Flint et. al. (2001) also found similar difficulties across the sites. Compared to general education candidates, the reading specialization candidates at both schools had a better understanding of how to apply strategies and principles of learning to support their students. They also were more involved in the community; they more frequently collaborated and presented at their schools and conferences. The findings from this report suggest that the quality of preparation that exist and the shape of these programs are complex. However, the findings clearly show the benefits of preparing future elementary teachers through a program that specifically emphasizes reading.

Broemmel, Meller, and Allington (2008) conducted a thorough investigation of peer-reviewed professional research literature in an attempt to find out what high-quality literacy

preparation designed specifically for urban teachers looked like. They found that "most of the urban teacher education programs provided limited, or in some cases no information, on how preparation for literacy teaching was addressed" (p. 1). The authors stated that although these urban preparation models have developed some consistency in their frameworks, often structuring programs around long-term goals or principles of social justice and multiculturalism, most of them did not reflect the sorts of preparation for the teaching of reading noted in the IRA study of excellence in reading teacher preparation (The International Reading Association, 2003). "In fact, of the programs that identified specific literacy courses, most seemed only to enroll in the same minimum number of reading methods courses, and usually the same reading methods courses, as students in traditional teacher education programs" (p. 1). However, one program did stand out among the others. *Center X*, the teacher preparation program at the University of California, Los Angeles was designed to promote social justice for urban schools. In this program, all of the students draw on urban youth literacies across the academic content areas.

This section of my review examined multiple perspectives in reading teacher education. It was found that improvements in teacher preperation have been made yet there is still room for growth. The mentioned studies indicate that having a strong emphasis on reading in teacher education programs clearly benefits new teachers. The next section of my review of the literature will highlight teacher education programs that specifically strive to develop critical perspectives in their students.

Critical Perspectives in Teacher Education

Leland et. al. (2001) suggest that "how teacher educators design their programs can make a big difference in whether or not prospective teachers attain a critical perspective" (p. 382). Developing critical perspectives in teacher education will be the focus of this portion of my literature review. Because they have relevance to supporting the development of critical educators, I will include perspectives from those who teach in-service teachers as well. Curriculums vary from program to program. Therefore, I will provide information about curricular decisions based on developing critical perspectives in teachers. This review will include perceptions of teacher education, curricular components, and student outcomes of the various programs.

Hatch (2006) reported the first stages of a longitudinal study focusing on the "perceptions of pre-service teachers who have chosen to study in a teacher education program designed specifically to prepare them to work in urban elementary schools" (p. 4). One of the 12 pre-service teachers in Hatch's (2006) study also happens to be the participant in my study, although I did not use or reference Hatch's data in my own research. Findings from Hatch's (2006) study revealed that a central factor in deciding to become an urban teacher related to having a desire to have a positive influence. This desire was based on two dimensions: they wanted to have a positive influence on the life chances of urban children and they wanted to have a positive impact on the direction of society. Hatch (2006) found that "many of the participants expressed a commitment to working in urban settings that rose to the level of acting on a moral imperative" (p. 6). Data also revealed that they were attracted to the challenge, they perceived urban schools to be difficult places to work, and they welcomed the challenge of overcoming those difficulties. Many chose an urban teacher preparation program because they wanted to teach in settings with

which they were familiar, and they were attracted to the positives associated with teaching in urban schools/communities.

Stevens and Bean (2007) studied a program that supports in-service teachers' development of critical literacy perspectives. One of the professors they interviewed about the program reported that she "infuses her classes with theories and direct experiences that treat teachers as inquirers" (p. 44). When asked about how she found opportunities to include critical literacy into her teaching, she stated:

> We do key studies on children to understand how children are learning to read and write. We visit schools. I take my classes to a rural school that's north of here in an economically depressed area so we can talk about what are their understandings of poverty – what are the situations for this particular school and what are the children facing. We'll look at text-books, we'll look at basal programs, we'll get all of those things so they understand what they are. It goes back to that idea – understanding the context. This is the context in American schools today. Now what is it that we do about it? (p. 44)

Stevens and Bean (2007) believe that taking a critical stance means recognizing that curriculum and instruction are connected to power and politics. They argue for "a wide-angle lens to recognize the historical and political origins" (p. 45) of any literacy curriculum. Thus, in considering curriculum reform or literacy intervention, they suggest asking the following critical questions: "Whose interests are being served by this curriculum?" "Who is not represented?" "How will this curriculum serve students as future learners?" "Are students active or passive

recipients of this curriculum?" "What are the historical origins of this curriculum?" and "What political stances are served or ignored in this curriculum?" (p. 45).

Leland, Harste, Jackson, and Youssef (2001) described phase 2 of a study conducted with 2 cohorts of pre-service teachers. They reported that their general approach with Cohort 1 was to discuss topics (like power and equity) in the context of normal conversations, but not to introduce these topics as part of curriculum. With Cohort 2, however, they explicitly discussed critical issues in the context of schooling. They found that the students from the later group made more attempts to discuss critical issues. Their data suggest that there was a difference between the amount and type of critical journal entries made by the groups, with instructional entries dominating in Cohort 1 (64%) and entries related to either instruction or the culture of schooling in Cohort 2 (45% and 48%). They found "an increase across the groups in the overall number of critical entries, with students in the second group becoming increasingly aware and critical of the invisible forces that operate on meaning making in schools" (p. 389). Overall, the two groups were concerned with different issues. Cohort 2 showed more instances of critical thinking than Cohort 1. Those instances were also related to instruction and /or the culture of schooling rather than larger social issues. These differences led Leland et. al. (2001) to three hypotheses about critical perspective development in their students: (1) Students learn what we teach; (2) The inquiry model of curriculum does not take us far enough without a critical perspective; and (3) Building a political consciousness takes time.

Leland and Harste (2005) later reported on another aspect about their program. This report was based on three different cohorts of students over a 6 year period. Their candidates came into their program expecting to do their fieldwork in communities similar to where they came from, that is, not in urban settings. They saw the "program's urban focus as an obstacle to

their career goals" (p. 61). Patterns across all three groups showed there was a willingness to accept the status quo. The pre-service teachers would make comments such as "that's just the way things are" (p. 62). They either did not notice a lack of power and societal inequalities, or they blamed children and their families for the problems they faced. In the beginning of the program, Leland and Harste's (2005) students rarely felt the need to interrogate their own assumptions related to poor people and did not wish to spend time discussing poverty or racism, often stating they were not prejudiced and intended to treat all children the same way. As reported in the previous study, Leland and Harste (2005) introduced their pre-service teachers to critical literacy picture book text sets. The pre-service teachers said these topics were too hard to talk about and initially reacted negatively to using them with children. However, after several weeks of exposure to this type of literature, the candidates were drawn in and began questioning what was fair and just, thus addressing the issue of power relationships. Several months after graduation, many of the pre-service teachers said they were either already under contract or attempting placement in the same urban district utilized by the teacher education program: "Of the 29 students that were actively seeking teaching positions, 14 ended up with jobs in that same urban district" (p. 67). Leland and Harste (2005) determined that pre-service teachers' critical perspectives can be conceptualized as having three dimensions: (1) understanding how the systems of meaning and power put people in specific positions; (2) willingness to recognize one's own complicity in maintaining inequitable power systems and relationships; and (3) having a commitment to social action. Based on the data, it was not clear whether they occur in a developmental sequence. Leland and Harste (2005) concluded that "the ability to be self-reflective is often one of the most difficult aspects of critical literacy for people to attain" (p. 68).

Lalik and Potts (2001) wanted to know whether themes of social justice and societal transformation were evident in literacy teacher educators' and literacy teachers' descriptions of their work; and if they were, did the participants feel able or prepared to use these themes in their teaching? All of these educators were part of a program that was based on social reconstruction. While their approaches varied, literacy teacher educators said that social justice and societal transformation were important to their work. They saw literacy as being connected to larger social issues. They felt that having a diverse student population made doing their work richer as part of the dialogic process. They saw their perspectives as developmental, tracing those roots back to their own experiences earlier in life. Lalik and Potts (2001) found that "the practicing literacy teachers constructed themselves as child-centered and counter-culture centered literacy teachers" (p. 133). They did not explicitly use the terms social justice or societal transformation, however, Lalik and Potts (2001) were able to assertain that such a commitment was evident. The teachers felt that equity was important for their students in assessment and curriculum areas. The teachers also felt that their teacher preparation program gave them a strong foundation to develop their personal and professional beliefs. Lalik and Potts (2001) believe, based on the study, that a framework for social reconstruction in teacher education remains viable, at least in the program they studied.

Lazar (2001) worked with pre-service teachers learning about children, caregivers, and classrooms within an urban African-American community. Her field-based literacy course explicitly addressed "White identity development, sociocultural explanations of literacy achievement, and culturally conscious literacy teaching" (p. 369). Lazar (2001) found that all pre-service teachers recognized their own privileged status; however, variations in identity growth existed. All interns recognized the negative factors of urban schooling; however, only

some interns saw themselves able to confront the challenges of teaching. All interns applied some culturally responsive principles and practices; however, interns varied in their ways of applying these principles to literacy teaching. Prior experiences with diversity were common to seven out of the eight interns whose interest in urban teaching increased. Five of these eight interns experienced diversity at the university through a previous education course involving tutoring Latino children in children's homes and studying diversity issues. Lazar (2001) also found that many of the pre-service teachers' field-based inquires were based on issues of diversity.

Barnes (2006) reported about a program based on preparing pre-service teachers to instruct culturally and linguistically diverse students. She wanted to know how pre-service teachers in her study teach in a culturally responsive manner. The fieldwork objective was to have pre-service teachers utilize the three dimensions of the culturally responsive teaching (CRT) framework while teaching reading to elementary students. Barnes (2006) found that at all times, both the instructors and pre-service teachers were frustrated. Most of the pre-service teachers had field experiences in similar settings to their own schooling: private, parochial, or rural public schools. The pre-service teachers "quietly" expressed their desire to gain knowledge and skills without dealing with diversity issues. The pre-service teachers also had difficulty being flexible, which was the instructor's explicit teaching style. However, data also showed the pre-service teachers learned that their views of the world are not the only views; they learned to use CRT approaches in their content areas; they began to understand the influence of social and cultural influences on their students; they learned to use various approaches to support academic

and social achievement of their students; and they learned how their role in the educational system can have positive or negative impacts on student learning.

Across the United States, there are many teacher education programs that incorporate critical perspectives. After being exposed to such perspectives in teacher education, many pre-service teachers welcomed the challenge of teaching in urban schools and became more articulate about social issues. Some programs reported that their pre-service teachers were working or seeking positions in urban settings upon graduation.

Discussion

Looking back over 40 years to *The Torch Lighters* report by Austin and Morrison (1961), Keppel (1961) recognized that an achievement gap existed between the "haves" and the "have-nots." Walsh, Glaser, and Wilcox (2006) claim that the current failure rate of 20 to 30 percent could be reduced to the range of 2 to 10 percent by applying the findings from the NCTQ (2006) report to teacher education programs. Leland et al. (2001) state that

> because how teachers define literacy makes a big difference in the kinds of literate behaviors they value, a critical definition of literacy raises the ante in terms of what we teach undergraduate students during their stay in our teacher education programs. (p. 392)

I have reviewed findings from large-scale national studies to small independent site studies. The common theme among all of them is clear: elementary school teachers, regardless of what context they are going to be teaching in when they enter the profession, need to have a strong foundation in reading instruction. This foundation will support them in developing a strong belief system and philosophy of literacy education. Teachers prepared with a deep understanding of

reading instruction seem to take on leadership roles, collaborate with their peers and feel safe to take risks that support their students' achievement.

Many of the studies acknowledge that improving teacher preparation in general is a complex task. There is concern for assessing teachers' knowledge, both during their teacher preparation and once they are in the classroom as full-time teachers. The International Reading Association (IRA) (2003) has taken on that challenge and examined the relationship between teacher preparation programs and teachers' experience as they transition into their own classrooms. Not only did they examine the teachers' perspectives about their professional identity, but IRA (2003) also included student data to see if what the teachers know and believe supports student achievement. It was clear once again that the more reading teacher preparation teachers had, the more effective they were in the classroom.

The findings in these studies also indicate that students' transition into programs designed to help them develop critical perspectives is not as challenging if they start with less resistance and choose to be in such programs. The end result however, is that with a strong network of teacher educators aware of the challenge and complexities of these programs, students may choose to teach in contexts with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

I also found in my review of the literature that the field distinguishes instruction between urban and non-urban contexts. In my opinion, students in urban schools are the ones who need the best reading instruction. Many students in urban schools tend to be the "have-nots" and wind up with teachers that "know-not-enough" to change that. As Broemmel, Meller, and Allington (2008) stated, our teachers need to have an understanding of both cultural and linguistic diversity. Our teacher education programs need to take both factors into consideration. Both the "haves" and the "have-nots" need to acquire a strong literacy foundation to be better prepared for

what lies in their future. All teachers need to know how to teach children to read, how to assess them, and how to intervene when they are struggling. Teachers, along with their students, also need to develop an understanding about the role of language, power, and knowledge in literacy development. Keppel's (1961) statement almost 50 years ago holds true today: "Whether Johnny learns to read is no longer a matter of concern only to him, to his teacher, and to his parents" (p.xi). I believe it should be everyone's concern and that all children deserve to be taught by competent and socially conscious teachers. I will now share some examples of teachers and researchers together utilizing socially conscious practices.

Critical Literacy in Practice

My goal now is to present what critical literacy looks like in the classroom and how researchers co-construct this process with teachers. Critical literacy practices are the result of educating teachers about critical pedagogy and taking advantage of children's literature, essentially taking critical literacy from theory to practice. In my review of the literature, I found various examples of critical literacy classroom implementation. To explore the breadth of critical literacy, I will start with some examples from an international perspective. Knobel (2007) points out that in Australia "during the mid – to late 1990's, critical literacy gained momentum and took on the characteristics of an education movement" (p. viii). Luke (2000) said "the practices and debates over what might count as critical literacies and multiliteracies have been well underway there for over a decade"(p. 450). This movement had influenced various levels of policy from local to state levels particularly in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and England. After presenting international practices, I will provide examples of implementation in the United States.

Comber (2001) worked with elementary school teachers to explore their text use with children. In doing so, she considered the following questions about classroom cultures of critical literacy: "What kinds of conversations will children be having about texts?" "Whose voices will be heard in these classrooms?" "What kinds of questions will teachers be asking?" "What kids of tasks will teachers be setting?" and "What kinds of knowledge and representations of reality in texts will be contested?" I will share an example of one of the teachers she worked with who is from a suburban disadvantaged school in South Australia.

The teacher in Comber's (2001) study, Ms. O'Brien, constructed literacy events with her primary grade level students, while infusing her own understandings of critical literacy. She problematised the texts both her children read and those she read aloud to the class. "Instead of asking children what they think of a story or which characters are their favorites or what they like best, O'Brien encourages the children to consider the text as a crafted piece on which authors make decisions to represent realities in certain ways" (p. 93). She asked various questions over several months such as: "What do writers say about girls, boys, mothers and fathers in the books you read?" "What do adults think that children like to read about?" "If you knew about families only from reading this book what would you know about what mothers do?" and "What would you know about what fathers do?" Ms. O'Brien also had her students complete a range of tasks to show their understanding of the writer's constructions of characters based on the book *Counting on Frank* (Clement, 1990), such as: "Draw a witch like the one in this story." "Draw a different witch." "Draw the mean characters in this story." "Draw different mean characters." "Draw a different Mrs. Fox helping to save her family." "Use speech bubbles and labels to show what she could say and do to save her family." Ms. O'Brien provides us with insight that even in classrooms with young children, teachers can create space for children to

interrogate the worlds of books. In her classroom, "children became aware that texts are socially constructed artifacts and vehicles for different kinds of reality presentations" (p. 95).

Kempe (2001) sought to investigate the ways in which primary school students become aware of text contradictions as they learned to become critical readers. In a primary classroom in Australia, both Kempe and the classroom teacher developed a unit around gender in hopes that the students would begin to recognize the relationship between gender and power. The objectives of the unit were that the students would begin to develop the ability to: identify the values inherent in texts and readings, and whose interests these values serve; analyze different readings to examine the issues in the contradictions between readings; challenge taken-for-granted or dominant readings; examine how the selective use of language and the structured silences work to position the reader to accept the underlying ideology of the text; expose the gaps and silences of readings, their own and others; and construct socially critical readings of their texts and their culture.

In the unit, texts were selected so that they could be considered in relation to each other, referencing both conventional and unconventional texts from various genres and time periods. One of the activities they employed was based around magazines: "The intention was to focus on the language and visual images used to portray women and men in different kinds of magazines" (p. 45). Students cut out pictures, words, and phrases and placed them on posters and then were asked to consider why women and men were portrayed in particular ways. One child suggested, "*That's just the way things are. That's how women are*." The children were then asked: "What view of women/men does this particular magazine promote?" "How is this different?" and "Do you agree/disagree with the images presented? Why/Why not?" At the end of this component of the lesson, some of the children began to analyze the magazines critically, stating for example:

> *"Magazines like Dolly influence girls to think they should be pretty and beautiful and delicate because they want you to buy things."*
>
> *"Society expects women to be thin. You might buy their magazines if you think they're going to tell you how to be thin."*
>
> *"Anyone should be able to be a builder. It's mainly the society that gives the image that only men should be builders. It's not easy to be different from what society expects."* (p.45)

After wrapping up the complete unit, Kempe (2001) concluded that "comments such as these represent the beginnings of an awareness between language, ideaology, and power" (p. 46). She also said that "Students who are aware that there are choices to be made, that there is no one natural or common sense way of reading their texts and their world, will have more textual and cultural power than would otherwise be the case" (p. 56).

In another Australian classroom, Simpson's (1996) purpose was to help children become conscious of texts and the manipulation that can come from reading them. As a researcher, she worked with Willson, a teacher she had collaborated with in the past. Together, they decided that Freebody and Luke's (1990) "four roles of the reader" was a good model to conceptualize the way children read. This model identified the following four roles: code breaker, text participant, text user, and text analyst. They decided to work with picture books because illustrations allow students to step back and have discussions beyond the text, the text is relatively short, and they felt that children's enjoyment would not be compromised.

Simpson (1996) and Willson selected books they determined to be sophisticated, thought provoking, and entertaining. For one of the books, *Piggybook* (Browne, 1987), they asked students to write responses to the following questions: "Where do you think the author might have got the ideas for the book?" "If you lived in Africa, of China, or India, apart from the look of the people, would the idea of the story still work? That is to say, do you think families are like

this in other countries?" "What are the various ways the author has used our understanding and associations for the word *pig*?" And "Why has he chosen to turn the father and boys into pigs? Why not, for example, gorillas? Is this fair to pigs?" (p. 122). The students' responses were short, monosyllabic, and did not appear to reflect the issues the adults were trying to raise. Simpson and Willson felt that their process was not working. They changed their focus and had students generate their own questions in pairs. They came up with questions such as: "Why does the mum do all the housework?" "Why won't they clean up the mess?" and "Why do they have to go to an important school if they are such pigs?" Based on the student generated questions, the researcher and teacher identified four general categories: literal, genuine, rote, and thoughtful.

Simpson and Willson found that this process enabled the students to develop understandings through responses, not questions, and children provoked each other to stimulate the conversations. Simpson (1996) and Willson found two factors that produced these responses. One, the children constructed these questions and two, they could apply them to an already existing literature circle program. The teacher's role also changed as she began to support students and help them clarify rather than pose questions in their literature circles. They found through this process that (1) educators must help children ask questions; and (2) if teachers don't care about children's answers, why ask in the first place.

I will now shift my focus and share examples from elementary schools across the United States as teachers and researchers move from theory to practice implementing critical literacy approaches. Paugh, Carey, King-Jackson, and Russell (2007) collaborated in a second grade classroom in an urban district that was feeling the pressures of mandated school reform based on NCLB. Because of high-stakes pressures, the teachers, Valerie and Shelley, were maintaining an often conflicting dual focus: One, they had ongoing goals to help their students develop as

critical and social participants of literacy, and Two, they needed to relate their goals and practices to the "official curriculum" based on local and state policies. The teachers were able to develop a project supporting their interest in practices based on working with diverse learners and developing socially just literacy instruction. Together, Valerie and Shelley developed and co-taught "Choice Time that invited student ownership, innovation, and agency within the official district-mandated literacy block" (p. 33). The teachers, along with the researchers, explored the curriculum, including the basal textbook series, a social curriculum, the district reading plan, and the state-mandated School Improvement Plan. These components were questioned and used as part of their lesson planning when appropriate.

Not only was critical literacy being implemented with the students in the Paugh et. al. (2007) study, but the teachers and researchers were exploring their own understanding of how power and politics impacts literacy development. Rather than view gaps in the curriculum as negative aspects, they chose to refer to them as "opportunities to see differently" (p. 34). During Choice Time, students engaged in various activities such as "Vocabulary Wardrobe," in that they would use sentence strips to write words, look up their meanings, measure a particular body part to fit the "wardrobe," and then wear their words. This activity started with one student, which led to a domino effect of others joining in to make their own accessories such as bracelets and hats. The teachers and researchers in the study all felt that this Choice Time project "encouraged a remixing of social and academic resources from teachers and students as they negotiated what was important within the complex demands of a high-stakes literacy reform environment" (p. 41). The teachers used the classroom texts to help their students understand the power of creating and using literacy to understand their world.

Researchers Van Sluys, Lewison, and Flint (2006) collaborated with elementary classroom teachers from a Teacher in Action group to enact critical literacy. Just as Paugh, Carey, King-Jackson, and Russell (2007) did, they too applied their framework not only to teaching but to their research practices as well. They used a four dimension framework they created to clarify their understandings of critical literacy. This framework was based on the following: disrupting the commonplace; considering multiple viewpoints; focusing on sociopolitical; and taking action. They used three different methods to analyze each data set from the twelve classrooms involved in the study. The methods they used were grounded theory, existing critical literacy frameworks, and critical discourse analysis. The researchers felt that using multiple methods of analysis enabled them to draw on each others' strengths in certain areas of analysis and to present teachers with new ways to analyze their classroom practices.

An example of a critical literacy practice that took place in one of the classrooms was based on an approach they called "invitations." In this case, after hearing students discussing hair and the different types of hair associated with people of different races and cultures, the teacher, Ruth, asked "Would you like an invitation to think more about this?" (p. 203). The students are then given a folder that contained texts and artifacts related to the topic of hair, such as a children's book about hair and cultural identity, a photo of a Philippino girl in a hair salon, and other student-created items. The intent of this practice was to allow students to engage in critical practices independently. The folder also had questions to consider, such as "Why is it like that?" "Why do people think this way?" and "Can we help?" The transcripts revealed the girls sharing their own stories about their hair and think alouds about hair in general.

The analytic procedures of Van Sluys, Lewison, and Flint's (2006) study were based on three phases: (1) a preliminary analysis using one of the analytic tools mentioned earlier; (2)

examining each other's analytic processes; and (3) compiling everyone's findings to create a new data set. Using the different lenses, they were able to see different aspects of critical literacy. Some of their findings led to understandings based on each analytic tool. Grounded theory led them to focus on personal resources, such as the ways the girls took-up or ignored materials. They focused on the social aspects through critical literacy frameworks analysis and learned about the social practices of the girls and the frequency of their practices. Critical issues were focused on through critical discourse analysis in discovering the nature of power relationships enacted by the girls. Overall, the researchers found that the girls attempted to understand and critique dominance of European notions of style in non-European settings, and they interrogated how hair is a representation or marker of cultural identity.

In looking through a lens to analyze themselves as researchers, Van Sluys, Lewison, and Flint (2006) discovered the following. Based on grounded theory they were drawn to think about encouraging teachers to rethink invitations by including more disruptive texts. Critical literacy frameworks analysis led them to explore alternate way to introduce new social practices into the classroom. Finally, critical discourse analysis challenged them to attend more closely to student conversations and explore them more explicitly within the classroom curriculum. This process enabled the researchers to disrupt the commonplace and interrogate and unpack their own assumptions. Not only were the students interrogating meaning, but so too were their teachers and the researchers, thus capturing the essence of critical literacy.

In a junior kindergarten class, Vasquez (2001) "engaged in a teacher research study to explore how different literacies are constructed through different practices, looking specifically at what happens when critical literacy is used as a theoretical tool to frame curriculum" (p. 1). The teacher in this case created an audit trail, posting artifacts of student learning such as

photographs and student artwork on the walls, and these remained in place over a long period of time for continual revisiting by teachers, parents and students.

Vasquez (2001) began by reading the story *Quick as a Cricket* (Wood, 1982). This predictable text allowed students to engage in a shared reading. The children began to raise issues about the illustration of an amphibian which led to discussions of the rainforest. They talked about extinction and the issues of clearing rainforests for various reasons, including urban expansion. This led the class to think about ways to take action to "save rainforests and endangered animals, which marked the beginning of a curriculum about social justice, equity, and environmental issues that lasted throughout the school year" (p. 5). The class engaged in other issues throughout the year, including gender and age discrimination and took action within their own school seeking inclusion of junior kindergarteners in more school activities. The teacher created spaces for these children to "question, contest, and interrogate social texts throughout the school day in class meetings, in small-group conversations, and in different areas of the classroom" (p. 7).

Chafel and Neitzel (2007) asked 8-year old children to listen to the picture book story *Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 1991) then had them respond by drawing and discussing the story. These children were in public school classrooms in urban and rural settings in the Midwestern United States. The illustrations in the story were not shared with the children during the read aloud, allowing the children could draw their own original pictures related to the story. Chafel and Neitzel later asked the children individually about their pictures and posed questions about poverty to gain understanding from the children's perspective. They found that "on the drawing task children of higher socioeconomic status were more likely than those of lower socioeconomic status to convey the positive look of poverty and to exhibit a lack of

awareness of the poor" (p. 76). On the verbal task, Black and biracial children were more likely than White children to communicate the negative look of poverty and an awareness of people living in poverty. These teacher researchers view this process as teachers helping children explore their understandings to develop their own thought and communication skills.

Another teacher, Jane, used children's books that dealt with discrimination and hatred in her multiage K-2 classroom (Chafel, Flint, Hammel, & Pomeroy, 2007). Jane described the experience she had reading *Teammates* (Golenbock, 1992). Her students began asking questions such as "Why would the players be mean to Jackie?" "What did he do to them?" "and "Why do people get stuck on somebody's color as a reason to be a friend?" (p. 76). The books shared by the teacher continually led them to critically question more issues throughout the year.

Based on these two studies, Chafel and Neitzel (2007) and their colleagues suggest creating a classroom library to include books addressing issues such as poverty, as well as what the children are interested in and curious about. They suggest engaging children in small groups or pairs to read, discuss, and share thinking. They believe teachers should allow students to respond to texts and conversations by representing images, or making text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-other connections. Lastly, they suggest posing questions such as "Who is telling the story?" "What do you think that person wants us to think?" Or "Why do you think the character is poor?" (Chafel, Flint, Hammel, & Pomeroy, 2007). These are examples from the literature of teachers and researchers raising children's awareness of language and the culture of power.

Discussion

Researchers Comber (2001), Kempe (2001), and Simpson (1996) all collaborated with elementary school teachers in Australia. Describing their work served to provide an international

perspective of critical literacy classroom practices. These researchers worked with classroom teachers to help children become conscious of texts through the questions teachers posed and activities they implemented. The teachers in these classrooms asked critical questions and used rich literature and magazines. They had their students share their thoughts as they drew, made collages, and had various discussions. In the United States, researchers Paugh, Carey, King-Jackson, and Russell (2007), Van Sluys, Lewison, and Flint (2006), Vasquez (2001), and Chafel and Neitzel (2007) also collaborated with elementary school teachers to implement critical literacy practices. They too engaged children in similar activities to develop critical perspectives related to reading and the role of readers in relationship to the world. They looked at issues related to gender, poverty, class, and culture as they led their students to think about taking action.

Both the researchers in Australia and those in the United States became a part of the critical literacy process, just as I did in my study. This process took the form of critical pedagogy, as the teachers and researchers co-constructed knowledge about critical literacy and examined their own practices as well as their curriculum. On a micro level, the researchers helped teachers develop critical questions and activities to raise their students' consciousness. On a macro level, the researchers helped teachers look at their school curriculum, which at times extended to district and state levels. The researchers also included the teachers in the research process itself. Both the researchers and teachers looked at data that included transcripts from their own conversations as well as those from the students. As the researchers included the teachers in transcript reviews, they sought to raise the teachers' consciousness about issues related to power, language, and literacy. This consciousness raising technique could then serve the same purpose in the teachers' instructional practices with their students. In the United States

and beyond, researchers and teachers are engaging in similar critical literacy practices. They all embrace the perspective of engaging in give-and-take transmission of knowledge as the students, teachers, and researchers all explored critical literacy practices.

Summary

Critical pedagogy provides the framework that takes critical literacy from theory to practice. Having students and teachers share in the creation of new knowledge is at the core of this philosophy. A transformative education requires individuals to reflect before taking action. Critical children's literature was used throughout my study, which enabled Jennifer and I, as well as her students to reflect on social issues. However, to use children's books within a critical literacy curriculum, the teacher must understand the uses and benefits of doing so. Children develop social and academic competencies through the use of books. Engaging in books that portray real life social issues depicting characters from various backgrounds becomes part of the critical literacy process. Knowing how to initiate and sustain conversations around such books is a crucial element in a critical literacy curriculum.

Teacher education provides the underpinning that starts this process. Answers to questions such as, how should teachers be taught to teach reading and what they should be taught, are always in flux. However, many teacher education programs are beginning to go beyond traditional expectations and trying to develop critical perspectives in their candidates. Researchers extend themselves into elementary classrooms to collaborate with teachers to engage in critical literacy practices. Authentically engaging teachers in such practices helps those teachers to examine their own practices, learn about their students' academic and social development, and interrogate the role of language, literacy, power in the world.

McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004a) stated that "critical literacy helps teachers and students expand their reasoning, seek out multiple perspectives, and become active thinkers" (p. 52). We live in a changing world, with continually evolving global economic growth, medical discoveries, and science and technology innovations. These factors are often seen as positive contributions to humanity on the one hand, or the opposite, depending on one's position related to gender, race, class, and ethnicity. Students need to contribute to the world around them. They need to be engaged throughout their own learning process in exploring the culture of power (Delpit, 1988) and what that means to them as human beings. Leu, Kinzer, Coiro and Cammack (2004) wrote: "reading a book changes us forever… by teaching a student to read, we change the world" (p. 1570). They remind us that important social forces are "at work today that frame changes to literacy that we are experiencing" (p. 1575). Those social forces include the following: global economic competition within economic communities based increasingly on the effective use of information and communication; the rapid emergence of the Internet as a powerful new technology for information and communication; and public policy initiatives by governments around the world to ensure higher levels of literacy achievement, including the use of the Internet and other ICT's. As Allington (2006) states; the "information age" simply places higher-order literacy demands on all of us.

Chapter Summary

In this literature review, I examined three theories of reading and their place in reading education. Modernist reading theory subscribes to standardization, embracing the perspective that there is one "right" answer, thus excluding multiple perspectives, such as those derived from experience, culture, and background. Transactional theory embraces the perspective of the

individual reader. Rosenblatt (1978) subscribes to the belief that each reader will have a "different" answer, and all answers should be celebrated throughout the reading process. Critical literacy theory not only embraces "different" answers, it also specifically incorporates the perspective of confronting social, cultural, racial, class, and gender issues. Beyond just transacting with the text and outside influences, the reader questions all these factors.

I chose to study critical literacy practices in the classroom because I wanted to explore interactions between the reader and the text, specifically texts that address critical social issues such as race and poverty. However, I believe that life experiences and outside influences impact the reading process, a construct that is analogous to critical literacy theory. As a White, middle-class, female, I believe that my reading experience will differ than someone having different life experiences and different sociocultural characteristics. In conducting read alouds, the characteristics of the audience play a vital part in the dialogue that ensues. Seeking only one "right" answer during reading instruction, I believe is debilitating and excludes essential elements. A two-way transmission of knowledge offers the opportunity for everyone to share and learn together. My beliefs about literacy and read alouds were incorporated into the design of my study, which will now be described in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this dissertation study was to gain an understanding of the critical literacy journey of one first year teacher as the teacher and I co-constructed our knowledge of that process. Chapter 1 introduced the study, presenting the problem, purpose, research questions, significance, and limitations. Chapter 2 presented a literature review, which included theories of reading and research on critical literacy practices to provide the necessary background knowledge for understanding the present study. In this chapter, I provide the methodological theory for my research stance. I include a rationale for my methodological choices and a detailed description of the methods utilized throughout the study, including participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. Pseudonyms will be used for people and places throughout the report.

Methodological Theory

The research perspective I took to direct my fieldwork and interpretation is primarily based on qualitative inquiry. This perspective will serve as the methodological context for my findings (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). I located my study in what Hatch (2002) refers to as a critical/feminist paradigm. This is based on my worldview, essentially how I think about and make sense of the complexities of the world (Patton, 2002). Like Hatch (2002), I integrated the critical and feminist assumptions under a single qualitative research paradigm. The critical aspect relates to issues tied to race and social class, while the feminist aspect seeks change by exposing differences related to gender. My study explored both aspects as I sought to raise my participant Jennifer's "consciousness of those being oppressed because of historically situated structures tied to race, gender, and class" (Hatch, 2002, p. 17). Therefore, a critical/feminist paradigm is well

suited well this research. Through dialogue and reflection, my critical/feminist research stance supported Jennifer in developing greater understandings about social change.

Using a critical/feminist approach enabled me to co-construct with Jennifer knowledge *about* change as she began to *use* "knowledge for change" (Patton, 2002, p. 129) with her students. As I was immersed in the critical literacy process with Jennifer, I was able to actively engage with her for two purposes: (1) to raise her consciousness of critical literacy and (2) to influence her use of critical/transformative pedagogy in the classroom. I was able to exercise my transformative aims through working with Jennifer as she explored leading her class toward thinking about positive social change. My own role during our interactions, especially in planning meetings served to raise her consciousness, thus providing understandings that could potentially lead to social change (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002).

Critical theory provides the major methodological basis for this study. Patton (2002) believes critical theory is "one of the most influential orientational frameworks… that focuses on how injustice and subjugation shape people's experiences and understandings of the world" (p. 130). He states that critical theory "seeks not just to study and understand society but rather critique and change society" (p. 131). Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) define a critical researcher as someone "who attempts to use her or his work as a form of social or cultural criticism and who accepts certain basic assumptions: that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted" (p. 139). They state that "critical research can be best understood in the context of the empowerment of individuals" (p. 140). My goal was for this empowerment to occur for Jennifer as I sought to raise her consciousness of the oppression experienced by the students in her urban school classroom. This empowerment could have led her class towards engaging in activities that improved their school or community. Thus,

my research became "a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label 'political' and unafraid to consummate a relationship with an emancipatory consciousness" (p. 140). As Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) suggest, I entered the investigation with my assumptions on the table and the awareness that those assumptions may change throughout the research process.

My own positioning within a critical/feminist research perspective enabled me to pay attention to what Hesse-Biber (2007) calls reflexivity in that I was able to recognize, examine, and understand how my social background, location, and assumptions affected my research practice. Throughout this process of reflexivity, I also considered Jennifer's "perspective and voice" (Patton, 2002, p. 65) by shifting lenses from her to myself throughout the report.

Methodological Approach

This research was designed to be a qualitative case study supported by a critical/feminist research stance. I observed and became a part of the phenomenon of interest, critical literacy, as it unfolded naturally in the classroom at the same time the teacher and I co-constructed our knowledge of what critical literacy means. Through working with Jennifer during her lesson planning, she and I continually stretched each other's thinking about critical literacy. These conversations became a major data source as they were tape recorded. My goal was to study the phenomenon of critical literacy development, based on Jennifer's experiences with me as we co-constructed knowledge about this process. This case represented a single entity that was intrinsically bound (Merriam, 1998). My unit of analysis for the in-depth case study was based on one participant and the exploration of one aspect of her practice, critical literacy. Observations, interviews, and planning meetings all focused on critical literacy and were the main data sources of the study which will be described later.

A case study approach enabled me to explore the case of a new teacher over time through detailed, in-depth data collection using multiple data sources (Creswell, 1998). The data sources included interviews, observational field notes, recorded planning meetings, lesson plans, and photographs of class products. Data sources from a preliminary study were also included. Jennifer was a participant in a pilot study entitled *Pre-Service Teachers Confronting Issues of Diversity through Children's Critical Literacy Literature*. This study took place during the 2006-2007 academic year. It focused on pre-service teachers exploring children's critical literacy literature with their peers and later reflecting about the literature. Details about that study will be described below. Data from that pilot study were included in the present study in order to document the progression from pre-service explorations of critical literacy to actual implementation during Jennifer's first year of teaching.

Merriam (1998) offers two main reasons that support my rationale for selecting a case study approach. First, I did not know ahead of time what events were likely to take place. Even though Jennifer was displaying indications of wanting to implement critical literacy in her classroom after completing her internship, when it came to starting her first year teaching, she may or may not have done so. If she did use critical literacy, I did not know what that process would look like. Second, I was exploring a process - the process she would go through in implementing critical literacy as we co-constructed knowledge about it. Because these elements fit Merriam's (1998) criteria, I believe a case study was the best choice. The case was also bound by time and place (Stake, 2005). Data for the major phase of the study were collected over a five month period, and the study took place in an urban elementary classroom. The study may be characterized as a critical/feminist case study, meaning that the end product became a rich

picture of our co-constructive process, along with details about my observations of what happened within and beyond Jennifer's critical literacy read alouds.

Participant

Participant Selection

Using criterion sampling, I chose a participant based on predetermined characteristics for in-depth qualitative analysis (Patton, 2002). There were four main criteria that I used in participant selection for the study (Merriam, 1998).

- Having prior experience with critical literacy
- Showing interest of using critical literacy during the first year of teaching
- Displaying an emergent philosophy of critical literacy
- Having willingness to work closely with researcher

The pilot study that became part of this research project included 12 participants. Going through the pilot study, I was aware of which pre-service teachers might be good candidates to follow into their first year of teaching. During the second phase of the pilot study, each participant chose his/her own critical literacy book to share with the group. This was Jennifer's reflection about her sharing session in February 2007.

> *This was a wonderful experience for me doing this critical literacy activity. I used a book with my peers that I had also used with my students. I chose the book "Visiting Day". I was able to go through the process of planning and walking through a book in depth so that my students could connect and respond. They made connections throughout the book to the family and a few made connections to a parent who was in prison recently. The students were able to connect to the perspective and point of view of the child in the story where as the adults for critical literacy came from the same perspective that I had assumed. The children in my classroom were excited for the little girl and talked about how they would feel excited as well. My peers did as I expected and came from the adult approach where they wanted to know more about why he was in prison and the*

> *perspective of the adult versus the child. Both of my audiences responses to the questions asked were similar when it came to guessing and talking about what they thought was going to happen in the story. I had a great time planning and implementing this critical literacy lesson.*

I was surprised that Jennifer had already used this book with her students because it was about a child going to visit her father in prison. For me, this was an early indication that she was using critical literacy texts and felt comfortable having discussions around such texts with her students.

A relationship between Jennifer and myself had already been established. She received instruction related to critical literacy and participated in the critical literacy pilot study with me during her teacher preparation. Throughout that process, she explored and discussed children's critical literacy literature with her peers, read professional literature on critical literacy, and privately reflected. I also supervised her during her fieldwork. I was able to observe her in the classroom and saw her using children's literature with her students. Jennifer's teaching style, attitude, and willingness to participate made her an appropriate participant for the study.

Participant Description

Jennifer Rossini is a White, middle-class female who grew up in a suburban area in the southern United States. She described her childhood classmates as coming from middle to upper class White families. Her school and community did not have much diversity. Jennifer earned her bachelor's degree in Healthcare Marketing and always had an interest in working with children. After her first experience in college, she worked with teenagers in the healthcare field. I met Jennifer at the start of her coursework in an urban multicultural teacher education program. She was pursuing her master's degree in education for a career change. She entered the urban multicultural program looking for a challenge. One of her relatives taught in an urban school and shared stories of her challenges with Jennifer. This left an impression on Jennifer because she

wanted to be well prepared for the complexity of working with diverse student populations. Unsure about how she would fit into an urban elementary school, she initially had concerns. Yet, the day she began her pre-internship rotation, she reported falling in love with one particular school. This school would later serve as her primary placement during her internship, and it is also where she took her first teaching job. Jennifer was 23 years old at the start of her internship.

Jennifer considers herself a reader, but she particularly likes to write. She has kept a journal for years and feels that journaling is a good way for young children to communicate. She sees writing as a form of expression for students of all ages. She stated that a book provides students with a connection they may not find elsewhere. She sees literacy as a way to provide students with a broader perspective of the world and a way to help them avoid feelings of isolation regarding personal issues. Jennifer views read alouds as a time for the class to come together and talk in a relaxed atmosphere, rather than a time to follow strict rules. She thinks some children have issues in their lives that they don't talk about with anyone, especially in school. She believes critical literacy, on the other hand, provides them with an opportunity to talk about their real life issues. She often refers to the author Jacqueline Woodson as a writer who touches on many of the issues her students face from a child's perspective.

Jennifer disclosed to me during our interviews that she agreed to participate in this study for two main reasons. One, she wanted to increase her resources and learn about more critical literacy books that she can add to her classroom library. Two, she wanted to learn more about how to ask critical questions during read alouds and how to plan those lessons. Mostly, she felt that having a deeper understanding of critical literacy would make those real life conversations not so uncomfortable. Much more about Jennifer's beliefs and thoughts about education will be revealed in Chapter 4.

Contexts

School Context

This case study examined the lived experiences of a real teacher in a real first grade, urban classroom. Jennifer was hired for her first teaching job at Lafayette Elementary School. This is an urban elementary school that also served as Jennifer's primary placement for her year-long internship the previous year. Lafayette Elementary serves students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. It is a large urban magnet school that has an emphasis on technology. The student population includes more than 650 students, most of whom are African American. These demographics serve as a contrast to the county's 80% White population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The school is open to students from all areas of the county although many students live in close proximity to the school. The socioeconomic status ranges from poverty to middle class, with eighty-three percent of the students receiving free/reduced lunch based on their family income. These factors qualify it as a Title I school.

Prior to the study, I had served as an on-site intern supervisor for two years at this school; therefore, I had already established relationships with the administrators and many teachers. During that time, I also became familiar with the school's literacy philosophy. Lafayette Elementary is an official Literacy Collaborative school. Literacy Collaborative is based on a comprehensive school reform model designed to improve reading, writing, and language. This model supports school growth through ongoing professional development, systematically assessing children's literacy growth over time, promoting home/school partnerships, and providing an instructional framework. The instructional framework is based on read alouds, shared writing, guided reading, independent reading, language experience/shared writing,

interactive writing, writing workshop, and independent writing. Level books are used for instruction and independent practice. Based on this philosophy, the school subscribes to the belief that as children listen to a variety of well-chosen texts, they not only develop a love for reading but they also learn how reading works. The goal of this program is for all students to achieve literacy success (Literacy Collaborative, 2008). I was already familiar with the school's literacy philosophy, and felt that the school context would support the emphasis of my study.

The year Jennifer began teaching at this school was the first time in recent years that the school utilized a basal reading program. The basal was not mandated at the time, but it could be used to supplement the Literacy Collaborative framework. Jennifer reported that she was indeed using the basal program, because as a first year teacher, she felt that it gave her more guidance and structure than Literacy Collaborative did alone. The mentor who supported Jennifer during her internship had been at the school for a long time and already developed her lesson plans within the Literacy Collaborative Framework. However, Jennifer was reluctant to base her instruction only on this framework. She felt that the basal program assured her that she was meeting state standards, covering all of the first grade content, regularly assessing and meeting the needs of her students, and providing her with needed structure.

Classroom Context

Jennifer's classroom was situated among six other first grade classrooms. She was down the hall from her mentor teacher's classroom, which served as Jennifer's yearlong internship site. The classroom Jennifer was given was previously used by a teacher who had been at the school for many years and moved into an administrative position. Therefore, she left many teaching supplies for Jennifer to use.

Initially, Jennifer's classroom layout (Appendix G) had the students' desks in the center of the room. She used an elbow table in the back corner as her teacher work table and guided reading table. She also had four Apple computers along the rear wall for student use. The classroom library was in the front corner and had colorful baskets labeled by genre such as animal, sports, fairy tales, etc. There was an easel in the corner of her library, which she used to conduct shared readings with big books. In November, Jennifer decided to change the layout of her classroom and make the floor space a focal point. She found that she needed more space for her read alouds, which she conducted on the floor. She also felt that her students enjoyed using clip boards to lean on as they wrote sitting on the floor. The new classroom layout provided that space. The desks then became clustered to one side of the room in small groups, allowing for collaborative activities.

At the beginning of the school year, Jennifer had four rules handwritten on chart paper and posted on one of the classroom walls: (1) Respect our teachers; (2) Respect our friends and other people; (3) Respect our things; and (4) Respect yourself. She also had some books on display by the author Kevin Henkes, whom she was using for her first author study of the year. On her word wall, she had 13 words posted: *A, I, jump, can, did, like, to, the, for, have, play, we,* and *you*. Over the course of the study, I did not see many more words posted on that wall. However, Jennifer would create charts for certain units that displayed thematic vocabulary such as her "Family Word List" that included words such as *mom, dad, grandmom,* etc.

Jennifer began the year with 18 students. Throughout the year that number changed as students moved in or out of the school zone. At the beginning of the school year, Jennifer's class included five girls, two of whom were White and three were Black. The rest of the class was made up of Black boys, except for one Hispanic boy. Because of behavior issues, two of her

boys were assigned seats away from the others. The age of Jennifer's students' was typical for first grade.

Access and Entry Procedures

I initially asked Jennifer about her interest in participating in the second phase of this study as she ended her internship year. She eagerly accepted the offer to participate, pending a formal invitation with details about the study. In order to follow the appropriate guidelines for conducting research with human subjects, I initially sent a letter to the school system requesting permission to conduct the study at one of its schools. Once that permission was granted, I sought Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the university. Once the study was approved, I provided the school principal with a study information sheet and asked that she sign a letter of approval. I was already visiting the school on a weekly basis and knew the school administrators; therefore, I had direct contact to seek permission. The principal from that school had previously participated in a critical literacy professional development workshop I conducted. Based on her positive reception to the workshop, I was confident that she would agree to Jennifer participating in the study. Once that permission was granted, Jennifer was formally invited to participate. She was given an informed consent sheet (Appendix B) that included written information about the study. In August of 2007, just as the school year was beginning, all of the formal documentation to conduct the study was completed by all necessary parties.

Data Collection Methods

This case study included multiple sources of data, which helped me build a rich picture of the co-constructive process (Creswell, 1998). I collected data within two time periods based on

Jennifer's pre-service preparation and her first year of teaching. I followed Jennifer from her pre-service preparation into her own classroom. I collected data from Jennifer for approximately 15 months, accruing 75 pieces of data from eight different sources (see Table 1). I also kept a careful record of my data collection and analysis processes along with my reflections on how the research was going throughout the study. Although not "data," entries in this research journal (Hatch, 2002) provided a valuable resource for monitoring the progress of the study and my place in it.

During the first time period, data collection was based on a pilot study conducted during Jennifer's pre-service year, which will be described in this section. After IRB approval (Appendix A), I collected data from August of 2006 until May of 2007. These pre-service data were generated from three main sources, including eight reflections, eight text connections, and two surveys. The original pilot study data was based on a cohort of 12 pre-service teachers. I disaggregated Jennifer's data from that group to include it in the present study.

The second time period of data collection was based on the first half of Jennifer's initial year of teaching, which will also be described in this section. After IRB approval, I collected data from August to December of 2007, just before the school's winter break. This data were based on five main data sources including eight planning meetings, fifteen observations, three interviews, one copy of her lesson plans, and thirty class products. I will now describe data collection details for both time periods starting with Jennifer's pre-service year.

Pre-service Data Sources

Qualitative data was originally collected from Jennifer's cohort of 12 pre-service teachers in the urban multicultural teacher education program at a large southeastern university. The pilot

Table 1: Data Sources

Data Sources	Description	Amount of Data	Collection Time
Pre-service Data (3 sources)	**Approximately 8 weeks of data collection**		**10 months**
Reflections	Interactive, online journal reflections after each read aloud.	8	
Text Connections	In-class post-it note comments making connections to the literature.	8	
Surveys	Pre- and post-survey regarding urban education.	2	
In-service Data (5 sources)	**Approximately 15 weeks of data collection**		**5 months**
Planning Meetings	Bi-weekly tape-recorded conversations about lesson planning and reflections.	8	
Observations	Weekly observations before, during, and/or after critical literacy read alouds.	15	
Formal Interviews	1: Start of the study 1: During the study 1: Conclusion of the study	3	
Lesson Plans	Copy of weekly plans.	1	
Products	Photographs of class/student/teacher made products.	30	
Total:	**23 Weeks**	**75 items**	**15 months**

study entitled *Pre-Service Teachers Confronting Issues of Diversity through Children's Critical Literacy Literature* took place during the 2006-2007 school-year. Data were collected from August of 2006 to May of 2007. Including this data in the present study allowed me to build a developmental perspective on Jennifer's transition and track changes in her beliefs and understandings from pre-service to in-service. Data from the study included three main sources: reflections, text connections, and a pre- and post-survey. Jennifer had weekly classes with her university instructors as she proceeded through her preparation program. I was her instructor for the critical literacy component of the program. There were two phases of my instruction, which I will now describe.

Before my instruction began, each pre-service teacher completed a survey which I will later describe. As one of their instructors, during phase one of the study in the fall semester, I was fully immersed as a participant observer. I conducted read alouds using children's critical literacy literature, while the pre-service teachers listened and had whole group discussions. This instruction was based on the following four critical literacy stories: *The School is Not White, the True Story of the Civil rights movement* (Rappaport, 2005a), *The Lady in the Box* (McGovern, 1997), *A Shelter in Our Car* (Gunning, 2004), and *Going Home* (Bunting, 1996). After each read aloud, students made text connections and reflected. Each session lasted approximately one hour.

During phase two of the pilot study, I withdrew from the role of participant and became more of a passive observer (Patton, 2002). The pre-service teachers were assigned to read McDaniel's article (2004) about critical literacy to gain a deeper understanding of this philosophy. They then took on leadership roles, conducting their own read alouds in small groups among their peers. I designed this instructional approach to scaffold their knowledge and allow them to have critical conversations in a supportive environment before doing so in their

own classrooms with children. Engaging in critical literacy practices with their students was something these pre-service teachers could pursue if and when they chose to; but it was not required. Not including this as a requirement was based on two reasons. One, based on my own experience, I believed that understanding critical literacy is a process - an individual process. I felt that everyone comes to different understandings at different times. Two, the very nature of critical literacy is just that: critical. I did not feel that the pre-service teachers in this cohort all had the same level of comfort in confronting issues of diversity and having critical conversations. That was the whole point in going through this process - to help them increase their comfort. Therefore I chose to have the cohort opt to engage in critical literacy with their students in an authentic manner, not to meet a requirement.

Based on the examples I modeled during phase one and referring to the critical literacy criteria outlined in McDaniel's (2004) article, students each selected a book and developed their questions. Jennifer's group transacted with the following books during phase two: *Always My Dad* (Wyeth, 1997), *The Three Questions* (Muth, 2002) , *Now Let Me Fly: The Story of a Slave Family* (Johnson, 1993) and *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002b), which Jennifer read when it was her turn to facilitate. As mentioned earlier, Jennifer already read this book to her class prior to sharing it with her cohort. Hearing her tell her group that she had previously read this book to her students confirmed my decision to let this occur in an authentic rather than imposed manner. These small groups occurred four times during their spring semester. During phase two, the same process continued: making text connections and reflecting. Students were exposed to a total of eight different critical literacy stories throughout the study. At the end of the year, they were each given the same survey to complete. I will now describe each data source from the pilot study.

Reflections

After each critical literacy session, Jennifer and her peers logged from home onto a secure online journal to write their thoughts about the read alouds and discussions. They were also asked to describe their feelings about having critical conversations with their own students in the classroom, either making predictions or reporting such scenarios. When they served as group facilitators, I suggested responding to topics such as text selection and posing questions. I responded back each week, often posing follow-up questions and providing suggestions. There were a total of eight online reflections, four from each semester. I later copied Jennifer's eight reflections from the online journal and pasted them into a Word Document for use within the present study.

Text Connections

After listening to the read alouds, Jennifer and her peers transacted with each story on a sticky-note (Rosenblatt, 1978) in class. Everyone in the class was given a sticky-note to write a brief connection he of she had with the story (text-text, text-self, text-other). The group then each took a turn posting their sticky-note on chart paper, labeling their connection, and discussing it within the group (Wooton, 2000). This occurred throughout the whole group sessions during the fall semester and the small group sessions in the spring. I collected a total of eight text connections, four from each semester. I typed the connections into an Excel spreadsheet to organize them, keeping track of the books, facilitators, dates, and text connections from each person. Jennifer's data were later copied onto a new spreadsheet for the present study.

Surveys

At the start of Jennifer's internship coursework, before my critical literacy instruction began, her cohort was given a survey (Appendix E) to complete at home. I individually emailed the survey as a Word Document to all the students so they could type in their responses and email them back to me. The survey, which included 15 open-ended questions, took approximately 45 minutes to complete. It included questions regarding their attitude and beliefs related to critical issues in an urban community and a teacher's role in that environment. Everyone in the cohort was emailed the survey again at the end of their pre-service year and after our critical literacy sessions concluded.

I determined that Jennifer would be an appropriate candidate to follow into her first year of teaching based the criteria described earlier and these three data sources (reflections, text connections, and the survey). Throughout the pilot study, Jennifer expressed an interest in using critical literacy approaches when she became a teacher and showed a desire to stretch her thinking about what this process entails. She was also already beginning to use some of the critical literacy literature we discussed with her own students. I will now describe the data that were collected during Jennifer's first year as a teacher.

In-service Data Sources

Qualitative data were collected with Jennifer during fall of the 2007-2008 school-year. Data collection took place from August to December of 2007. Data from her first year teaching came from five main sources: recorded planning meetings, observations, interviews, lesson plans, and class products. Jennifer and I met on a weekly basis as she proceeded through her first year teaching, which made it possible for me to acquire considerable data. During Jennifer's pre-

service year, she and I communicated regularly by email, but these communications were not included as data in the pilot study. However, contrary to what I had expected, as a first year teacher, Jennifer rarely checked or wrote emails. Jennifer did however use her cell phone to send me last minute text messages about our schedule. Because I had not included this form of communication as data in the informed consent, I would only note in my research journal that she cancelled my visit and the reason.

Planning Meetings

I met with Jennifer weekly for approximately 45 minutes as we discussed her literacy lessons. The start time of these meetings ranged from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. On two occasions we even met after school. Our time fluctuated depending on her classroom schedule and other school related conflicts. Some of our scheduled planning meetings were cancelled because of a continually changing schedule of classroom routines and school-imposed interruptions. I was often on call in the morning waiting to hear from Jennifer whether to cancel or proceed with the meetings. Jennifer frequently used cell phone text messaging to notify me of last minute cancellations. We rescheduled when appropriate or waited until the next planned visit. A total of eight planning meetings took place. Two planning meetings were cancelled, one because of a school-based literacy meeting and another because Jennifer felt the need to discuss her personal life with me rather than lesson planning.

As Jennifer and I met, I recorded this dialogic process on audio tape to gain a greater understanding of how she planned her literacy curriculum and selected books for her read alouds. These meetings took place when students were not in the classroom and allowed us to shape and re-shape our knowledge of the process of implementing critical literacy. My role was one of

participant during these meetings, as Jennifer and I stretched each other's thinking and co-constructed our knowledge about critical literacy. We discussed upcoming lessons and reflected on previous lessons. Insight was gained about why she did or did not implement particular strategies, what obstacles she encountered, and how she overcame challenges. At times, I had particular questions for her based on prior lessons, and I sometimes made suggestions for future lessons. Early in the study, I started to provide Jennifer with transcripts from our planning meetings and observations, which she requested. She specifically asked to have her own copies so she could have a record of the suggestions I made and refer to them later for implementation. We discussed many topics, including the literature, classroom dynamics, behavior management, school policies and procedures, inside and outside influences, as well as her personal thoughts.

These "conversations" between myself and Jennifer also served as an opportunity to raise her consciousness about social issues and critical literacy in general (Hatch, 2002). Together we shared dialogue about the critical literacy process (Kvale, 1996). These conversations also supported Freire's (1970/2005) notion of praxis – self-reflection, transformation, and action – for both Jennifer and myself. During these conversations, I sought to raise Jennifer's awareness and understandings of social change. This was the time when we co-constructed knowledge about seeking positive change in society (Hatch, 2002). The recordings of these planning meetings were transcribed by a transcriber verbatim. After I reviewed the transcripts, they were used along with other data for analysis and interpretation (Kvale, 1996). I organized the planning meetings by labeling them in sequential order (i.e. Planning meeting 1).

Observations

I observed Jennifer for a total of fifteen times, as she conducted her read alouds, led follow-up discussions, and instructed students in writer's workshop. However, six planned observations were cancelled, which I was notified about through cell phone text messaging. Three observations were cancelled because the class had to take a test, either curriculum-based or district-mandated. One was cancelled because parents were invited for a Thanksgiving luncheon, and another was cancelled because the class was scheduled to work on a project in the Title 1 computer lab. An additional observation was cancelled because Jennifer was sent by the district to new teacher training. My observation times fluctuated from week to week, depending on the class schedule and school events. I was in Jennifer's classroom each week for approximately one to two hours, depending on the class schedule. The observation start times ranged from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., fluctuating based on school or classroom factors.

During my visits, I observed Jennifer in her regular first grade classroom. These observations occurred in the morning during the school's scheduled literacy block. I specifically observed read alouds of books that Jennifer determined to be critical literacy texts. I used Creswell's (1998) steps for following my observation routine. I observed the introduction of the book, the questions and discussions that took place during the read aloud, and how the activity came to a close. This process took approximately thirty to forty minutes. Writer's workshop often followed the read aloud, which I continued to observe. The writing time ranged from fifteen to thirty minutes. Sometimes, I informally walked around the room supporting students. I intended to gain an understanding of the process Jennifer went through to implement her critical literacy lessons and wanted to see that naturally unfold.

I observed the read alouds Jennifer specifically associated with critical literacy that were discussed in our planning meetings. Not only did I observe her critical literacy read alouds, but also the dialogue that took place within and beyond that process, including follow-up activities. During these observation visits to the classroom, I maintained a low level of participation as I took fieldnotes on a notepad. I scribed the dialogue that Jennifer had with her students. My interactions with students during the read alouds were minimal, allowing me to focus my observations on Jennifer's read aloud technique. While students were present for these observations, their comments and actions were not included as data in the study. At times during writer's workshop, I temporarily shifted my role and became a participant. I circulated to help the students, which also provided me some insight as to what they were writing. My interactions with children would often come up in our planning meetings. Being a former first grade teacher and familiar with writer's workshop, I often struggled with only observing this process because so many students wanted assistance. Once I started to assist the students with their writing, Jennifer appreciated the extra support, and the students came to see me as another person to help them spell, sound out, draw, and create their sentences. Engaging with the students at this point supported my study because I was able to gain insight as to how their writing connected to the read alouds. I only interacted with students during writer's workshop and shifted my role back to a passive observer for all other activities.

Because I wanted to explore the process of critical literacy read alouds and the dialogue that took place within and beyond that process, I needed to observe it in the real classroom setting. I was always mindful of the goals of observation in trying to understand the culture, setting, and social phenomenon being studied. As an observer, I was attempting to see the world through the eyes of those I was studying (Hatch, 2002). Through direct observation, I was able to

see how Jennifer responded to the literature and the comments and questions the students posed. I was also able to learn things about Jennifer that do not come through during the interview process. My research stance during the critical literacy read aloud process was one of participant observer.

During the observations, I created raw field notes, scripting on the spot what I saw the teacher say and do. I used a notebook to record the field notes, and I made a record of the physical environment of the classroom, often drawing the layout which changed over the course of my time in the classroom (see Appendix G). After each observation, I either informally discussed the lesson with Jennifer when time permitted or quietly left the field if I was not staying for a planning meeting. Once I left the field, I returned to my raw data and filled in additional notes providing a more detailed description. I also made notes in my research journal including any comments I made during class time and my own reactions to what I observed that day (Hatch, 2002). I then typed my raw field notes into formal research protocols. Copies of my observations were given to Jennifer so she could examine her own teaching and reflect on the comments and questions in the data. Both of our reactions to the observations and the observation transcripts became part of our recorded discussions at follow-up planning meetings.

Interviews

I tape-recorded three scheduled formal interviews (see Appendix F) with Jennifer during the in-service part of the study. My intention for conducting these interviews was to capture Jennifer's beliefs and understandings about the critical literacy process. These interviews provided Jennifer with time to independently reflect on her implementation of critical literacy over the course of the study. Because of the relationship I already had with her, she appeared to

be able to speak and share her thoughts comfortably with me. The interviews provided insight into the meaning structures she used "to organize her experiences and make sense of her world" (Hatch, 2002, p. 91). I attempted to understand Jennifer's experience from her point of view (Kvale, 1996), uncovering meanings that may be hidden during the observation process. In my research journal, I recorded my own reactions to her responses during the interviews.

The first formal interview took place before our initial planning meeting on September 4, 2007 and contained 11 open-ended questions. We discussed her beliefs and understandings of critical literacy as well as her expectations for participating in the study. The second formal interview, containing 22 open-ended questions, took place on November 12, 2007. This was near the middle of the study, and we discussed Jennifer's beliefs and understandings about critical literacy as well as her thoughts on the process of the study. The final interview, containing 17 open-ended questions, took place on December 11, 2007 at the end of the study. I again asked her about her beliefs and understandings of critical literacy and her thoughts on how she implemented it thus far in the school year. My questions were planned in advance and were based on data from the months of observing and planning together. These interviews were tape-recorded and took place in the classroom when students were not present. These tape-recorded interviews lasted approximately one hour each, and they included open-ended questions to capture her thoughts on the process of teaching critical literacy as a first year teacher. Jennifer and I also on occasion had informal interviews before and/or after the lessons. These were not tape-recorded; however, I took notes when appropriate during or after these brief conversations.

In order to transfer our taped conversations into formal research protocols, I had a professional transcriber convert them into Word documents. The transcriber signed a pledge of confidentiality to protect all participants' identities. I used a digital voice recorder to record our

planning meetings and interviews. After leaving the field, I downloaded each file onto my home computer and listened to the recording to check it for completeness and clarity. I then sent the files each week to a professional transcriptionist. There was a two to three day turn around time to receive my formal research protocols, which were delivered as a Word document through email. Once I had the protocol, I would open the audio file, listen to it, and compare it to the Word document. I listened to each audio file and replayed parts that needed clarification or modification. Once I was confident that the formal research protocol matched the audio tape verbatim, I then assigned an identifier to each research protocol.

Lesson Plans

Prior to starting the study, I requested that Jennifer provide me with a copy of her weekly lesson plans from all subject areas, which would enable me to explore not only the lesson(s) I was observing but to have an overall perspective on a unit or theme. I received one copy of her lesson plans that spanned from August 13 through September 14, 2007. This copy included her math and literacy block plans. However, that was the only copy I received from her. I reminded Jennifer several times to make copies of her plans, but I only received one set. I do not believe her intent was to withhold them, but time limited her ability to make the copies. As an intern, Jennifer always had her plans written and organized in advance. However, as a first year teacher, her planning appeared to be done on a day-by-day basis. She would suggest that she could go back into the plans and fill in any gaps before providing me with a copy. Rather than have an unauthentic version of her lesson plans, I stopped asking for the plans midway through the study. I knew that our planning meetings included many discussions about the school day, planning, and curriculum. I did not want to take her plans in order to make my own copies because I knew

she needed them on a regular basis. I was, however, able to see the plans as we talked each week, which provided significant insight about her planning.

Products

I took photographs of some products made by Jennifer and the class to help me understand critical literacy lessons. Many of the photographs were of students' writing samples, class word walls, themed sight word lists, and student projects. I took a total of 30 photographs of class products over the course of the study. Any identifying information from Jennifer or the students was covered prior to photographing.

Data Analysis Procedures

I primarily based my data analysis on two models: typological data analysis and inductive data analysis. I began with typological analysis to disaggregate the data that would help answer my research questions. I then switched to an inductive analysis model to develop my themes. As I proceeded through each phase, I continually reread the data looking for patterns. I also kept careful records, documenting each phase of analysis in my research journal. I included interpretive analysis processes in order to make sense and meaning of the whole story.

Typological Data Analysis

I began my data analysis by referring to a typological analysis model. As LeCompte and Preissle (1993) describe, I assembled the pieces like a jigsaw puzzle, continually shifting my attention from whole to part. I assembled each piece separately continually locating and adding the connecting pieces until no holes remained. I used typological analysis to help me sort through each aspect of the data and to specifically breakdown the elements that encompassed Jennifer's

critical literacy curriculum, her progression, and her beliefs and understandings of critical literacy.

While I was collecting data in the field, transcribing, recording my thoughts in my research journal, and planning each next step, I was continually looking over the data as a whole and attempting to fill in any gaps I discovered along the way. Data collection concluded just before Jennifer's class began it's winter break. I then printed my last set of data and began the next phase of the project. As LeCompte and Preissle (1993) suggest, I began data analysis by reviewing my research prospectus, looking back at my research questions and theory, and reviewing my data collection methods. The first thing I did was to print a large copy of my research questions.

My research questions changed slightly throughout the dissertation process. However during typological analysis, I created typologies based on my original research questions. I broke question one into two parts to help clarify specifically what I was looking for in the data. Originally question one read: How does this first year teacher implement critical literacy? In order to analyze the data, I made two parts: (A) How does this first year teacher implement critical literacy and (B) What does critical literacy look like in her classroom? Question two remained the same: What happens to this teacher's beliefs and understandings about critical literacy from pre-service preparation to in-service teaching? I describe how I developed the final version of my research questions later.

Phase one of my analysis consisted of rereading the data, scanning it for two purposes: (1) to check the data for completeness and (2) to reacquaint myself "with territory previously covered, this time with the wisdom of hindsight" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 236). As I reread the data, I jotted down notes about what I noticed in the data, helping me highlight

significant events. I also started to develop routines for how I would look at the data. I decided to reread and analyze the data consistently in chronological order which I documented (see Table 2). I felt that in order to understand Jennifer's process of implementing critical literacy and her progression, I needed to reread the data in the order it was collected. Many times during our planning meetings, Jennifer and I referred to the past, which could have become confusing as I reread the data. However, by reading the data consistently in chronological order, I was able to make sense of it. As table 2 shows, I always read the data starting with Jennifer's pre-service year. I would then continue reading by date starting with interview one in September through the final interview in December. Rather than group the interviews, planning meetings, and observations together, I chose to read them as they occurred in time order, switching from planning meeting to observation and so forth.

Phase two of my analysis began with identifying the typologies I would use to analyze the data. I decided to use my original research questions as the two typologies, thus dividing everything observed into those two categories to anchor my analysis (Hatch, 2002; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The third phase consisted of reading the data and highlighting entries related to my typologies. I began with my first typology: RQ1 - How does this first year teacher implement critical literacy and what does it look like in her classroom? Everything related to that typology was highlighted in orange. Next, I highlighted my second typology in blue: RQ2 - What happens to this teacher's beliefs and understandings about critical literacy from pre-service preparation to in-service teaching? Data for this typology was primarily derived from our planning meetings and the interviews. Throughout this process, I found some overlap and I would highlight excerpts addressing both questions with both colors. Once the data were disaggregated and divided into the two typological categories, I began phase four of my analysis.

Table 2. Chronological Review of the Data

Collection Date	**Data Source**	**Topic**
Fall-Spring 06-07	Pre-service Text Connections	
Fall-Spring 06-07	Pre-service Survey	
Fall-Spring 06-07	Pre-service Journals	
Sept. 4, 2007	Interview 1	
Sept. 4, 2007	Planning Meeting 1	
Sept. 11, 2007	Observation 1	*The Other Side*
Sept. 14, 2007	Planning Meeting 2	
Sept. 18, 2007	Observation 2	*The School is Not White*
Sept. 18, 2007	Planning Meeting 3	
Sept. 24, 2007	Observation 3	*Ruby Bridges*
Sept. 26, 2007	Planning Meeting 4	
Oct. 2, 2007	Observation 4	*The Secret Seder*
Oct. 2, 2007	Planning Meeting 5	
Oct. 4, 2007	Observation 5	Friends Unit Closure
Oct. 10, 2007	Observation 6	Literacy Coach/Writer's W.S.
Oct. 10, 2007	Planning Meeting 6	
Oct. 11, 2007	Observation 7	*Always My Dad*
Oct. 15, 2007	Observation 8	*Visiting Day*
Nov. 5, 2007	Planning Meeting 7	
Nov. 12, 2007	Observation 9	*Something Beautiful*
Nov. 12, 2007	Interview 2	
Nov. 13, 2007	Observation 10	*A Shelter in Our Car*
Nov. 19, 2007	Observation 11	Make a Change Day
Dec. 3, 2007	Planning Meeting 8	
Dec. 4, 2007	Observation 12	*A Busy Year*
Dec. 6, 2007	Observation 13	*Tillie and the Wall*
Dec. 10, 2007	Observation 14	*The Biggest House in the World*
Dec. 11, 2007	Observation 15	*Great Joy*
Dec. 11, 2007	Interview 3	

During phase four of analysis, I recorded the main ideas of each typology on separate summary sheets as Hatch (2002) suggests. This allowed me to physically move and sort the data to identify my codes. I created summary sheets for typology one using a blue pen and then repeated the process for typology two with a black pen, including summaries only related to the typology of interest each time. Using colored pens helped me distinguish between the two typologies. At this point, I was not trying to interpret the data; however, I did make side notes during this process. Those notes included: putting a star on the sheet noting powerful quotes in the data (Hatch, 2002); the name of read alouds books connected to summaries on the top of the summary sheet; differentiating mine and Jennifer's voice when necessary by noting a *W* or *J*; and including important words or phrases found in the data. I also started to pay attention to the context or the situation, noting the chronological time of some events. These summary sheets began to tell a basic story about the critical literacy process that took place in Jennifer's classroom (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I noted on each summary sheet the data source and page number to allow for later referencing in the original data. This process prepared me for my next phase of analysis using an inductive approach.

Inductive Data Analysis

Phase five of my data analysis was based on an inductive analysis model. At this point, I began utilizing the summary sheets I created in phase four. Typological analysis allowed me to disaggregate the data that would specifically help me answer my research questions. Now that I disaggregated that data from the whole (Hatch, 2002) and had my summary sheets, I was ready to develop my codes through inductive analysis. During typological analysis, I read the data line by line continually asking myself if there was a match to one of my typologies and then created

summary sheets based on that process. At this point, I proceeded with an approach aligned with Strauss and Corbin's axial coding (1990). Axial coding enabled me to develop categories and look for relationships between them. This occurred by continually examining my summary sheets, referring to the original data, and collapsing the categories, always looking to develop central themes (e.g., developing a unit on families in relation to planning; developing questions in relation to read alouds).

To begin the process of inductive analysis, I sorted all of the summary sheets from typology one into piles based on common themes. Once I completed this process, I assigned a code to each pile and wrote each code on a sticky-note. I developed 33 initial codes through this process and then recorded the codes in my research journal. Next, I took the summary sheets from typology two and added them to the piles or started new ones when I did not see a match to the existing codes. I knew there would be an overlap in the codes between the two typologies based on my earlier highlighting process; therefore I felt that combining the summary sheets from both typologies made sense. Sticky-notes identifying the codes were placed on the newly developed themes as well. I then recorded the combined codes into my research journal. Combining the two typologies resulted in 43 initial inductive codes. Once I had my 43 codes from the summary sheets sorted into separate piles, I began collapsing these codes. I moved the summary sheets into new piles as I collapsed some codes and created new ones based on relationships between the codes. I was mindful throughout this process to keep the original sticky notes with each collapsed category to help me later see which codes encompassed the central themes. After collapsing the codes, I developed the following six central themes: (1) The Untouchables; (2) From Student to Teacher; (3) Planning; (4) Co-construction; (5) Critical

Conversations; and (6) Read Alouds. Having these themes serve as my central codes, I proceeded into the next phase of analysis.

During phase six of analysis, I went back to my raw data and marked each highlighted excerpt in the data with a special code based on each one of the six central themes. The codes were as follows: (1) The Untouchables: UNT; (2) From Student to Teacher: ST:TC; (3) Planning: PL; (4) Co-construction: CC; (5) Critical Conversations: CONV; and (6) Read Alouds: RA. I started with the first theme: The Untouchables. I referred to my summary sheets which included the summarized excerpt, the data source and page number. I then went into the raw data and marked the code UNT by each excerpt that represented that theme based on my summary sheets. As I was doing this, I also drew brackets in the margins by the code to isolate and identify each "frame of analysis" (Hatch, 2002, p. 163), such as a, line, paragraph or section of data. This also allowed me to differentiate the codes and later make exclusions when there was overlap. My intention was to use the brackets as a form of organization, not a form of analysis. I did this for each of the six categories.

Once I coded the original data, I developed a code book. This would serve two purposes. One, it would help me organize the data by code. Two, I would be able to cross reference the code with the data as I went through each theme. To engage in this process, I organized the code book chronologically for each theme. To start the code book, I began with the first theme: "Planning" and referred to the original data starting with Jennifer's pre-service survey. I went through each piece of data in chronological order and made a record of the excerpts highlighted and coded as "planning". To do this I would write the theme at the top of my code book page. Along the left side of the page, I would identify the data source such as pre-service survey fall (S-F) and include the page number. Then I would summarize the bracketed excerpt into one

sentence for the code book. I repeated this process chronologically for each of the six codes, one at a time.

Creating my code book took on another form of analysis as I began to develop subcategories within my themes. I shifted my focus and developed another visual representation (Wolcott, 1994). Using large chart paper and new sticky-notes, I began to chart the connections between the central themes (Hatch, 2002). To do so, I looked back at the original codes on the old sticky-notes. Each pile of summary sheets based on the central themes had a small stack of sticky-notes that accrued as the codes were being collapsed. Reviewing the original codes, raw data, and summary sheets, enabled me to develop subcategories which I would write on new sticky-notes under headings related to the central themes. As I was creating my visual representation with the help of these sources, the codes continually evolved. Using sticky-notes allowed me to move around the subcategories and even change the central themes as I saw connections among them. Again, I was collapsing my categories and generating new ones. As I would shift forward and backwards throughout data analysis, I would go deeper into the data that lead to my findings. The result of this process led to new themes.

Within the "planning" theme, I developed six subcategories: planning in general, pre-reading, read aloud introduction, body of read aloud, follow-up activities, and evaluation. Within the "read aloud" theme, I developed two subcategories: read alouds in general and read aloud books. "The Untouchables" remained one category although the name eventually changed to "obstacles." The theme "from student to teacher" also remained one category, yet it was renamed "Jennifer's voice". When I got to the "critical conversations" theme, I also began to see that other's voices were emerging, which led me to change the name to "voices." Although I did not develop sub-themes based on those voices at that time, I did begin a list in my research journal.

Once I got to the "co-construction" theme, I saw the prominence of my own voice and my role. As I proceeded through this process, I looked closer at the data to see if these themes were supported by the data. I would constantly question if I had enough data to support each theme, are the data strong enough to make a case for including each theme, and are there contradictory relationships between the themes and the data in general.

At this point, as I looked closer at the data and my newly developed themes, I saw the need to modify my original research questions. I modified one question, left one intact, and discovered I needed a third question. Question one went from: What happens to one first year teacher's beliefs and understandings about critical literacy from pre-service preparation to in-service teaching? to What happens to a first year teacher's perceptions of critical literacy from pre-service preparation to in-service teaching? Question two remained the same: How does this first year teacher implement critical literacy? As I was going through the process of analysis, I was beginning to see that Jennifer's curricular decisions were influenced by numerous external factors (voices and obstacles). I saw that in order to understand this critical literacy journey, I needed to look deeper at an aspect that I was not aware of until I began data analysis. Therefore, I wanted to explore specifically what those influences were throughout this process. Thus, I developed question three to complete the picture. Question three became: What influences impact this teacher's development of critical literacy perspectives?

Once I modified my research questions and developed the third question, I proceed onto phase seven of analysis. In order to conceptualize my themes, their subcategories, and how they related to my research questions, I created a conceptual outline (Appendix H) as suggested by Hatch (2002). The main categories of my outline were guided by my research questions. Typological analysis assured me that the excerpts I would use to write my findings were based

on disaggregated data that answered my research questions. This process followed by inductive analysis enabled me to break down the disaggregated data into parts that would later become whole again as I fit the pieces of the puzzle together (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). This two-fold approach to analysis became useful as I accrued a large amount of data from multiple sources. Writing the conceptual outline, inclusive of my subcategories, helped me find the stories beneath the surface (Hatch, 2002). As I began to fill in the pieces of the outline, I started to see connections and patterns linking different aspects of the data related to Jennifer's implementation of critical literacy. This phase of analysis extended into the writing of my findings. Based on the themes that had been established through continual collapsing of the categories, I began putting the final pieces of the puzzle together. These pieces began to form a rich picture depicting Jennifer's critical literacy journey.

In order to interpret the data and capture the story, during phase eight of analysis, I began filling in the outline with excerpts that supported my themes. I referred back to the powerful quotes I discovered when I began reading my data and later writing my summary sheets. I discovered new quotes at this point and discarded others depending on how they related to my findings. I also paid attention to the read aloud books as I tried to capture how Jennifer implemented a unit from start to finish and the process she undertook to do so. While there were numerous twists and turns navigating through all of the data, each shift led to a richer, more in-depth picture. Throughout this process of analysis, I reread the data to maintain a sense of the whole. I reviewed my research journal, being particularly mindful of my early notes about findings, implications, and themes. I also reviewed my summary sheets and the piles they were grouped in by code. I looked over the chart paper with my mobile themes and continued to think about how those smaller pieces were contributing to making sense of the data.

During phase nine, in order to make generalizations about Jennifer's critical literacy practice, I stepped back from my original themes and looked for connections among them. I looked to see how the pieces fit together to make sense of this process (Hatch, 2002). I created visual representations breaking down the elements of Jennifer's curriculum based on the data (Wolcott, 1994). I made tables for the various curricular elements (i.e. pre-reading activities, read aloud questions), which helped me gain a sense of what was happening (and not happening) before, during, and after her implementation. These tables led me to make generalizations about the critical literacy journey Jennifer and I took together. As I wrote about these generalizations, I began to see connections among my three research questions. This is how I began to see the whole picture.

The last phase of my analysis included more interpretation, which helped me give meaning to the data. I interpreted my generalizations to explain the story (Hatch, 2002). Throughout this process, I wrote notes to myself, capturing my impressions and helping me make sense of what I was learning about Jennifer's critical literacy practice. I then summarized my interpretations and thought about how to communicate these findings to others. This is what led me to the final version of my report and allowed me to generate a rich narrative about this story. As I began to draft Chapter 4, I wanted to stay true to the critical/feminist paradigm of my study. Having my voice represented along with Jennifer's was important, especially because one of my goals throughout this research was for me to raise her consciousness about issues related to race, gender, and class (Hatch, 2002). Going through such a rigorous process of analysis allowed me to become very well acquainted with the data. Developing central codes helped me organize and make sense of the data. I was able to take ten months of data from eight different

sources and answer my research questions. Through this process, I developed a deeper understanding of what it means to implement critical literacy as a first year teacher.

Chapter Summary

This research project utilized a qualitative case study approach within a critical/feminist research stance to gain an understanding of the critical literacy journey of one first year teacher as the teacher and I co-constructed our knowledge of that process. Multiple sources of data were gathered during two time periods. During Jennifer's pre-service year, I collected the following data: reflections, text connections, and two surveys. The reflections captured Jennifer's initial thoughts about using children's critical literacy literature, the text connections reflected her own connections to the stories, and the surveys reflected her beliefs about being a teacher in an urban community. From Jennifer's first year of teaching, I collected data from recorded planning meetings, observations, formal interviews, class products, and lesson plans. Planning meetings produced weekly transcripts of the process Jennifer and I went through as we co-constructed critical literacy lessons. Observations produced transcripts of the critical literacy read aloud sessions Jennifer would conduct with her class. Formal interviews produced transcripts of Jennifer responding to open-ended questions about critical literacy in general and the process of being a participant in the study. Class projects were photographed to support the data, and lesson plans were collected in the beginning of the school year to supplement our planning meetings.

Data analysis was based on two models: typological data analysis and inductive data analysis. Through careful reading and rereading of all transcripts, field notes, and other data sources, typological analysis allowed me to disaggregate the data that supported my research questions. Inductive analysis led to the generation of themes, leading to my findings about this

critical literacy journey. Detailed documentation of the previously described procedures became paramount in creating this report. The methodological approaches I chose for the study enabled me to gain an understanding of a critical literacy journey for one first year teacher as she and I co-constructed our knowledge of that process. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data analysis described in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Three research questions guided the data collection and analysis of this study: (1) What happens to a first year teacher's perceptions of critical literacy from pre-service preparation to in-service teaching? (2) What influences impact this teacher's development of critical literacy perspectives? And (3) How does this teacher implement critical literacy. The findings in this chapter are reported in the form of overarching themes related to those questions: Perceptions of Critical Literacy; Influences Impacting Critical Literacy Development; and Implementing Critical Literacy. Subcategories within each theme will be described in each section. As subcategories within the themes are explored, Jennifer's journey toward critical literacy teaching is illuminated. It will become evident that the development of Jennifer's critical perspective was emerging during the period of the study. The findings show that while Jennifer took some initial steps toward critical literacy practices, several areas remain that need strengthening. Imbedded in the findings are generalizations related to the research question that organizes each section.

Because a number of data sources were analyzed to generate findings, excerpts from those sources will be identified as follows: data from the pre-service year: (J) Jennifer's journal and (S) survey (fall and spring); data from the in-service year: (I) interview, (P) planning meeting, and (O) observation. Numbers will be used to specifically represent the times data were collected. For example, planning meeting seven will be identified as (P7).

Perceptions of Critical Literacy

The first major theme to be described is based on the following research question: What happens to a first year teacher's perceptions of critical literacy from pre-service preparation to in-service teaching? At the start of Jennifer's first year of teaching, she had perceptions of critical

literacy based on her pre-service experience. Throughout her first year of teaching, she reflected back on her internship, her pre-service coursework, and the critical literacy sessions she engaged in with me, her internship cohort, and her own students. I begin with an analysis of Jennifer's perceptions of critical literacy that remained constant, followed by an explication of perceptions that changed over time.

Consistent Perceptions of the Value of Critical Literacy

Jennifer consistently perceived critical literacy as being valuable for teachers and for students. She perceived critical literacy as being valuable for teachers because it helps them learn about their students' lives and emotions. She perceived critical literacy as being valuable for students because it helps them learn about the world and about social issues in that world.

Valuable for Teachers

Jennifer consistently perceived critical literacy as being valuable for teachers. She believed that it can help them learn about their students' lives and emotions. Because Jennifer's own background is different from her students' backgrounds, she used critical literacy as a way to develop her relationships with students. To Jennifer, the challenges her first grade students faced were much different from those she experienced as a child. Being of a different background than her students is often what motivated Jennifer to turn to critical literacy. She describes her experiences growing up in relation to those of her students and why that makes critical literacy so valuable to teachers:

> *(I1) Here it's almost like you have to be careful, even for me, cause a lot of kids weren't raised the way you were. It's really neat cause the kids teach me a lot. And that's something coming from where I'm coming from. I mean it's amazing some of the things these kids are doing. It's like they're living grown up lives and they're in first grade. So*

> *for me it's really just – now I just kind of sit back and listen, because I feel like right now I'm the one who needs to learn more than to teach them about myself, because there's so many different things these kids are teaching me about in the classroom, that coming from where I came from, I didn't come from a rough home life. I didn't come from a broken family. I didn't come from any of that. And so I really don't know what to say when – and I guess that's why I use critical literacy, cause I don't know what to say in a lot of those situations. I had a child in my class who said, "My brother is moving to Atlanta to live with my dad." And he was really upset about it and I didn't know what to say, because I was like, well, how old is your brother? I thought maybe going to college. Well, he was only 12. And so now he's leaving to go to Atlanta to live with the other parent.*

Rather than ignore these differences, Jennifer searched for ways to support her students' emotional needs. Jennifer tried to learn about her students' home lives alongside their academic abilities. She perceived critical literacy as a way to have reciprocal dialogue in which she gained insight into her students' complex lives.

Jennifer had strong feelings about the knowledge teachers could gain from using critical literacy. She felt that using critical literacy could provide insight into students' emotions. Knowing more about her students on a personal level helped explain some of their actions and reactions in class:

> *(I3) I think that it's something that needs to be out there because, obviously, I can see how much my kids have grown, and I have learned so much about my kids, and especially in school a school like I am in. These teachers could learn so much more about their kids and why their behaviors are the way they are, or why they might be acting the way that they are, or why things are the way they are with certain kids, and if they would just - I just think they could learn so much about their kids and about themselves by using critical literacy.*

Jennifer valued learning about her students beyond just their academic strengths and weaknesses. She felt that the discussions she pursued with them during her critical literacy read alouds, helped her understand them from a psychological perspective. She believed that by engaging in critical literacy, she grew as a teacher. Because of these reasons, Jennifer consistently perceived

critical literacy as being valuable for teachers, especially if teachers come from different backgrounds than their students.

Valuable for Students

Jennifer consistently perceived critical literacy as being valuable for students. She perceived it as being valuable for them because it helped them learn about the world and about social issues, especially through the use of books. Children can learn more about themselves and about experiences different from their own. Critical literacy in particular, provides real life lessons. Jennifer believes that by reading, children can learn about the world:

> *(I2) I just feel that everything can build on literacy. And the kids can relate to things that all people can relate to. Some things you can relate to that you don't even realize through literacy. Authors can speak to kids and adults and all different kinds of people through literacy and you can deal with things you're going through in life through literacy. You can use literacy as a way of dealing with things and not just through good, I mean, through bad things, but also fun things. The kids and I talked about authors writing things to make you laugh. You can read for enjoyment. We talked about reading to learn. So it's just, literacy has got so many different things that the kids can use it for. But there's just so much with literacy, it's just, it can be used for so many different things.*

Jennifer acknowledged the authors' role in teaching children through books. She sees literacy as a strategy to help children learn about the world as they "read to learn."

In knowing that her students had a lot to contend with at home, Jennifer tried to reach out to them through critical literacy. However, she was also conscious that not all situations apply to everyone. She perceived teaching children about critical social issues to be valuable for all students because it helps them learn about themselves and understand others, essentially building tolerance. She came to this understanding after reflecting on the limitations of her own childhood experiences:

> *(I1) This school that I'm at, there's a lot going on at home and outside of school that teachers never know about. And I feel like a lot of kids come to school with things going*

> *on that they don't ever get a chance to talk about or maybe to even deal with. And I think it's also like for the kids who may not have something else going on in their lives, but by using critical literacy it gives them an opportunity to see what's going on. Kind of like when we said relating back to the world. I didn't know anybody when I was growing up that had a parent in jail or that lived with their grandparents. It just wasn't there where I was from, but reading those books and seeing how the kids connect. Even being a child that's listening, it's like "wow," because then you think that really happens. And I wasn't around it but if I had a teacher read me Jacqueline Woodson, I probably would have been like, "Huh, I have a friend that maybe I know who lives with their grandmother and I wonder if that's" - It reaches beyond the level of what as teachers you really do.*
>
> *(I3) It's something that really teaches you about your kids, and it's something that teaches them about life.*

Jennifer looked back at her own childhood and felt that learning about others' experiences may have given her insight she could have benefited from knowing. She believed that teachers are the ones who have the power to educate others about diverse life circumstances:

> *(I1) I mean using critical literacy – even if your children aren't going through some of that stuff, it opens their eyes to what other people could be going through. Or just like we did last year, a book on homelessness, well I don't really know anybody that's homeless but there were so many different degrees… you could be someone who lives in a box with nothing, or you could be living in a car and driving around.*

Jennifer perceived critical literacy as being a valuable tool for students to develop empathy and to understand different perspectives on people's lives.

Data spanning two time periods, during Jennifer's pre-service and in-service year, revealed that she consistently perceived critical literacy as being valuable for teachers and students. She believed it helps teachers learn about their students' lives and emotions and it helps students learn about the world and about social issues in that world. Her consistent perception, valuing this practice, became an underlying support as she implemented critical literacy. Jennifer believed that she continually learned about herself and others as she engaged in critical literacy,

which contributed to its value for her. As she was immersed in this practice, some of Jennifer's perceptions also changed.

Changed Perceptions of Appropriateness of Critical Literacy

Because Jennifer had explored critical literacy since the start of her intenship, I wanted to assess what changes took place in any of her perceptions. As Jennifer reflected on her experiences and her own childhood, her perceptions changed along the way. She compared herself to her students and always wanted to make sure she addressed their needs. Data in two major domains provided evidence of changes in her perceptions from pre-service to in-service. Jennifer changed her percpetion about having conversations related to the following two "taboo" topics: homelessness and race. As she became more comfortable having these conversations, her perceptions about the appropriateness of critical literacy conversations changed.

Homelessness

As Jennifer began her internship, she stated in her survey that she believed there were topics that were either not appropriate for class discussion or that she did not feel comfortable addressing. Yet, she knew that apprehension with certain topics depends on the individual:

> *(S-F) I feel that there are definitely boundaries of topics that teachers should not talk about with students. I feel that some of these topics are the "unspoken" or the issues that make many people feel uncomfortable talking about. These are the topics that seem to be pushed aside or only spoken about if brought up or in a passive manner through a lesson. I feel that there is not a specific list because these topics may change by person … I just feel that if a topic comes up that a teacher is not necessarily teaching that he/she feels strongly about, I wouldn't know what to do.*

Homelessness was an area that Jennifer was initially uncomfortable discussing. However, I introduced two books to her internship cohort about homelessness: *A Shelter in Our Car* (Gunning, 2004) and *The Lady in the Box* (McGovern, 1997). After listening to and discussing these books, in particular *The Lady in the Box*, she reflected on her change in comfort level:

> *(J) Homelessness was one of those grey areas for me to talk about in the classroom and now that I have read this book, I feel confident enough that I may use it as a read aloud in the future with any age and it would be a great book to read around the holidays I think.*

While she still had some discomfort during her internship, Jennifer found solace in knowing that there were books about these topics that she could use to address critical issues:

> *(S-S) I still feel that there are topics that may be not necessarily disturbing, but uncomfortable to talk about. However, I have learned that any and most topics have some sort of story or literature that allows for a general discussion. Now, instead of feeling like I did in the beginning when I may have avoided the topic, I have learned a variety of ways to incorporate the topic in fun and comfortable ways for me and for students even with topics such as homelessness and incarceration.*

Early in her first year of teaching, Jennifer reflected on her discomfort during the previous year. She acknowledged that she would have preferred to ignore sensitive social issues, but having begun to address issues of diversity, she embraced having conversations around these issues:

> *(I1) Last year, I was like – I probably would have been one of those people that just didn't even go there. Like not as far as reading literacy, but as far as issues or topics that were uncomfortable for me. I'm the type of person that would have probably just been like, "Okay, so let's just act like this didn't ever happen." But now I think it's awesome because not only does it help the students, but it helps me.*

Jennifer saw the benefit of talking to children about issues related to homelessness. While she acknowledged that it was not always comfortable, she was willing to overlook that discomfort

for the benefit of her students. She became fond of discussing issues that could be uncomfortable to some people. Throughout her first year of teaching, Jennifer pursued discussions around the issue of homelessness using books such as *Great Joy* (DiCamillo, 2007), *Something Beautiful* (Wyeth, 2002), and *A Shelter in Our Car* (Gunning, 2004).

Race

As Jennifer started her internship, she acknowledged that race was an uncomfortable topic to discuss with her students. This was based on her own distance from other races. She felt that she needed to be open and needed to listen to her students in order to develop better understandings from their perspective:

> *(S-F) I sometimes feel uncomfortable when talking with students about other races because I am not of that race and as much as I research and try to teach, I am not them and so therefore I can never fully understand their race. I need to be open to listen and learn from students of other races because who better to teach me about another race then someone of that race.*

At the end of Jennifer's "Friends" unit, she reflected on her own connections (or lack of connections) based on the Black characters in the stories she read. She realized her own disconnection to stories such as *The School is Not White* (Rappaport, 2005a) and *Ruby Bridges* (Cole, 1995). Still, that did not stop her from reading and discussing those books. She came to an enriched understanding about connecting to her White identity through reading aloud *The Secret Seder* (Rappaport, 2005b), which I lent her. This is a story of a Jewish family celebrating Passover in hiding during the Nazi Holocaust. All of the books Jennifer had been reading up until this time were based on Black people trying to overcome various struggles. She wanted to show another perspective, that is, White people having similar struggles, so I lent her my copy of this book. To my surprise, she decided to read it the same day I brought it to her, so it was a cold

read for her without pre-planned questions. After reflecting on that read aloud, she felt that her students were more engaged in that story than others. When questioning why, she offered that she identified more with the characters in this book. We both discovered this reading experience was different for her; therefore, it was different for her students. She believed that difference could be attributed to her connection with the characters' race:

> *(P5) Maybe and this is totally way out there, but maybe even in my own mind without thinking about it I connected to that book because I'm White and, you know, being a Christian – whereas I don't know how it was to be a Black slave. I didn't know what it was, and all of this would be going on internally and I would not even have a clue that it was going on, but – you know, even just that feeling everyone knows what it's like to have to hide from something. You know, in "The School is Not White" – I've never been the minority, I mean, I've never been that person who's had to really hide where people were calling me names or beating me up. You know what I mean, so – or being that little girl, like Ruby Bridges, she was so brave and the voice of getting into her character it was like, maybe that's why – without even reading the book, before I could get right into the feeling of like this little boy (The Secret Seder) and he's with his dad and this is, you know, he's scared and the words in this book too, the author really puts the words like you know he's scared or they're being secretive.*

Jennifer realized that she connected to the characters' White race and also to the concept of hiding. She believed that was a universal concept that she could relate to versus being a slave or being bullied because of her race. While she did not directly address the "race" factor with her students during this read aloud, she did change the way she thought about race.

At the end of the study, I asked Jennifer how her own background, race, gender, culture, and class played a role in her classroom discussions and activities. She again referred to her own experiences and lack of exposure to diversity:

> *(I3) Well, I think, let's see, I was gonna say I think it's changed, but it's definitely changed now from where it was before because like I said in the first interview, it was, where I came from, it was totally different from where I'm at now because where I came from, I was not around many other races, it was pretty much, I was around all White people. And it wasn't because I was racist, it's just where we were at there were not many other, I mean, we lived next to a Black family, we were friends with them, but they were the only*

> *Black people that we ever knew. And we hung out with them, they were our nannies, I mean, she was my nanny, she watched us before school.*

Jennifer's nanny was from the only Black family she knew growing up. She seems to be oblivious to their class difference as her nanny worked for her family. Yet Jennifer was aware that her lack of exposure to Black people throughout her life has limited her understandings about other races.

I later asked her if she thought that she distinctly identified herself to her students as a White person or a female:

> *(I3) I don't think I really come out and – like when we did that whole segregation thing, I wasn't like, "I'm a teacher, I'm not really a part of this." I made myself like I was with the White children. It wasn't like "I'm the teacher, you guys are the White kids, you are the Black kids." I was with the White children. I'm always with the females. I don't ever separate myself as a higher authority. I'm always right there with them. I don't ever try and separate myself from the kids because, really, I'm just like – now, when it's time for me to be the teacher, I'm the teacher, but I mean, I don't think there's really a time for me when I should say, " I'm a White female," because there's other White females in the class. And really, there's probably not a time when I would ever say that I'm a White, probably I wouldn't ever because there's always – like right now, there are other children in the class who are in the same place that I am. So I probably wouldn't step out and say "I'm a White, middle class female," because there's other kids in here who are the same and they're kids and so I wouldn't separate myself just because I'm the teacher.*

Jennifer felt that she had a responsibility to include her own race and gender in class activities. While she did not explicitly refer to herself by race or gender, she would try to blend into groups that she identified with to support her students' understandings. She felt a strong identification with the White females in her class, especially since there were so few.

Jennifer went from being uncomfortable talking about race with people of other races to discussing and reading aloud books surrounding issues of segregation. She began to see how her own role as a White female played a part in her classroom participation. Looking back on Jennifer's upbringing supported her own understandings of why she resisted talk about race.

Even though Jennifer made great gains in her comfort with discussing issues related to race, she still relied on books to support her in those conversations. When I asked her if she would have conversations about segregation, jail, poverty, and difference without these books she replied:

> *(I3) Difference, probably yes. Segregation stuff - probably around Martin Luther King. Everything probably would have happened around Martin Luther King, to be honest. I personally don't think that I would probably be able to talk about that stuff unless it was Martin Luther King and I was talking about that for that purpose because I just – it like makes my stomach irritated to even think about having to talk about that stuff without having something to go to.*

In the end, Jennifer relied on children's books to support her in having conversations around race. Martin Luther King Day is a day in U.S. schools when race is an appropriate part of the discussion. Jennifer felt that in order to have discussions without books, it would only be appropriate on that particular day. She referred to sensitive issues, such as race, as "the untouchables." Books enabled her to confront those "untouchable" topics, which will be described later. Without the use of books, it seems as though talk about race would be absent from her curriculum.

Summary

In order to explore Jennifer's perceptions of critical literacy, she herself had to look back on her own childhood, her experiences, background, and race. As Jennifer progressed from pre-service to in-service immersed in critical literacy, she consistently valued this practice. She perceived it to be useful for teachers to learn about their students' lives and their emotions. This would lead her to better understandings about their behavior and attitudes in class. She also perceived critical literacy as being valuable for students as they could learn about the world and develop greater understandings about social issues.

Jennifer's perceptions about the appropriateness of critical literacy changed over time. She was initially uncomfortable with some topics and felt that some issues were not necessarily appropriate for classroom discussion. However, as she engaged in critical literacy practices, talked with me, and self-reflected, she was able to explore her discomfort. This led her to gain confidence in talking about sensitive social issues, and in doing so, she no longer perceived such issues to be inappropriate for discussion. Through the process of self-reflection, Jennifer realized that the closer she connected to a story, primarily based on her White identity, the more comfortable she became.

Even though Jennifer perceived critical literacy to be valuable to both students and teachers, she still felt she would only have conversations about such issues through the use of books. However, finding the right books made her willing to have such discussions with children. Jennifer's perceptions changed over time. Her comfort in talking about "taboo" topics increased as she began to talk about homelessness and race with her students. To provide a deeper understanding of how Jennifer implemented critical literacy, I will next highlight the influences that impacted her critical literacy development.

Influences Impacting Critical Literacy Development

The second overarching theme to be explored is based on the following research question: What influences impact this teacher's development of critical literacy perspectives? Data revealed two contrasting influences impacting Jennifer's development: obstacles Jennifer faced causing her to be reluctant as she implemented critical literacy and support Jennifer received encouraging her to continue implementing critical literacy. These influences played a large role in how Jennifer developed and implemented her critical literacy curriculum.

Obstacles

Data revealed five obstacles Jennifer faced throughout this research as she tried to implement critical literacy: other teachers' attitudes towards her use of critical literacy literature; parental influences related to race; the developmental age of her students; a lack of books; and limited time. Facing these obstacles generated reluctance and limited Jennifer's development as a critical educator.

Other Teachers' Attitudes

During the study, Jennifer taught at the same school and grade level as she did during her internship. Therefore, she was already familiar with the other first grade teachers. Jennifer used critical literacy literature in her classroom during her internship and shared her knowledge of those books with the other first grade teachers. They too became familiar with Jennifer's interest in using such books for read alouds this year. Although Jennifer's fellow first grade teachers had some familiarity with critical literacy, their attitudes towards using such books with her students became an obstacle.

Jennifer was evaluated three times during the school year. Prior to her final evaluation, when she asked me for some read aloud suggestions, I named a few authors, including Patricia Polacco. I knew that Polacco's books portrayed characters from diverse backgrounds, spanning many age groups. Jennifer also went to her fellow first grade teachers for advice about what book to use during this evaluation. She wanted to use a book that could also be part of an author study, and her colleagues recommended Leo Lionni. When Jennifer told me about the outcome of her evaluation, she said her students were not well behaved. She described what happened as a result of her taking her colleagues advice:

J: *(I3) We just finished that Leo Lionni unit, and it just wasn't as much fun. Like I was reading and I was trying to find questions to ask the kids, or the kids – you can look at their faces, and they're like trying to search for things, like dig deeper. Some of those books to me were like, "Unh," even when I read 'em, I was like, "Nyah." I just think there's a lot of other better read-alouds, but it was just kind of part of the author study, and so we went ahead and did the rest of those books…I was asking these teachers, like for my evaluation, "What should I do? Should I do," and they're like, "Well, you know, this book, this author might be too complicated," and I was like – and now, after doing my evaluation on Friday, I wished that I had done who you and I talked about. I don't remember even who we were talking about – Patricia Polacco?*

W: *Patricia Polacco.*

J: *I wish I had done her, because my kids probably would have responded more to her, and I ended up doing Leo Lionni and my kids were like –*

W: *I wonder if that's why they were bouncing around, they weren't challenged.*

J: *Probably, because it was like, "And then Frederick, duh-duh-duh, and then they got the leaves, and then they did this, and they," and my kids were like, "Eh?" I wasn't really that into the book, because I was like, "There's not really hardly any questions for me to ask, my kids are really into this whole," – like we went straight from the whole "A Shelter in Our Car" to Leo Lionni, and my kids are like, "Okay, Leo Lionni…" People were like, "Frederick is a really hard book for first graders, and*
I'm like, "My kids were bored out of their mind," and everyone's like "You know, we know you have a really low class." I do have a low class, but when it comes to read alouds, they've been introduced to critical literacy, and the books that we started out with from the beginning of the year are way beyond what a lot of other people have started with. Now they get bored with books that are just like, "Let me read to you and
not ask you anything about the book," because they try and get into the book now and they'll ask, "Well, why's she doing that?" Or, "Do you think she's homeless?" or "Why do you think she's being mean?" My kids are looking into the book for more things…I liked "Tillie and the Wall," but you know, there was like a sentence on the page, and I'm like, "And, uh." It's like the kids were looking at me to ask them a question and we just kind of stared at each other, and when my evaluator was here, they were waiting for me to ask a question. I should have gone with my own gut instinct knowing that these kids were gonna be bored when it comes to this unit. I should have gone with Patricia Polacco, and everyone was like, "That's gonna be too hard," and I knew that it wouldn't be for my kids, because they are so used to this stuff.

Jennifer took the advice of her peers and refrained from using a critical literacy literature for this evaluation. We talked about the fact that her students were also used to her reading books with human characters rather than the animal characters in the Leo Lionni books. Jennifer's peers felt that her students were low and that that factor alone should be a reason not to do critical literacy. Jennifer saw it very differently. She recognized that her students were low, yet she felt fully confident in their ability to comprehend these books, especially since she had been reading them for over four months. Her peers' attitude about using critical literacy literature with her students became an obstacle for Jennifer. She knew the other teachers were experienced and she looked to them for advice; yet, that advice led her to feeling poorly about her evaluation.

Discussion

Throughout the study, I frequently had to validate for Jennifer that her students were capable of engaging in critical literacy. We periodically talked about my observations and reviewed transcripts that revealed the depth of her students' comments. Her feelings about the positive aspects of critical literacy changed as a result of this evaluation. Jennifer became more vocal about her students' abilities to engage with these texts, and her confidence in them became evident. Jennifer sought out advice for her evaluation. In doing so, her peers talked her out of doing critical literacy. As a result, Jennifer and her students were bored with the alternative selection. The negative attitude her peers expressed became an obstacle that led Jennifer to refrain from using critical literacy texts for her evaluation. However, after seeing her students' lack of interest in the alternative selection, Jennifer realized that her students should be doing critical literacy. In hindsight, she realized they loved the books, engaged in the discussions, behaved well, and comprehended the stories.

Parental Influence

Jennifer was concerned about what her students' parents were teaching them about race, and she was also concerned about how parents would perceive her teaching about race. These concerns became an obstacle in her critical literacy practice. She feared being questioned by parents about the content of her read aloud discussions and also felt guilty when she blamed parents for their children's comments. Because of such obstacles, Jennifer did not want to take responsibility for having conversations based on race.

Jennifer found through her students' comments that parents played a role in predisposing children to seeing race as a dividing line. She was surprised when she discovered that parents told their children not to play with others based on the color of their skin:

> *(I1) I've had questions like, "Well, my mom says I don't need to hang out with the Black people cause I'm peach." And I was like, "Oh gosh, what do I do now?" Because you don't know what to say…That only happened twice and that was – it was like "my mommy says I don't play with the Black kids cause I'm peach," and then we kind of talked about it with the class. And some of the other kids were like, "Well my mom says I don't need to play with White people." And then they started to talk about how – and it was kind of like an eye opener for me cause I'm like "look at how these parents – look what they're telling their kids."*

Jennifer realized that some of her students' parents were teaching their children to discriminate against others based on the color of their skin. This was an unforeseen topic of discussion for her. Even though she was surprised and unsure about how to react, she allowed her students to express themselves.

Jennifer later shared feelings of guilt for assuming that African-American parents led her students to see White people as "mean." When Jennifer went searching for the roots of such comments, she found herself grappling with her own White identity. *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001) is about a White girl and a Black girl each told by their parents not to go on the other side

of the fence which, symbolized a racial divide. Jennifer described the internal thoughts she had during that read aloud:

> *(P2) There were some comments like, "Well, the White people are the mean ones." And I'm White, so it was like, "Is it the parents that instill this? Is it something they've seen? Is it kids in the neighborhood…I went directly in my mind to the parents, which is horrible because it might've been something here at school that happened. But the little ones even, they were like, "The Black people are the nice ones, and the White people were the mean ones." Because I'm White - it made me want to get defensive inside. And being the teacher, obviously I can't say anything, but I want to ask, "Well, why do you say that?" And some of them may have said, "Well, that's what my mamma told me." I'm one of those people - that's one of those barriers I don't want - because then if I start saying, "Well that's not right." They will start going home "Ms. Rossini said you're not right". So that's why I kind of left it.*

When Jennifer's students began labeling White people as "mean," her instinct was to blame their parents as she questioned why her students would say something like that. She felt guilty for feeling that way towards the parents; yet, she was reluctant to counter such comments because she feared the outcome. Her students' prior knowledge and views related to race were of concern to Jennifer. Her students sometimes made comments alluding to the fact that their parents taught them to discriminate. Yet, Jennifer found herself feeling guilty for assuming right away that such comments came from parents. Unsure about how to deal with this dilemma, Jennifer often felt reluctant to pursue conversations with her students about race.

Jennifer expressed her fear of being confronted by parents about the racial content in her read aloud books. She felt as though she needed a rationale to tell parents why she was reading books that contained racial elements. Rather than feeling confident about telling parents why she was using such books, she took a passive approach, handing over the responsibility of having critical conversations to the authors of the books and to her students. She felt she could say that the children "noticed" issues of race and that led to such conversations about racial issues. She

did not want to be seen as someone aggressively pursuing critical conversations, at least in the eyes of parents:

> *(I1) I always kind of like look at what I'm about to read and think, okay, if a parent came in or a parent asked I could have said this is a series that we're reading of Jacqueline Woodson, she talks about - there's a White child and a Black child and they're friends. And the kids brought about and noticed this is in the book. Cause really when I do critical literacy, I'm not like "this is a book about race," or" this is a book about parents in jail." It's like the kids pick up on it so then if a parent were to come and say, "I don't feel comfortable with my child, dadada", then I could say "this is something - it's an author that we read, the children brought it about, I did not in any way" – because I really didn't.*

Jennifer wanted to use books that included content related to racial issues; yet, the possible perceptions of parents caused her concern. Her fears about using racially charged books led Jennifer to develop a rationale which would place the responsibility on the authors and her students rather than owning the discussions herself. Jennifer's concern about what her students' parents were teaching them about race and how they would perceive her teaching children about race was an obstacle that led her to limit such conversations.

Discussion

Jennifer was conscious of her students' parents while she was planning and having read aloud discussions, especially because her students were only in first grade. She said she did not automatically see color when looking at her students, but she became aware of her own Whiteness when the idea of "meanness" was associated with White people. These conversations about race were a challenge for Jennifer. She did not resist using books containing racial elements; yet, she was reluctant to have conversations explicitly related to race because of these obstacles. Her reluctance led her to avoid taking responsibility for initiating such conversations.

She constantly grappled with two main issues related to parents: How they discussed race at home? And how they would perceive her having such discussions in the classroom?

Students' Developmental Age

Students in a first grade classroom are exposed to various types of literature ranging from fairytales to non-fiction. In Jennifer's classroom, another layer was added to the types of books her students would be hearing. Her critical literacy texts contained issues related to racism, poverty, mental illness, and incarceration. She used many of these books with her first grade students during her internship the previous year. She also heard texts of this type while working with peers in her pre-service preparation. However, those prior experiences did not provide absolute confirmation for Jennifer that first graders could deeply engage with critical literacy literature. Throughout the research process, the developmental age of her students became an obstacle. Jennifer would compare her students' comments to what she perceived older students saying. Therefore, I had to continually validate for Jennifer that her students were successfully engaging in critical conversations. As Jennifer became reluctant to engage in critical literacy, I had to build her confidence in this process.

After listening to Jennifer read *The School is Not White* (Rappaport, 2005a), she told me that her students' age was an obstacle for her. She felt that the content of her critical literacy books were too advanced for first graders:

> *(P3) I'm really having a hard time. I feel like some of my books are almost above them right now. And so maybe working with you and finding books that go along well with what we're doing - like "friends" in The Other Side. They got that. They got the basic level. But for me wanting them to get into – maybe it's because I did it last year with you guys and it was all college-age people, and so my expectations are higher for that. But I feel like I'm not getting to the critical points with the kids because it's all basic level to get them to understand the book. Does that make sense at all?*

Jennifer reflected on her experience with her intern cohort and the discussions they were able to engage in the previous year. She realized that she could not have the same expectations for her students' discussions; but, she wanted to make sure they could understand the books at a critical level. She was just beginning to realize that her students needed to learn the content, including the concepts and vocabulary in order to take them to the next level.

The topic of Jennifer's students being too young returned when we talked about her reading aloud *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002b). This story is about a young Black girl going to visit her father in jail. I gave Jennifer my thoughts about how to approach the book from a critical perspective. I also generated critical questions (Appendix D) for her to infuse with her own. Her recourse was to speculate on how to use this book with upper grade students:

> *(P5) That's the kinda book like, when you get those questions; I'd like to hear from the upper grade kids. And I've actually thought about, you know, I've talked to Ms. Davey too, but I thought about putting our two classes together and doing one. And see the differences in the ages and how they respond to the book. Maybe come see how our classes - like a fourth grade response compared to the first grade. And see what they say…Cause that would be something that would be neat. Then it would either reassure me that I'm thinking, okay, some of this is overwhelming for my first graders – if the fourth graders are catching on to the ideas that I'm trying to get out of my first graders…*

Jennifer felt that she would find validation about the material being too advanced for her first graders if older students either grasped the content or became overwhelmed by it. I never wanted to deter her from the idea of trying these books with older students. In fact, I believed that doing so might support her endeavors. Knowing that critical literacy is a process, I thought this was part of the process Jennifer needed to go through.

Jennifer thought her students were not developmentally ready to make connections to the stories. This concerned her, and once again she raised the idea of trying out critical questions

with the older students. She felt that she would be able to ask the older students more explicit questions:

> *(P5) I always get nervous that these kids are not gonna be able to do it. I'll be honest, I'm always like, they are such good ideas, but I'm afraid - my kids sometimes don't even connect… I get nervous with that with the younger kids.*
>
> *(P6) If you went to Ms. Davey's room and did critical literacy, it'd probably ask, "Why do you think it's just a Black family in the community?" Or, "Why do you think it's—?"*

Even though she never pursued trying out her questions with the older students, she would continually differentiate between what older students could do compared to her first graders. This occurred again as she described how her students did not understand the mother's situation in *Our Gracie Aunt* (Woodson, 2002a). In this story, two siblings were taken to live with an aunt after their mother was hospitalized:

> *(P6) I was like, "Why do you think she's sick?" And I just kept probing questions and not one of them was like, "She could be on drugs." "She could be with alcohol." And that's the first thing you hear those upper grade kids say is, "She's on drugs." "She's on alcohol." "She's been out doping it up." "She's got an STD." Who knows what they'd say - my kids aren't going to say that…So that's hard. And it's kind of like I feel like they're not going to the full extent.*

The book never talked about or alluded to issues such as drugs and alcohol. Jennifer however, believed that students should make those connections. She felt that older students would automatically assume drugs and alcohol were the reason the mother was hospitalized and that would lead to a richer conversation. Jennifer often felt frustrated that her students did not give her the answers she thought older children could provide. She was coming to her read aloud discussions with presumptions about the comments her students should or could share. Our follow-up conversations during our planning meetings, therefore, became much more important to her implementation of critical literacy.

Discussion

There was an ongoing tension between the high level of the content Jennifer was sharing and the young age of her students. She continually questioned if they were capable of having critical conversations. Her students' lack of experience and limited background knowledge were factors she struggled with in implementing critical literacy. She didn't seem to realize that background knowledge had to be introduced and she was in a position to be one of the first to do so through the use of these books. Her escape mechanism was to project having critical conversations with students in fourth grade rather than with her first graders. She was looking for either confirmation that her students were too young or that both age groups would have difficulty with engagement. Even though the developmental age of her students was an obstacle, Jennifer did not give up on implementing critical literacy. However, she did need continued support from me to point out her students' ability to carry on these conversations in a thoughtful manner.

Lack of Books

Jennifer did not have a pre-existing critical literacy framework to follow, neither did she have a set of resources in place. In order to conduct read alouds with critical literacy literature, Jennifer needed books. First year teachers are provided with classrooms that have served other teachers in the past. The books left in those classrooms are not usually the best of the bunch; and based on my own experience, books that deal with critical social issues are rarely included, which was the case in Jennifer's classroom. In addition, her school library did not seem to have appropriate resources. A lack of books became an obstacle for Jennifer, resulting in her not being able to read all of the stories she would have liked. Books that she knew about from her

internship were the only tangible resources she had to get started. Over the course of our interviews, she describes her frustration and drive to get her hands on critical literacy literature:

> *(I1) I've looked online for some things, but once again it's kind of like I don't know what I'm exactly looking for, cause when you put in "critical literacy" it doesn't really pop up. I actually use the branch library more than the school library. Because I find a lot of times that school library is limited on what they have.*

> *(I2) I don't have enough books at my hands…And I don't feel like I have enough books that I know that are critical literacy books…How do I get a hold of critical literature…That's my thing - getting a hold of critical literature, that's how I would make it better. Being able to have the resources, because you can't just type in Google "critical literature" - I mean, you could type in "homelessness" and you could type in, "racism" and you could type in different topics like that. But that's probably my biggest thing, finding those books and the authors who touch on those things.*

Having a lack of books on hand was not the only problem for Jennifer. She also found it challenging to search for books that she deemed "critical." She knew she needed the right key word to do a search, but that meant that she had to have an established topic in advance. Jennifer said that her main source of knowledge about books came from her pre-service experience the previous year. She was already familiar with the content of those books and what questions could be used with them. Those books also provided her with a starting point for topics that could turn into units:

> *(I2) Last year helped - knowing some of the books that we did and having the background of some of the books, like "The School is Not White" and "The Other Side" and "Visiting Day" because I found that I pulled a lot of the books from last year because I knew those books.*

Jennifer wanted to use *The Lady in the Box* (McGovern, 1997), which I read to her cohort last year, for her "Friends" unit and then again for her "Being Thankful" unit. However, without easy access to the book, it was never used:

> *(I3) The Lady in the Box, I would have really liked to have gotten it, but time – they didn't have it here in the library, so I could have – it was finding the time even to drive to*

> *the library that's 10 minutes from my house…Going to the library and then getting the book to go and check it out…*

Time was always a factor in locating books. While Jennifer acknowledged going to the public library for some of her books, as the year progressed, she seemed to go to the library less and less. Going to the library meant that she needed enough time to make the trip. Jennifer would often determine which books she was going to read on a week-by-week basis and her plans often changed, making it more difficult to rely on books from the local library.

Jennifer began to look towards next year and realized the importance of planning ahead, especially in having time to gather books. She saw that she would need to know where to borrow the books or she would have to buy them in order to ease the process of planning her units:

> *(I3) I think what I might do is put together even, like say something like "homelessness" – okay, I know I've got "A Shelter in Our Car" and I've got this, and I've got this, and I've got this, and then I've got "race," and I've got this, and this, and this, and this, and then I've got this. Like start my own – even if I don't have the books, like these are not my books, but I can say, "I know I have this book, and this book, and this book, that if I need to locate these somewhere, I can find them in a library, I can find them at this school. These are books that hit this subject, and these are critical literacy books, and I can find these somewhere. I think that would be something that I would really like to do… If you could get me a library - that's my wish, I want a critical literacy library…I just wish I had a magic wand to say, "I need a library of critical literacy books."*

Jennifer felt that having an organized system for her books would help her implement critical literacy next year. She knew that a lack of books was an obstacle in her critical literacy practice. Yet, she also understood that knowing in advance where she could locate various books would make the implementation process easier.

Discussion

The central tool a teacher needs to conduct a read aloud is a book. However, in conducting a critical literacy read aloud, that tool is not always a standard resource in a

classroom. There is not a specific key word a teacher can use to locate these books from an online or library search. School libraries may only have more traditional books. As Jennifer was trying to establish her own collection of books, she embarked on what looked like a scavenger hunt. Jennifer had to look many places in search of her books: the local library, the school library, the book store, and her own collection. She also relied on me to supplement her collection. Having to determine if she had the right book on hand became a constant concern. This led Jennifer to make an attempt at getting a head start on planning for next year so that a lack of books would be less of an obstacle.

Limited Time

The school day is filled with various activities, at times not related to content. Jennifer and I often spent time looking at her planning book to find time for our planning meetings and my observations. That led us to talk about the role time in general played in her planning. I often gave her suggestions for activities she could do to extend and enrich her lessons. However, time was constantly an obstacle, limiting the activities she could do to extend her read alouds. Her extension activities primarily became written responses to the books as a part of writer's workshop, which was already built into her schedule.

For Jennifer to go beyond the prescribed schedule would have taken a lot more time, thought, and creativity - elements she was trying to balance as a first year teacher. She described how various upcoming events and holidays served as obstacles in her teaching:

> *(I2) I just wish I had more time to do some of the big activities with the kids, like I wanted to do that web connection with the kids, but there's so many things going on…this Thursday it's Title One parent day…On Friday, a big Thanksgiving activity… and the book fair is this week… then it's Christmas break and the week before Christmas break is testing and you don't really have full teaching time, so it limits you… there's all these*

> *things that you wanna do. I think you could go so much further with the activities and critical literacy.*

She was mindful of the need to look ahead when planning. While she was initially relying on having more time for projects, once she noticed all of the holidays, events, and testing days, she was once again limited.

Jennifer reported that time limited what she could do with her students. She felt that overall, if she had more time in her daily schedule, she could complete more projects. Jennifer especially wanted to do more hands-on projects, but she rarely found the time to do so:

> *(P4) Time is probably the biggest barrier I've found this whole year already that is driving me crazy 'cause I don't feel like I can ever get everything done. So that's been the hardest thing.*

> *(I2) Time is so – it's such a precious thing. That's probably my biggest thing. If I look back through our months that we've had together, it's like just having time to be able to do projects and stuff like that.*

She was frustrated by the lack of time in the school day. I gave Jennifer transcripts of our planning meetings so she could have a record of the suggestions I made about extension activities. However, many of those activities never came to life, which will be discussed later. Jennifer seemed eager to take critical literacy to a deeper level, but not much of the depth she desired was actually achieved. Having a well thought out plan in advance may have supported her efforts to try to incorporate more activities, but the school schedule in itself seemed to be an obstacle.

Discussion

Not having enough time to teach and incorporate activities was an obstacle for Jennifer. The school had many important events planned, such as parent visits and holiday celebrations. Those events, combined with school vacations and district and state testing, provided limited

time for instruction. Time limitations resulted in her critical literacy lessons being restricted to read aloud discussions followed by a written response.

Jennifer should be commended for her attempts to implement critical literacy in the face of numerous obstacles. Other teachers, the influence of her students' parents, her concerns about the developmental age of her students, a lack of books and limited time were forces pushing her to be reluctant in her critical literacy approach. However, she overcame many of these obstacles. Jennifer continually reflected on her practice, sought out new ideas, and continued her mission to find new books and learn more about implementing critical literacy. Even though Jennifer faced many obstacles as she implemented critical literacy, there were also factors that supported her efforts, providing confirmation along the way.

Sources of Support

In order to engage in critical literacy as a first year teacher, Jennifer relied on sources that supported her. Data revealed three main sources of support throughout this process. I was a constant source of support, her knowledge about critical literacy books helped her gain confidence in using them, and her students' reactions confirmed that she was doing something positive. All three sources of support helped move Jennifer beyond her reluctance to use critical literacy approaches, and helped her further develop a critical perspective.

The Researcher

My goal throughout this research project was to raise Jennifer's consciousness about critical literacy. I designed the study so that Jennifer and I could co-construct her lesson plans. I was mindful of my place in the research throughout the study. When time permitted, Jennifer and

I talked before and after her read alouds. I gave her feedback on the questions she posed and inquired about the dialogue that ensued. Because I knew Jennifer, her students, and about critical literacy, she found my role to be important to her development. My presence served as a source of support for Jennifer.

Jennifer said that even when I was not there to observe her read alouds, she would think about my suggestions. Just like I did, Jennifer wrote her questions on sticky-notes and posted them throughout the read aloud book. As she would pose her questions, she would think about what suggestions I would make along the way:

> *(I2) You're like my sticky-note. Because having you here, like I said, it makes me remember, like what we did last year. And when I'm reading through my book, like today, I would be reading and I would look at my sticky-note and think of what I had written, but then I would think "What would Wendy ask?" and think about what we talked about in our planning meetings and the questions… I felt like I could always turn around and say "What do you think?"*

We had many planning meetings directly after her read alouds. Jennifer preferred this form of follow-up because she could receive instant feedback. I asked her what it would have been like if I did not join her in that process. She said that her critical literacy lessons would have been more generic had I not supported her. She believed that in particular her questions would have suffered had I not challenged her to rethink them:

> *(I2) The planning was probably one of my favorite parts… because we could always talk and say "okay, now what do you think?"… I don't think it really would have been beneficial for me… I probably would have planned and done, but… it would not have worked the way it did because I would probably not have changed my questions to be as engaging… The planning was definitely a big deal.*

Our planning meetings not only improved her lessons, but Jennifer also was able become a better reflective practitioner in the process. Through our conversations, she was able to verbalize and question her own actions. She also thought more about her students and their level of

engagement in the read aloud discussions. Since I was there to raise her awareness, I often posed open-ended questions, asking her to rethink some of her decisions. This process of reflecting led her to continually grow:

> *(I2) The reflecting was huge because that was a time for me to be like, "Okay, this is what my kids did, this is what they said." The times you said, "Well, what do you think if you had done this?" or you know…*

Having another person interacting with her students on a regular basis was also a source of comfort to Jennifer. We had thoughtful discussions about the children's reactions and how to follow-up based on their development. Because my visits were frequent, my suggestions were connected to the immediate needs of Jennifer and her students.

Jennifer not only recognized that her teaching improved because of my support, but she realized that her students became more engaged as well. We talked about her read aloud questions throughout the study and I provided her with a general outline (Appendix C) to help her develop critical questions. We also specifically co-constructed questions to two of her read alouds (Appendix D), which will be described later. During our interviews, Jennifer described her enjoyment of that co-constructive process and how it led to a change in her students:

> *(I2) I think one of my favorite times was when you read through the book and then I got to read the book, which that was something that, obviously, we couldn't do every time because of time and getting the books back and forth and having two copies of a book and all that. But to be able to see us both doing the questions and put them together, and that was probably one of the best engaged books with the kids too, because there was 50 questions in all of that book. The questions were probably more than there was writing in the book. The kids were involved and to hear them get into it, that was probably one of my favorite books that we did because it was like both of our minds and all of the kids thinking and it was just really cool to see them get that much into the book and pulling all those questions from you.*

> *(I3) I saw the change, I would say look at my notes from the beginning to when you and I talked about how important it was to ask questions. Because going from my questions, the first couple of times that you observed, to when you and I sat down and said, "Okay, let's look at the questions I'm asking." …When my questions started changing, the way my*

> *kids started responding changed…It was like talking to somebody else really made a difference.*

Once again, Jennifer was able to be reflective about her students and their level of engagement. She began to see the importance of thinking through her questions. Even though she gravitated toward the more basic questions, after I modeled for her how to create critical questions and reviewed the critical question outline (Appendix C), she began to feel more confident in her own questions, which could lead to higher level questioning in the future.

Jennifer felt that I was one of the only people consistently supporting her to implement her critical literacy lessons:

> *(I3) You were pretty much the only support that was there. I mean, people here knew I was doing it, but… It was pretty much like, "Wendy's coming," and I knew that if you found anything, or if you saw anything, or if I had a question about a book…*

These sentiments speak to the isolation Jennifer was experiencing as a first year teacher, which became a challenge as she tried to implement strategies that went beyond the regular curriculum. I always received a warm welcome when I stepped into Jennifer's classroom. She seemed to enjoy our time together and was eager to elaborate during our planning meetings and interviews. I not only provided her with feedback and books for critical literacy, but I offered suggestions about teaching, school politics, behavior management, and other issues related to the profession. As a first year teacher, Jennifer was eager to have any support offered.

Discussion

My role as a researcher was instrumental in helping Jennifer develop a critical perspective. This support began before she started her first teaching job. Being able to learn about critical literacy during her pre-service year provided Jennifer with a foundation that supported her in her first year of teaching. This foundation also provided her with knowledge

about books that she could use to engage children in critical conversations. Collaboratively creating critical questions became a point of reference for the duration of the study. Jennifer often looked back at that particular experience as a pivotal point in her use of critical literacy. Being a first year teacher is a complex challenge for anyone. Trying to implement a critical literacy approach at the same time adds another layer to that complexity. My role was to support Jennifer while being mindful of both aspects. Knowing that developing a critical perspective is a process, I wanted Jennifer to feel supported and encouraged as she continued on an important journey.

Books

Jennifer acknowledged that acquiring critical literacy books for her read alouds was an obstacle to her critical literacy development. However, her continued quest for these books spoke to her strong belief in using them. Jennifer felt that once she had the right book, her students would benefit. They engaged in discussions around the books and sought them out for use in other content areas. Having knowledge of such books and continually learning how to use them enabled Jennifer to initiate conversations about sensitive social issues. Without the use of such books, she said she would not have pursued conversations about these issues. These books supported her critical literacy practice.

Jennifer referred to her critical literacy books as “the untouchables” because they contained topics that she would typically feel uncomfortable talking about with children. However, because those topics were situated in books, it made it easier for her to initiate conversations related to sensitive social issues. Because of the books, her children were able to engage in the discussions they would not otherwise have:

> *(I1) Most my critical literacy books are books that I call "the untouchables" because it's stuff that I wouldn't feel comfortable talking about or bringing right up with my class. But in a book it just kind of becomes part of the story and the kids start understanding.*

Without the books, Jennifer would not feel comfortable talking about some of these critical issues. The books supported her, easing her comfort in having those discussions.

Jennifer continued to use critical literacy books because her students understood them and gravitated towards them. During our interviews, she described how her students continually referred to those books throughout the school day:

> *(I2) They go back and re-read them a lot. And they want go through and write about them in writer's workshop. Or when they get free time and in centers, they come back and read the books that we've read, especially the ones that we talk about….My kids really, with the critical literacy stories, they want to be involved in the story.*

> *(I3) The kids go to those books. Those are the books that they go to when they can go to the basket and pick one of the books that we've read, and they refer back to those all the time.*

Her students' engagement with these books confirmed for Jennifer that critical literacy was positively influencing her students. Children were not only listening to them during the read alouds, but they referred to them in their writing and selected to read them during free time.

Jennifer also became eager to use critical literacy books because of their inclusiveness of Black characters. She recognized that such books had not been available to a mainstream audience in the past. Now that she was teaching and had an awareness of these books, she wanted to use them. However, she was also consciously trying to include both Black and White characters in the books she selected:

> *(I3) Well, I was in one of those classes where the teacher – I mean, I don't remember any books that had any Black characters in them, which I also don't think that they were readily available, because well… I mean, there were not that many… Now its funny how many books I can find that have African-American characters... I want to do books that have both African-American and White -you know Black and White both – I want 'em both in my books.*

Jennifer put a lot of thought into the books she chose to read to her students. The majority of her students were Black. Being that she chose to select books that reflected her students' lives, having an awareness of books that contained Black characters supported her efforts. Her students may have gravitated towards those books because they saw characters in them who were similar to themselves. Jennifer saw the impact of using such books with her students and she looked toward the future and envisioned always using critical literacy literature:

> *(I3) I'm learning that these books will be in my classroom no matter what. I will read Jacquelyn Woodson books, and I will read "Something Beautiful," and I want to read "A Shelter in Our Car," and "Visiting Day" – those will be in my classroom no matter what, as long as I'm a teacher, because that's important stuff for my kids, no matter if they're Black, or if they're White, because that's stuff that happens in our world every day.*

Jennifer felt that critical literacy literature is important to use with children. The content of the books reflected real life, the children engaged in conversations during their read alouds, and they chose to use them in their writing and during free time. Seeing the positive impact these books had on her students' engagement supported Jennifer's efforts to engage in critical literacy practices.

Discussion

Jennifer may have referred to critical literacy books as "the untouchables" because of her lack of comfort with the topics presented in these books. However, that did not interfere with her drive to use them. She believed that these books reflected the lives of her students and therefore, she overcame her discomfort and focused on the needs of her students. Jennifer was still developing her critical literacy perspective and limiting the depth of her conversations; still, she continued to use books that contained critical elements. Even though she struggled to acquire

children's critical literacy literature, the impact these books had on her students led her to continue searching for more books, especially books depicting both Black and White characters.

Student Engagement

The level of engagement her students displayed as a result of critical literacy became a source of support for Jennifer and encouraged her to continue with this approach. Jennifer recognized that using children's critical literacy literature gave her students the opportunity to express thoughts they would not typically share. She believed that using these books helped her students cope with issues they faced in real life. Jennifer also found that her students wrote in response to the books and became better communicators through this process.

Jennifer felt that her students expressed themselves and shared their emotions as a result of having critical conversations. She also felt that being in a group amongst peers provided children with another source of support in dealing with their life issues:

> *(I1) It's so like "we don't say this, we don't do this", but by reading the book it gives them a place to say – "that makes me sad when I don't get to see my dad", or "I don't know what my daddy did, but they say he's bad", or "they say he's still good." It gives them a place where they can open up when they may not have it… Or it may just be a place where they say, "you know what, I kind of feel that way." And they have other kids that they can reach out to rather than just the teacher or a grownup.*

By having a relaxed atmosphere during her read alouds, Jennifer created a sense of community for her students in which they felt safe to share issues that may typically be taboo for discussion. Her unit on "Families" was primarily based on issues that her students were dealing with in their everyday lives. Talking about family dynamics sometimes revealed deeper issues that some of her students were facing, which will be described later. She offered what happened after she read *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002b), which is about having a parent in jail:

> *(I2) I had a lot of kids who felt like they were the only ones going through it in this room… And last week, I had like three kids bring in letters their dads wrote them from jail…they all wanted to read them…Because of that book, they're not embarrassed that their dad's in jail anymore. They know their dad loves them and that's all those letters said over and over…Maybe that's most important, it's that other people are going through this too.*

Her students became less ashamed about discussing their families as they learned that others shared the same experiences. Through their conversations, they also learned to embrace their parents' love regardless of the circumstance. The sense of community that was built allowed her students to talk about suppressed feelings they had related to their family circumstances.

Not only did her students begin to express themselves more openly, they also became better communicators. She described how they started to listen to each other and learn from one another:

> *(I2) I see how they talk to one another now…Maybe they've grown, too. Just, they've matured, obviously as kids but now they can have conversations and even though it's kind of short, as you can tell, they can still talk and listen to one another and respond and feed off of each other. Whereas before that was just not happening. One would say something and the other would talk, but now they feed off each other like, "Oh," or, "Yeah, maybe," and they relate and feed off of each other's conversations… They're learning from one another.*

Jennifer found that her students matured throughout the critical literacy process. As they learned how to listen to each other, they started to empathize and support each other. As her students became more vocal about their connections to the stories, they also began to express their thoughts on paper. Jennifer described what happened after she read *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002b):

> *(I2) I had a lot of kids that after I read a story, they wrote in writer's workshop, they were like, "My dad is too," or, "My dad's in jail too."*

Through my observations, I saw many of her students writing about their feelings connected to the stories. One little girl was quiet and emotional while listening to *Always My Dad* (Wyeth,

1997), which is about an absent father. Yet, she seemed to flourish when she was given the opportunity to write. These kinds of scenarios are what encouraged Jennifer to continue with critical literacy. Jennifer also felt that enabling her students to become better communicators would support them throughout their life. The topics in these books reflected real life issues. Being able to confront those issues now, Jennifer felt would help her students as they grew into adulthood:

> *(I2) Well, it's going on in their lives, obviously, I mean, for them to be able to talk it is gonna help them grow because they're obviously, if they're dealing with it now, they're gonna be dealing with it in their lives and they can either hold it in and it's gonna turn into something else later, or if they can deal with it now, it's gonna make them stronger.*

She felt that her students would learn life skills through critical literacy. The more they learned how to cope with challenges now, the better off they would be later in life. She felt critical literacy was an approach that helped prepare students for their future:

> *(I2) No matter what it is, it's just, they're learning about something that's going on in someone else's life or their own life…They're learning a life skill of some sort no matter what.*

She felt that if her students learned to confront critical issues, they would become stronger individuals as a result. This belief is aligned with Freire's (1970/2005) view of transformative education, which is not explained to the oppressed; rather it comes about through dialoguing with the people about their actions. The dialogue Jennifer pursued with her students could lead them to become transformative in a positive manner for themselves and society. Their level of communication and their ability to express themselves in writing were strategies they could use throughout their lives.

Over my years in the classroom, I too had students with a parent in jail. *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002b) was the critical literacy text that led me to this area of research. I never knew

what was deemed appropriate for discussion on this topic. I also never had a book to support such conversations. Jennifer used this story to help her students share their own stories about missing a parent because of incarceration. The fact that her students later brought in their own letters from jail speaks volumes about the depth of their understanding. They connected the story to their lives, comprehended the meaning of the story, wrote about it in writer's workshop, and brought in their own letters acknowledging their "visiting days." Had this happened in my classroom, I too would have felt confirmation that I was doing something positive for my students. Had her students been unresponsive, she would not have been validated in continuing this approach. In the face of many obstacles, the high level of engagement her students displayed supported her throughout this process.

Discussion

Data revealed that Jennifer recognized the power of "talk". She was not only able to learn about her students through critical conversations, but her students learned about each other. They began to feel comfortable discussing topics that are often left untouched, at least inside of school. Jennifer's use of children's critical literacy literature provided a bridge between students' home and school lives. This "talk" also let children know that their peers have similar stories, which helped them build empathy toward others. They responded to each other and supported one another through critical literacy. Jennifer's students became engaged in talk, especially about jail. Their engagement led Jennifer to have confidence using books that spoke to their lives. All of these factors contributed to Jennifer's continued use of critical literacy.

Summary

As Jennifer embarked on her first year of teaching, she was eager to incorporate critical literacy into her curriculum. Without an existing framework and lack of books, she took on a huge task. Having support along the way became crucial for Jennifer's success. I, as the researcher, took on a large role as one of Jennifer's only supporters. While she did not have many books in the beginning, she acquired them along the way, which led her to feel confident about her plans for next year. Jennifer's students' also provided validation for what she was doing. Seeing their reactions, their level of engagement, and the way they began to support each other in the learning process, confirmed her use of critical literacy.

The support and confirmation Jennifer received outweighed the obstacles. I was aware of her hesitation and had to continually be mindful of her reluctance throughout the research process. Providing her with copies of transcripts became a tangible way for her to see the positive aspects of what she was doing. Books served as both an obstacle and as a source of support for Jennifer. She did not have many at the start, but once she began acquiring more, she became even more determined to continue her quest for appropriate literature. The developmental age of Jennifer's students was an obstacle; yet, her students' level of engagement served as a support. She questioned their age and developmental abilities to engage in critical conversations, yet when she began to see their reactions and the positive outcomes, she felt validated. Had she not had someone there pointing out all of the good things taking place, the obstacles may have forced her to give up on critical literacy. I will next describe how she implemented her critical literacy curriculum specifically illustrating the elements that made up her curriculum.

Implementation of Critical Literacy

The third overarching theme is based on the following research question: How does this teacher implement critical literacy? Within this theme, I explored three aspects of the implementation process. First I examined the elements of her critical literacy curriculum. Second, I examined how she and I co-constructed critical literacy. And third, I discuss missed opportunities that could have enriched Jennifer's curriculum.

Curriculum Elements

At least twice a month from August to December, Jennifer and I met to discuss her lesson planning specifically related to critical literacy. I also observed on a weekly basis how the elements of her lessons developed into patterns forming her critical literacy curriculum. Jennifer's critical literacy curriculum was based on three main units: "Friends," "Family," and "Being Thankful." As mentioned earlier, I also observed part of an author study based on Leo Lionni books. However, after completing that unit, Jennifer felt it did not meet her definition of critical literacy. For this research, that author study will not be considered as a "critical literacy" unit, although data from that time period was included when appropriate.

Data revealed that Jennifer's read alouds were the primary element in her critical literacy curriculum. A secondary element was a written response during writer's workshop. Other than writer's workshop, limited activities were implemented before or after her read alouds. Jennifer also had culminating activities at the end of some of her units. The majority of Jennifer's critical literacy curriculum was based on doing a read aloud and having her students write an individual response during writer's workshop. In order to illustrate how Jennifer implemented critical

literacy as a first year teacher, I will describe the elements of her curriculum. This includes a description of what happened before and after her read alouds. I will also discuss what happened during Jennifer's read alouds, which includes a description of the read aloud environment, the conversations and questions she pursued, and her purpose in using critical literacy literature.

Before and After Read Alouds

Jennifer implemented a limited number of activities before and after her read alouds. The structure of her pre-reading activities consisted of either a whole group activity or a small group or one-on-one discussion. Her follow-up activities were either whole group or, most often, individual written responses during writer's workshop.

Pre-Reading Activities

Jennifer held a limited number of pre-reading activities which were based on two purposes. One purpose was to introduce students to new concepts and vocabulary in order to help her students understand the story. Some of the topics she discussed were related to segregation, race, education, and slavery. For example, Jennifer read *The School is Not White* (Rappaport, 2005a), as part of her "Friends" unit. This story was about a Black family attending an all White school during the Civil Rights movement. Prior to reading this story, she had her students enact the concept of segregation and highlighted the role race played during the Civil Rights movement:

> *(P3) I noticed "segregated and slavery" were two of the words…So today we went outside and we made a big circle…I was like, "Pretend we're going to different schools. Everybody line up." And we both lined up and I said, "You guys walk that way and we're gonna walk this way." They were like, "Hey." I was like, "What are you guys noticing?" Then one little girl said, "That reminds me of that book with the two girls on the fence."…And she's like, "You guys are all White walking that way, and we're all Black*

> *walking this way." And they noticed it. And so then we talked about how that segregated is something that means separated, and a lot of times it's used for things like race.*

I lent Jennifer my copy of this book, which also included a teacher's guide with suggested activities. She referred to this guide to implement her pre-reading activity. This activity activated her students' prior knowledge and helped them make text-to-text connections as they found meaning in new concepts.

The other purpose of her pre-reading activities was to address particular students' personal connections to the stories. Data revealed that Jennifer had pre-reading discussions based on families and the emotions generated from changes in family dynamics. To have such discussions, Jennifer needed to be familiar with her students, their backgrounds, and their current family situations. She had these discussions in private, either in small group or one-on-one settings, depending on the situation. By having these pre-reading discussions, Jennifer helped her students make connections to the books, provided them with knowledge that they were not alone in their struggles, and prepared them in advance for the content of the stories.

Both of these purposes were aligned with the consistent perception Jennifer had about the value of critical literacy. As described earlier, Jennifer felt that critical literacy was valuable for students because it helped them learn about the world and about critical issues, which were often connected to issues in their own lives. She used her pre-reading activities to introduce students to new concepts, helping them learn about the world through an historical lens. Jennifer also addressed critical issues relevant in her students' lives before some of her read alouds. This helped students process their own critical issues, and by later engaging in the read aloud discussions, they were able to see that others had similar stories. As the class engaged in dialogue around these issues, her students could learn to empathize and build tolerance.

Although Jennifer did not often hold pre-reading activities, these examples highlight the thought process Jennifer underwent to launch her critical literacy lessons, showing that she was mindful of her students' needs. Jennifer was aware that students' personal connections and a lack of vocabulary could keep her students from following and understanding the stories. By implementing pre-reading activities, Jennifer helped her students build on and expand their background knowledge to improve their comprehension. She also helped them learn about social issues and the world. Having her students confront their own issues helped them to understand and express themselves. Jennifer referred to the teacher's guide provided in one of the books, which gave her ideas about implementing pre-reading activities. Without having such a guide for her other books, Jennifer did not pursue more pre-reading activities. I would share ideas with her during our planning meetings; yet, it seems as though she needed something more tangible to help her implement such activities. Perhaps if she had been provided with supplementary resources for her other books, she would have been prompted to engage her students in additional pre-reading activities.

Follow-up Activities

Throughout my observations and planning meetings with Jennifer, data revealed that she had both within unit follow-ups and those that came at the conclusion of her units. I considered a "follow-up" to be any activity that took place once Jennifer stopped reading the book and began some type of transition. Her within unit follow-up activities were based on two different approaches. She either had her students write a response to a story during writer's workshop or she conducted a whole group activity with the class. It is important to note that there were a small number of these activities. On a few occasions, Jennifer's class did not have any follow-up

activities. This was because there was either no advance planning for such an activity or because of time limitations (the class was scheduled for lunch directly after the reading block).

Jennifer's within unit follow-ups were based on whole group discussions or individual written responses. For her whole group follow-ups, Jennifer always wrote on her easel. She would use her easel to draw some type of graphic organizer such as a T-chart to make comparisons, and she had her students make text-to-text and text-to-self connections. They either had their own paper and followed along or orally took part in the discussion. For example, after reading *The School is Not White* (Rappaport, 2005a), Jennifer had her students compare their school, past or present, to the school in the story. Her students verbally shared their stories as Jennifer filled in the Same/Different T-chart. This activity was also developed based on the teacher's guide Jennifer referred to for her pre-reading activity. After this discussion, she transitioned into writer's workshop and shifted toward an aesthetic (Rosenblatt, 1978) approach, asking her students to write about how they felt while listening to this story. She had her students share their experiences.

To engage her students during writer's workshop, Jennifer always provided her students with lined paper, and they were allowed to write with pencils or crayons. They were told to sound out words that they could not spell. Jennifer reminded them to look on the word wall and the family word chart if they needed help or to "turtle talk" to sound out the words. As part of the school's literacy philosophy, they were reminded to write "long and strong," to write quietly, and to look like writers. Jennifer also played classical music in the background. She would either walk around to help her students or have some join her at her table for support.

The directions Jennifer provided for writer's workshop were specific, although at times her students were given the choice to extend previous work or respond to the read aloud of the

day. If they were specifically asked to respond to the read aloud, they were asked to write about their connection to the story or feelings they had towards the story. On occasion, she had her students envision themselves in the story. For example, as part of Jennifer's "Family" unit, after listening to the story *Always My Dad* (Wyeth, 1997), Jennifer asked her students to imagine they were part of the story:

> *(O7) Okay, close your eyes. If you were in this story, who would you, what's happening, who might you be missing? When you are ready, let me know what you'd write about.*

This activity was an extension of a pre-reading activity earlier that day. Both activities were prompted by the fact that Jennifer knew some of her students were missing their fathers. Once Jennifer was in her "Being Thankful" unit, she suggested that her students write about things they were thankful for or positive things they have done in their lives. On occasion, Jennifer would recite her own story as a model for her students. Often at the conclusion of writer's workshop, the class would come back together on the floor to listen to a few selected pieces of writing. Students were then encouraged to ask their peers questions.

Jennifer's unit closures included whole group discussions and individual written responses. Her whole group discussions always included a graphic organizer such as a T-chart. She would often dictate the students' comments as she filled in the graphic organizers. The content of these discussions was based on the characters and their feelings, the students' feelings toward the books, recalling information from the books, and the family dynamics in the stories. She sometimes had her students individually describe each book within the unit:

> *(O5) Who remembers this book? (holds up "The School is Not White")… Who remembers this book? (Holds up "The Other Side")… What about this book (holds up "Ruby Bridges")?*

> *(O11) Okay, in the books, what were they thankful for? If you remember something from the books, tell me… Who else can tell me something from "Something Beautiful?"*

Jennifer also helped her students connect information they recalled from the books with the theme of the unit:

> *(O5) Okay, all of these books, they all had a family, a mom, dad, grannie, aunt. In each one they all had a family. How did the people feel?*
>
> *(O11) Okay, in the books, what were they thankful for? If you remember something from the books, tell me.*

Jennifer posed questions to activate her students' prior knowledge based on all of the books in the units. During unit closure discussions, her students started out recalling books from a specific unit. However, as the year progressed, they would recall books encompassing many units. Her students at that point were able to use all of the books to scaffold their knowledge. Jennifer continually shifted her students' attention to past books as she introduced new ones, activating their prior knowledge to help them make connections. Jennifer's "Being Thankful" unit closure was initially intended to lead up to a "Make a Change Day." However; that activity became a written thank you letter instead of taking action, which will be described later.

Discussion

Jennifer's follow-up activities took place within and at the end of her units. When Jennifer held pre-reading activities, her follow-up activities often followed the same theme. Having a tangible resource guide with suggestions for activities supported her efforts to implement such activities. She used both whole group and written responses as part of her within unit follow-up activities and her unit closures. She often had her students share their writing, which helped them learn from their peers, empathize with each other, and see examples of quality work. As they listened to their peers' stories, they could discover new perspectives, enabling them to learn about the world and critical issues. Jennifer used an aesthetic (Rosenblatt,

1978) approach in her follow-up activities as she encouraged her students to describe how they felt during the reading process when they listened to and discussed the stories. She also used an efferent (Rosenblatt, 1978) approach, asking them to recall prior knowledge, make connections, and elaborate on the content of the stories.

Jennifer did not implement many pre-reading activities. However, when she did, a follow-up activity also occurred. Jennifer not only wanted to teach her students new concepts that were in the critical literacy books, she also wanted to address the needs of her students. She continually selected books based on the current situations of her students. This led her to being flexible with her choices because as situations arose, she sought out books to address them. Jennifer benefited from the suggestions offered in the teacher's guide. Rather than using the guide as a script, she took the suggestions and made them her own based on knowing her students and their backgrounds. However, Jennifer use of activities before and after read alouds was limited. Listening to my suggestions and having copies of our transcripts was not enough support to help her further develop activities around her read alouds. In addition, the expectations for her students written responses were not very high. Jennifer encouraged them to write, but that writing did not have to take on a critical dimension. These and related issues will be discussed later.

Read Alouds

Hoewisch (2000), Pressley (2006), and Hepler and Hickman (1982) make the case that books play an important role in children's social and academic development. Read alouds in particular, according to Pressley (2006), help children develop comprehension strategies, expand their vocabularies, and increase their phonemic awareness. Jennifer used her pre-reading and

follow-up activities, along with her read alouds, to strengthen those skills. Davis, Brown, Liedel-Rice and Soeder (2005) stated that pre-service teachers need to become familiar with social issues in order to help their students confront them. During her pre-service year, Jennifer was exposed to children's literature that encompassed many issues such as racism and poverty. Data revealed that she used many of those same books for her read alouds during her first year of teaching. This provides evidence that the instruction related to these social issues she received during her pre-service year transferred to her first year of teaching. She used these books to help her students increase their vocabularies and to discuss social issues.

Through my observations and our planning meetings, I came to discover that Jennifer's read aloud became the primary element in her critical literacy curriculum. I observed her read alouds and took field notes to help me gain an understanding of how she implemented critical literacy in a first grade classroom. To understand this element, I will describe the environment she created for her read alouds, the main topics of conversation, the questions she posed during her read alouds, and her use of critical literacy literature.

Read Aloud Environment

During read alouds, Jennifer consistently joined her class as they sat together on the floor in a large circle. In the beginning of the year, the circle was in a small corner of the room near her classroom library (see Appendix G). As the year progressed, Jennifer rearranged her room and cleared more space for her read aloud circles in another part of the room. While she consistently had her students sit in a circle, they were free to choose their place in the circle. At one point, she assigned her students spots using masking tape on the floor with their names, but that did not become the norm and children sat where they felt comfortable. Jennifer also invited

particular students who were having behavior issues to sit near her during her read alouds. This strategy helped with behavior management as she was able to intervene quickly if there was a problem. Students with behavior issues were not the only ones invited to sit next to her. All of her students seemed excited to have that opportunity. During pivotal points in the stories, the whole class would lean in and try to move closer to either see the pictures or to listen closely for the outcome. At that point, Jennifer would stop and remind them to move back and keep the structure of the circle. Jennifer consistently maintained the same environment for her read alouds.

Critical Conversations

Some of the stories Jennifer read had stories within stories, and dialogue with the children created new layers to those stories. I will highlight some of Jennifer's instructional practices based on her main conversation topics: family dynamics, poverty, and race. In many ways, those topics are interrelated, but for this report, I will separate each topic and describe how each was discussed during the study. As I describe these discussions, I will emphasize the ways Jennifer initiated talk around sensitive social issues and also point out areas where her critical literacy practice could be strengthened. Data revealed a common theme related to contrasting elements of her instruction. Jennifer sought out books that contained critical social issues, yet while pursuing these conversations, she often left it to her students to make their own assumptions about the underlying issues related to these topics. She relegated her talk about these issues to the context of the story, rather than questioning them in relation to society in general. This limited scope of discussion can be attributed to many factors, one of which is that Jennifer was only beginning to develop a critical perspective in relation to her instruction.

Family Dynamics

Jennifer's students were primarily raised in permeable families, which according to Elkind (1995), are not like traditional nuclear families. Permeable families include single parents, foster parents, or children living with extended family. Jennifer sought out books such as *Always My Dad* (Wyeth, 1997), *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002b), and *Our Gracie Aunt* (Woodson, 2002a), which all portray non-traditional family dynamics. Jennifer chose those books so that her students could make connections with the texts. These books contained elements related to foster care, single parents, extended families, hospitalization, abandonment, mental illness, unemployment, poverty, race, class, and divorce.

One way Jennifer supported her students living in permeable families was by reading the book *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002b). In the story, a little girl went to see her dad in jail. While reading this story, many of Jennifer's students shared their own personal connections to having a parent in jail. As mentioned above, some of her students brought in letters from their own parents in jail, showing that they comprehended and connected to the story. Jennifer was surprised that so many of her students openly connected to having a parent in jail. When it came to discussing incarceration, Jennifer believed that by reading this book, she opened a door that usually remains closed. After reading and discussing this story, her students expressed pride in the love they shared with their parents, rather than the shame usually associated with being related to someone in jail.

Jennifer provided a safe environment that enabled her students to feel comfortable sharing their connections during the read alouds. Listening to each other's stories resulted in a domino effect as more became willing to share. As a result, her students became engaged in the process and felt more comfortable about the complexities associated with their own families.

Jennifer helped many students express pride for their family, while others developed empathy for their peers. Her students expressed emotions as some cried and many coped by writing about or to the person they missed. As part of Jennifer's critical literacy development, at this point in time, her intention was not to interrogate these issues, it was to support her students' emotional development. Jennifer often followed-up by speaking to parents, meeting one-on-one with students, and having everyone respond during writer's workshop.

Explicitly addressing the complex issues associated with permeable families is an area that remains to be strengthened for Jennifer. She expressed a desire for these issues to emerge during her read alouds; yet, she relied on her students to initiate those conversations. She felt defeated when they were not making the assumptions she hoped for about the underlying complexities associated with these stories. When she started to have these feelings, she retreated to the idea that she should have these conversations with older students rather than her first graders, which was discussed earlier. The main idea Jennifer emphasized was the concept of missing a parent, rather than the reasons a parent could be absent or what happens to a family as a result of a change in family dynamics. Jennifer's main goal in selecting critical literacy books was to match the issues in the books with her students' lives. Rather than interrogate those underlying issues, Jennifer just expected her students to make a connection to the overarching concepts.

Poverty

Last year Jennifer said she was uncomfortable discussing homelessness with children. However, this year many of her read aloud books were based on poverty and centered on issues such as being helpful, appearance, safety, shame, unemployment, homelessness, class, family,

and communities. Jennifer read books that explicitly showed what poverty looked like. In reading *Something Beautiful* (Wyeth, 2002), her students were able to see a child living in an area ravaged by graffiti and people living on the streets in boxes. The child in this story wanted to make a difference. She cleaned what she could and did her part to make a change. *Great Joy* (DiCamillo, 2007) is about someone reaching out to a homeless person. In this story, the child's mother was initially unsupportive of helping a homeless man, which later changed. *A Shelter in Our Car* (Gunning, 2004) focuses on homeless people themselves, in this case, a mother and daughter. While reading this book, the class talked about the struggles the family had to endure and understood that the mother and daughter had a bond and love that kept them strong. In having conversations around poverty, Jennifer also helped her students think about being thankful and appreciative for things they have - specifically non-material things.

However, as Jennifer read these books, she did not always acknowledge the insightful comments her students made. For example, while reading *A Shelter in Our Car* (Gunning, 2004), a student asked "How did the mom drive the car to school everyday if they were poor?" Jennifer dismissed this question and moved on to the next. She later acknowledged that she did not always think about the deeper issues related to poverty, even when her students asked insightful questions. She recognized that her students only grasped the idea of a lack of money being associated with poverty and not the causes of poverty or the outcomes of it. She described that underdeveloped reasoning in her students as follows:

> *(I2) A lot of times, like when we read books about the dad being gone, or today when we talked about the lady who was sitting out on the street, or when the mom was gone in "Our Gracie Aunt", a lot of times the kids said they were gone because they were poor or he had a lot of jobs because he was poor… He was gone a lot because he didn't have a lot of money…The people were living in the house together in "The School is Not White" because they were poor, they couldn't afford to get a big house and they were all working in the crop field together because of that. They always said because they were poor, but*

> *we didn't ever get to, "Well, why do you think they could have been poor?"…Or, it was because they didn't have a job. They're so young. I understand maybe they couldn't have got a job because they were Black or maybe they couldn't read. They're so young. That's only brought up because they were poor. They know that that's a possibility, that someone may be homeless because they were poor, they don't have money to buy a house, they don't have money for an apartment.*

The expectations Jennifer had for her students' understanding of poverty were similar to how she expected her students to make assumptions about the complex issues related to family dynamics. She was depending on her students to make these connections rather than her taking the initiative to point them out and teach about such issues. In the future, Jennifer may be able to take her awareness of the issues related to poverty to further develop this element in her curriculum, perhaps helping her students engage in a social justice activity around those very issues. Talking more about social issues and not just the story itself may help her students explore the complexities associated with poverty.

Race

Race was another topic that Jennifer was initially uncomfortable discussing with her students. However, through the use of books, conversations related to race found a place in her classroom. Jennifer was particularly sensitive with her approach as she discussed race because of the racial make-up of her class. Her students were predominantly Black; yet, Jennifer and two female students were White. This dynamic played a role in her text selection. She always wanted to make sure she was reading books mirroring all of her students' lives, not just her Black students.

Jennifer read books such as *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001), *The Secret Seder* (Rappaport, 2005b), *Ruby Bridges* (Cole, 1995), and *The School is Not White* (Rappaport, 2005a), all of which include content related to issues such as skin color, segregation, change,

symbolism, education, and friendship. Early in the year, Jennifer reflected on her experience last year with her first graders. She recognized that at a young age children were capable of comprehending the idea that Black and White children were told not to play together:

> *(I1) Even things that the kids would say, I'm like what's going on in this book, and even as first graders they're like well there's Black and White people hanging together and their mamas don't like that because they aren't suppose to hang out like that together, or they aren't suppose to play together.*

Jennifer was starting to develop an understanding that she could have critical conversations related to race with young children. During her first year of teaching, when she read *Ruby Bridges* (Cole, 1995), which is about a young Black girl integrating an all White school during the Civil Rights movement, Jennifer posed questions to her students about why people would not help Ruby when the mobs were outside of her school. She helped them talk about how difference in race became the reason for hate. By reading *The School is Not White* (Rappaport, 2005a), Jennifer took the initiative with this story to have a pre-reading activity about separation and segregation. She also tried to have a student in her classroom who experienced racism at her old school share her story during the follow-up activity. Even though she was uncomfortable talking about race in the past, Jennifer took steps to try to discuss it in some manner during in her first year of teaching.

Many of the books Jennifer read related to race specifically centered on issues such as segregation and discrimination. However, the class discussions were limited to the context of the stories, without discussing the historical implications of the Civil Rights movement. Some of Jennifer's students were looking to make connections between the present and the past. For example, one of her students pointed out a Black/White ratio imbalance while discussing to *The School is Not White* (Rappaport, 2005a), which I pointed out to Jennifer:

> *(P3) Somebody said, "There's a little bit of White people in the book and a lot of Black people. But in the real world, there's a lot of White people and a little Black people."*

Jennifer did not elaborate on that comment and moved on to her next question. Even though her students were looking to make connections between the present and the past, Jennifer missed the opportunity to provide her students with background knowledge connecting the Civil Rights movement to U.S. history.

Rather than "name" this era of time, her students would refer to the Civil Rights era as "back in the day," which we both recognized:

> *W: (P2) A few students said, "Oh that happened back in the day. That's from back in the day." They kept saying that. I think one of the students even said, "My mom experienced that," or, "That was how my mom grew up."*
>
> *J: (I3) A lot of times my kids were like, "That happened in the old days." I think that for them, they're young, and people our age would probably say, "Mm, it still happens today, a lot."*

While Jennifer's students were in the early stages of developing an understanding about historical social issues related to race, she did not take the initiative to move them forward in their thinking, helping them make connections between past and present social issues and the Civil Rights movement in general. As described above, Jennifer was also concerned about how her students' parents would perceive such conversations. Jennifer left her students to make their own assumptions about these issues rather than explicitly teach them. Concern about parental perception, newly established comfort with the topic of race, and a reliance on students to make their own assumptions all contributed to Jennifer's limited ability to become more critical in her conversations related to race. She did not resist using books containing racial elements; yet, she was reluctant to have conversations explicitly related to race outside the context of the stories because of these obstacles.

Jennifer's awareness of her students' lack of understandings could serve to motivate her as she further pursues critical conversations around these topics. This awareness may also be a stage in her journey toward developing a critical perspective. The more she discovers gaps in her students' knowledge, the more inclined she may be to initiate more explicit instruction. Perhaps talking more about these social issues, beyond the context of the stories, will help Jennifer and her students explore the complexities associated with issues of social justice and inequality .

Discussion

As discussed earlier, Jennifer was initially uncomfortable having conversations based on homelessness and race. However, data revealed that the more she was immersed in critical literacy, the greater comfort she developed in having conversations based on those topics. This led to a change in her perception about the appropriateness of such conversations. This year Jennifer conducted read alouds using books that centered on those very issues. Rather than teach her students about many of the underlying issues related to these topics, Jennifer expected her students to make those connections on their own. She expressed frustration when they demonstrated limited understandings; yet she never took the initiative to redirect their thinking.

Some of the conversation topics were planned for and some were unexpected based on her students' transactions (Rosenblatt, 1978) with the books. Jennifer chose to read books based on her students' experiences, thus leading to a reciprocal process between text selection and discussion. She tried to find books mirroring her students' permeable families. Providing her students with a safe environment led them to open up about topics that are often considered taboo outside the home. This process of sharing is aligned with Jennifer's perception of the value of critical literacy practices for teachers. As her students expressed themselves, Jennifer was able

to learn about their lives and their emotions. This helped Jennifer understand her students' academic and social development.

Jennifer was continually rethinking her critical literacy curriculum. She often started with a unit theme, yet the books she chose along the way may have altered that theme. Such changes appeared to be part of the learning process Jennifer undertook as she constructed her curriculum without a pre-existing framework. During, and at the conclusion of each unit, she looked ahead to how she would plan for these units next year, based on the conversations that took place and the books she was learning about. As Jennifer introduced new information related to family dynamics, poverty, and race, she used scaffolding to support her students' understanding. She would always activate her students' prior knowledge, especially by initiating text-to-text connections before introducing new concepts. This led her students to make connections within and across each unit. Because her students are still young, by having conversations related to such critical issues, she was building a foundation for them. Breaching these subjects with children may also have been a starting point for Jennifer as she was embarking on her critical literacy journey. As she learned about her students' knowledge about these critical issues, she became better informed for how to lead future discussions. Co-constructing this process with me also helped her continually build on her own knowledge. This was especially important as she learned about asking critical questions.

Critical Questions

In order to have conversations around social issues, it is up to the teacher to create questions that encourage such talk. Data revealed that Jennifer was having surface level conversations with her students in part, because of the questions she posed during her read

alouds. Critical questions take time and thought to develop. They are not based on superficial elements of the story; instead, they critique and interrogate the underlying meaning or purpose of the story. I showed Jennifer several strategies to help her develop critical questions. First, I modeled asking critical questions with her cohort during her pre-service year. Second, her pre-service cohort read an article by McDaniel (2004) that gave an overview of critical questions. Third, during Jennifer's first year of teaching, I provided her with a handout (Appendix C) I created that outlined different types of critical questions. Lastly, we co-constructed questions (Appendix D) for two stories, so that Jennifer could see the process of developing critical questions. Throughout the study, she referred to all of these strategies in support of her question asking development. At the same time, she was in the initial stages of developing a critical perspective, which was reflected in the questions she posed.

Jennifer posed approximately nine questions per story. However, for each of the two books we co-constructed questions for, *Always My Dad* (Wyeth, 1997) and *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002b), Jennifer posed almost double that amount, almost half of which were based on questions I created and shared with Jennifer (Appendix D). As described in the preceding section, Jennifer shied away from questions explicitly addressing critical social issues outside the context of the stories. She gravitated toward the questions based on making inferences about family and separation. The majority of her questions were open-ended and she often asked her students to make inferences based on the illustrations:

(O1) What do you notice about the friends in the picture?

(O2) Look at their faces, why do you think they look this way?

(O3) What do you notice about the church?

Jennifer also asked her students to make text-to-self connections to the stories:

(O9) Is there any place like this where your parents told you to keep running?

(O8) Have you ever been on a bus receiving food like this?

(O3) How would you feel if people were yelling and saying bad things about you?

Her books included many critical concepts, but most of Jennifer's questions sought out the traditional "who, what, why" answers, based on the main characters, their feelings, and family dynamics. For example,

(O7) She just got there and is looking for something, what's she looking for?

(O8) How does the little girl feel, and the daddy?

(O10) Who's she with in the car?

When it was a central part of the story, Jennifer would ask questions related to homelessness and poverty. Yet, those questions never examined the root of such issues.

(O9) Why do you think she's wrapped in plastic?

(O10) Is she letting her go to school dirty?

(O15) Why would he be holding a cup out to people?

Harste (2000) believes in order to have literature discussions about complex social issues, the conversations should be based on certain criteria. All of the books Jennifer selected for her critical literacy units were aligned with those criteria. Most of her books explored differences rather than make them invisible, and they gave voice to those who have been traditionally silenced or marginalized. Her books were about people being persecuted for racial or religious differences and they were about people struggling because of incarceration, divorce, unemployment, mental illness, homelessness and other issues. However, the questions Jennifer

posed did not meet the same expectations. Only a few of Jennifer's questions explored dominant systems of meaning to help her students question why certain groups are positioned as "others:"

> *(O2) Why do you think that is (the Black man wants them to attend the White school and the White man does not)?*
>
> *(O3) Why do you think the police did not help her? (Ruby Bridges)*

Harste (2000) recommended using books that do not provide "happily ever after" endings for complex social problems. Most of Jennifer books met that criteria; however, her questions never explicitly addressed the underlying reasons for these outcomes. Jennifer posed surface-level questions instead:

> *(O7) How do you think he (the father) felt having to tell them goodbye?*
>
> *(O8) What do you think about the book, is it a happy ending?*

A few of her questions were based on people taking action on important social issues. She asked her students to make suggestions or to recall events in the stories related to change:

> *(O15) Francis wanted to help him (the homeless man), is there another way to help him?*
>
> *(O9) So she's making a change isn't she (cleaning her neighborhood)?*

These questions were not the norm and were asked primarily during the holiday season as part of her "Being Thankful" unit. Jennifer and I brainstormed about getting her students involved in a project to make a change; however, it never came to fruition as will be described later. Rather than talking about making a change throughout her critical literacy curriculum, Jennifer only focused on that concept as part of the holiday season.

Simpson (1996) suggested teaching students that an author will leave gaps and the reader can look for what is missing. Jennifer helped her students examine some of the missing elements in the stories:

(O8) Who is missing? (The dad)

(O7) Let me ask you, we hear about the girl, what about the brothers?

(O7) Why did the author not give them a voice? (The grandparents)

However, she posed those questions without thinking about it from a literacy perspective. She rarely had her students question the author or the role of a reader.

During Jennifer's first year of teaching, she was just beginning to feel comfortable reading books and having text talk based on critical social issues. The next step would be for her to make a connection between language, literacy and power. She could begin to pose questions based on Simpson's (1996) suggestions, teaching students that authors construct characters, they position readers, and they write for particular audiences. Once she pursues questions from this perspective, her conversations can become more critical. Simpson (1996) believes that what strategies a teacher employs will depend on the resources and the teacher's own experience. Jennifer was developing her critical literacy library throughout the year. She was also learning about critical literacy. As she continues to progress, I believe her strategies will change.

Discussion

During Jennifer's read alouds, she developed some consistencies in her instructional approach. She continually activated her students' prior knowledge and was sensitive to their life circumstances. She tried to conduct activities and ask questions that engaged her students in literacy practices in order for them to develop their comprehension skills. Throughout this process, she tried to improve her ability to create critical questions for her read alouds. Although at that point in her development, she was reluctant to question societal issues with her students. She preferred to have her students see themselves in the stories and not challenge their situations.

Jennifer pursued conversations with her students based on social issues; yet those conversations were situated primarily in the context of the story. Jennifer was just beginning to develop her critical literacy approach and to understand what that entails.

Over the course of almost two years, I provided Jennifer with strategies to help her develop a critical literacy curriculum. I showed her how to create and ask critical questions, exposed her to critical literacy texts, I had her read professional literature about critical literacy, and we co-constructed many of her lesson plans. I designed my research so that I could support Jennifer. However, throughout this process, I was aware that Jennifer was a first year teacher who was teaching in an urban school. These two elements are challenges in themselves. Trying to build a curriculum without an existing framework based on "taboo" topics adds an extra dimension to that challenge. As Jennifer moves forward in her teaching career, reflects on our co-constructive process, and revisits these texts and the questions she posed, I expect that her curriculum will evolve. Critical literacy is a process, a very individual process, which cannot be forced. Teachers need support in developing this aspect of their instruction. Going beyond the walls of the classroom, which is how Serafini (2003) described critical literacy, and disrupting status quo are not the norm for teachers. This is what makes developing a critical literacy curriculum a challenge. Even though there are challenges to implementing critical literacy, Jennifer believed that critical literacy literature served many purposes. She also had the tools and was building a foundation to take her critical literacy curriculum to the next level.

Critical Literacy Literature

As part of Jennifer's critical literacy curriculum, she used critical literacy literature in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. The primary element in her critical literacy

curriculum was her use of books. Data revealed that she used these books for the following four purposes: to help students make connections, to confront what she called "the untouchables," to gain insight about her students, and to teach real life issues.

Student Connections

One of the main purposes for Jennifer's use of critical literacy literature was to help her students make connections. She tried to support her students in helping them connect emotionally to the stories. She saw these connections as being based on feelings they had related to family dynamics or traumatic incidents in their lives. These could be either text-to-self connections or student-to-student connections:

> *(P6) I use it as something for them to connect to. Something that they can relate to and say, "Hey that's like me." Or, "That's like my family…" A lot of them I notice go through a lot of emotions when a brother moves or when they have to go to granny's because mom and dad are split up and they can't live with either one. Or, step-dad had to be taken away by the police…They can have someone else to talk to about it.*

> *(I2) Critical literacy is something that you can use to connect for the kids …or personal things that are going on like parents in prison or race.*

She also tried to address issues related to school. Talking about friendship or bullying helped her students learn social skills or develop coping strategies.

> *(I2) Simple things like self confidence or I had kids who weren't getting along…To be able to connect to books makes them more interested.*

Jennifer used connections as a way to help her students address issues that impact their personal lives. She believed that if they connected to the books, they would also be able to comprehend the stories and learn from them.

She knew that many students were making connections at the same time. Some were experiencing those issues at home at the time of her read alouds and others reflected back on

their past experiences. Being able to talk about those connections supported them, particularly in knowing that there were other people just like them. She believed that connecting to a story helped her students engage in the conversation and internalize meaning. This supported their comprehension and decreased behavior issues during read alouds. For Jennifer, their engagement became a sign of their understanding.

Confront the "Untouchables"

Another purpose in Jennifer's use of critical literacy literature was to support her in having conversations around critical issues in her students' lives. These were issues she called "the untouchables" because of their sensitive nature and their non-traditional elements. These untouchables were also different from issues in her own background, thus enabling the books to support her development as much as that of her students.

> *(P6) Critical literacy to me is helping me deal with those untouchables, the things that are hard to talk about, or social issues that the kids might be going through, or the community, that the kids don't just bring about but can be brought out through literature.*

Finding books that dealt with those untouchable issues was one of Jennifer's goals throughout this process. She even stated that without these books, she would not necessarily pursue critical conversations.

Teacher Insight about Students

Jennifer found that using critical literacy literature helped her learn more about her students. Critical conversations around the critical literacy literature sparked a home-school connection that led to deeper understandings of her students' emotions and behaviors. This was especially useful in relation to their academic achievement. Knowing more about her students' home lives also provided Jennifer with a bridge to talk about these issues with parents:

> *(I2) It helped me to get to know a child in my classroom. She really has a close connection and she's struggling with that right now. And I got to talk to that child's parent at open house about it and found out a bit more about what was going on and let the parent know that this was going on. It made me understand why some things were going on here at school… She wrote about it in her writing. I don't know whether it made her feel better or whether it made her feel worse, but she wrote that day and she had a really long writing, it was good writing and she wrote about it…I just think that the child expressed that emotion at that time and maybe she didn't get to express it before or maybe she did. But it helped me to understand more about that child at that moment.*

Jennifer used knowledge about her students to have productive conversations with their parents when appropriate. She was also able to provide her students with more opportunities to express themselves once she understood their feelings. Jennifer used this insight about her students to seek out more books mirroring their situations. The more she learned about her students, the more effort she put into finding materials to meet their needs.

Teach Real Life Issues

Jennifer believed that the topics presented in her critical literacy texts captured real life issues. She felt that children needed to learn about life and social issues rather than just the fantasy world portrayed in many children's books. She felt that books portraying animal characters were valuable; yet, they did not accurately portray real life:

> *(I2) It's life! I think if you read all these little stories about all the little animals and all the little, you know, I love literature, that's one reason I came to this school was they're all about writing and read-alouds and that's part of their literature program, but kids need to hear more than just, "Here's the little dog that went outside and played," they need to know about all kinds of literature.*

She believed her students deserved more. She thought critical literacy literature helped her students learn about the world and could help prepare them not just for today but for the future. Jennifer believed that the media should not be their only access to knowledge about current events and the world, especially since they were being confronted with critical issues themselves:

> *(I2) Kids need to know about things that go on in people's lives. I think this helps them understand each other and things that are going on in the world today without turning on a TV and turning on the news. I'm talking more about books like "Visiting Day" and "My Gracie Aunt," all those kind of books. But they're going through it, especially at this school and in my classroom…They're going through some stuff like these books.*

Jennifer believed that books that confront the same issues as her students would support their development.

According to Jennifer, books should portray people of diverse backgrounds. They should not lead children to believe that all stories have happy endings, which is aligned with Harste's (2000) critical literacy philosophy:

> *(I2) They need to see a whole variety of books, not just the simple little happy ending books all the time, and not just one type. I just really feel like kids need to see all kinds of books and not just White characters and not just Black characters. They need to see happy endings and sad endings…they need to get their hands on books and stories… I just really have a strong feeling about that.*

Jennifer believed that children see and hear many distorted things through the media. Yet books can provide them tools for thoughtful discussions that lead to better understandings of critical issues. Characters represented as animals, she feels, are far from reality. She would rather use books that capture true life through human characters with endings that are not always happy and realistic.

Discussion

According to Hoewish (2000), teachers need to understand the educational benefits of literature for children, and they need to be able to evaluate books that represent diversity. Jennifer used critical literacy books for many purposes depending on different factors. Just as Hoewish (2000) recommended, Jennifer read a variety of books from different authors and illustrators, spanning both past and present. While she did not always critically examine the role

of language, literacy, and power in her books, she did generate talk around social issues. According to Hepler and Hickman (1982), talk could help her students remember and work through meanings that might not otherwise be articulated, which is what happened in Jennifer's classroom. The more her class engaged in conversation, the more they learned about each other, which helped them feel comfortable sharing stories about their own lives. Jennifer was also able to learn more about her students, socially and academically. Talk also helped her students learn new concepts and vocabulary, increasing their comprehension. Engaging in a two-way transmission of knowledge supported both Jennifer and her students. This is one of the reasons why she consistently perceived critical literacy as being valuable.

Throughout this process, Jennifer put a lot of thought into her text selection and made the effort to find books that contained under-represented groups and diverse perspectives. Throughout most of her read alouds, she explicitly helped her students make connections, especially text-to-self or student-to-student. She also tried to help them make connections on an emotional level to support their psychological development. She relied on these books to help her have conversations that she would otherwise be uncomfortable having. She was able to talk about "the untouchables" through these books. Having these discussions, she was able to learn about her students. She then took that knowledge and used it to her benefit as a teacher. She spoke to parents to learn more about her students' lives and sought out books to address her students' situations. As she continues to learn about critical literacy, she can extend her talk around "the untouchables" and connect it to broader issues related to language and literacy.

In general, Jennifer defined a critical literacy curriculum as one that uses books about real life to help students work through their own issues. She believed such books support children both socially and academically. She thinks children need to see a variety of books,

including those that do not paint a pretty picture. According to Jennifer, talking about real life issues now will support children's social development later. Academically, engaging with high quality literature will also increase students' overall language competence, according to Pressley (2006). This multiplicity of uses confirms that there are many layers to critical literacy. Teachers benefit from this literature as much as students.

Discussion of Curriculum Elements

When I first discovered children's critical literacy literature, I wanted to know how someone who knew about these texts would use them. I began to question how a first year teacher would implement critical literacy, if at all. Through my research, I came to find that Jennifer did implement critical literacy; yet, at an emerging level. This first year teacher believed it was important to address the situations her students faced. Finding books about those issues made it easier to have open discussions with them. This enabled her students to learn not only from their teacher, but also from their peers. Jennifer taught literacy as a social practice, which is how Freire (1970/2005) and Luke and Freebody (1997b) view literacy. She engaged her students in a two-way transmission of knowledge, learning from her students as they were learning from her. According to Macedo (1987), Freire's emancipatory model of literacy is based on students' histories, experiences, and the culture of their immediate environments. These aspects are what drove Jennifer's critical literacy curriculum. She used their life experiences to make decisions about text selection. She also reflected on this process in order to help support her students understanding of critical social issues. According to Freire (1970/2005), this process of self-reflection could lead to social action.

It was important to Jennifer that her students talked about and understood the contents of the books. This philosophy aligns with Green's (2001) belief that students need to read and write for a range of purposes, with access to a variety of texts, so that they can engage in critical conversations about literacy. As Jennifer introduced her students to new vocabulary and content through the use of books, she was providing them with a foundation. Perhaps as she continues to teach, she will use that foundation to initiate deeper conversations related to literacy. In order to understand Jennifer's experience with critical literacy, I examined the elements that made up her curriculum. This included the activities that took place before, during and after her read alouds. I also highlighted aspects of class conversations and Jennifer's purpose in using critical literacy literature. I will now examine how she and I co-constructed critical literacy, which directly contributed to her implementation.

Co-Constructing Critical Literacy

The dialogue I had with Jennifer and the dialogue she then had with her students were always two-way conversations including everyone's voice. Critical pedagogy, which is based on a transformative view of education, is about interactions with the intent to draw on and create knowledge to help students transform their lives. According to Freire (1970/2005), my role was not to explain transformative education to Jennifer. Her consciousness was to be raised through our dialogue. Throughout this process, Jennifer and I discovered we could educate each other, and we observed her students doing the same through their dialogue. This is the essence of an education for liberation.

Critical literacy was an area of the curriculum Jennifer had to develop without an existing framework. As the school-year began, she did not have a long-term plan to refer to. However, by

the end of the study, her curriculum design included three thematic units. I designed my study so that Jennifer and I could have discussions before and after her lessons. Our planning meetings became a crucial part of this process. Jennifer was gracious with her time, allowing me to observe her read alouds and then discuss them with her. She also came to rely on my feedback as it helped her reflect, and she valued having someone else get to know her students, their comments, action, emotions, and academic capabilities. My having taught first grade in the past allowed me to understand her students' potential. Our discussions centered on helping Jennifer maximize her critical literacy curriculum so that her students could understand, engage, and learn from this practice. Here, I present data from some of the discussions we had prior to Jennifer implementing her lessons and our reflections after her lessons, highlighting how she and I co-constructed critical literacy.

Planning Lessons

Before Jennifer could start to develop her lesson plans for critical literacy, she needed a starting point. I was there to support her in thinking through potential lessons, yet she was responsible for delivering the instruction. Data revealed three main discussion topics that took place between us as we planned her lessons. We talked about text selection, developing critical questions, and activities she could implement beyond her read alouds.

Text Selection

Davis, Brown, Liedel-Rice and Soeder (2005) argue that pre-service teachers need to build their own background knowledge on a variety of social issues so that they can reflect on their own experiences related to these issues. This would also lead them to help their students reflect on these issues. From pre-service to in-service, Jennifer and I had many conversations

based on books that contained critical social issues. Our planning meetings allowed both of us to think aloud as we reflected on these books, the issues, and Jennifer's students. According to Freire (1970/2005), this process of reflection is an integral part of critical pedagogy. I was raising Jennifer's consciousness through our planning meetings, and she in turn, raised her students' consciousness through their book talks. Jennifer and I discussed text selection as we co-constructed her critical literacy curriculum. Throughout this process, we discussed books from last year, how to use them this year, and how to connect them to her students.

As Jennifer began planning her critical literacy curriculum, she started with what she knew based on her internship experience. Together, we would recall the names of some of the books she was exposed to during her internship to develop her plans:

> *J:* *(P2) There's another book that you read to us, and it was – I'm trying to think. I actually would like to read the box book.*
>
> *W:* *The Lady in the Box?*
>
> *J:* *…that one leads into how you can be friends with people that you don't even know.*

Throughout the study, we helped each other recall the names of many books. We also summarized the books and shared our opinions to see if they would fit in with her units:

> *J:* *(P2) The reason I liked this book (The Other Side) was - yeah it was about friends, but neither one of the girls – it wasn't the girls who were saying it. It was the parents, and you never – it did direct it towards the Black mother, because the White mother was never brought up in the book. But I liked it because it wasn't the kids saying it. And so it was really the parents in this book. It does talk more about the kids' feelings.*

Throughout this process, we both interpreted many aspects of the literature. Jennifer used her prior knowledge about critical literacy literature to help develop her lesson plans this year. Without prior knowledge or experience with critical literacy, Jennifer would not have had

anything to reference to get her started. As we recalled our knowledge about the books, we brainstormed ideas about the topics that she could cover with her students. Understanding the perspectives displayed in these books also helped her develop a vision for the message she wanted to present to her students.

We frequently talked about the texts and how they could be used to transition from one lesson or unit to another. We had discussions about the contents of the books and how to connect them to her students. Throughout this process, our discussions related to text selection were based on her students' and finding books mirroring their lives. For example, to develop her "Family" unit, we started off thinking about the definition of a family and what that meant to her students:

> *W:* *(P5) Family doesn't mean just because you're a nuclear family. It's who's close to you.*
>
> *J:* *A family isn't necessarily just a mom, dad, a brother, and a sister, or a mom and dad and a child. It could be an auntie or it could be a grandmother. Talk about that and then get into our books.*
>
> *J:* *(P6) So the different family things I have is about sisters, the whole family, a grandfather and a grandson, a mother and a daughter only, a father and a son only, the whole family and granny lives with the, and then an aunt with a niece and a nephew, and then a daughter and a granny, and then the dad and the – it's actually about a daughter and son who live with other people because their dad travels and goes through other things… I've done "Our Gracie Aunt" and "Just the Two of Us."*

Jennifer's students came from permeable families; therefore, it was important to her that her books represented different family dynamics. Whichever unit we were discussing, we listed all of the books we each knew and would then think about the sequence she should read them. This became a significant part of our planning discussions.

Jennifer did not have an existing critical literacy curriculum, and our planning meetings were important to her. I was the only person helping her create this curriculum. We brainstormed ideas about books based on our knowledge from last year, and we thought about how to use them this year. At times, we both went home and looked up the names of books from our own records or looked online to find new ideas. If I had a copy of a book she needed, I would lend it to Jennifer. She would go to the school or public library as well to locate books. Trying to learn a school's instructional framework as a first year teacher is not easy. Creating and implementing an additional curriculum that involves selecting high quality literature that is culturally authentic is a formidable task, according to Norton (2005). I did my best to support Jennifer through this process. I also helped her think about questions for the read alouds.

Critical Questions

Jennifer and I discussed her read alouds before and after they occurred. We used two different processes to co-constructed questions. During one process, I generated questions that Jennifer would use to supplement her own questions. The other process was through discussion during our planning meetings. Early in the year, I created an outline (Appendix C) that she could use as a guide to create critical questions. This guide was used throughout the study.

I generated questions for Jennifer's read aloud discussions as a scaffolding process. I wanted to model for her the process of developing critical questions so that she could then independently create her own. Logistics made it a challenge for us to continually share the books, which made this process of scaffolding even more important:

W: (P6) *I thought maybe if we took one of the books and wrote questions to them…You know see where they go with it. Not just the whole "who, what, where, why."*

J: You know what I wish? I wish that I had two copies of a book I was going to do and sent you with one, and I kept one, and we both wrote questions and compared the questions before I did it, to see the difference in how I'm thinking to how you're thinking.

W: Well I can borrow them ahead of time.

I generated questions (Appendix D) for two of the stories she read: *Always My Dad* (Wyeth, 1997) and *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002b). Jennifer then took my suggestions and modified them to her comfort level. In order to model for Jennifer how I created critical questions, I showed her how I referred to the outline (Appendix C) I created:

> *(P6) I read through the book and I developed some questions but I pulled out, remember I gave you one of these sheets and I had it. So it helped me actually in thinking about questions and helping me get to more critical questions. Because even when I was reading it, I could have asked general questions like, "Oh, how does this connect to you?" Or, "What do you see?" But I wanted to think about some more things so I looked at these…So when I was first reading, I started to just take notes. First I thought, "Okay, can't keep a steady job." But then in* ***the*** *story it even shows like five different jobs that he had… And so I initially thought of a question.*

I wanted to model this process for Jennifer to help prepare her to do the same on her own. As described earlier, when I generated questions, Jennifer posed more than her normal amount of questions during her read alouds; still she gravitated toward the most basic ones I offered. Jennifer continually referred to this activity as important in her own development.

Our planning meetings enabled this co-constructive process to continue. After my observations, I would ask Jennifer about the read aloud conversations. I would challenge her to rethink her questions and comments. I also asked her about her students' comments in order to help Jennifer think about her responses:

> *(P2) You have those discussions and things may come out that you see or don't see, and sometimes it's you responding to what they are calling out for eventually. And so that may be something you want to think about, that yes; there's history tied to this. And they obviously know there's history tied to it, whether it's from their parents or something they learned in school. But you might want to think about questions and comments that come up at those times, how you want to address them another time.*

I was able to point out specific things she said as we reviewed transcripts from her read alouds. Throughout this process I praised her questions and helped her think about extending them:

> *(P6) The last part you closed it with, "So it wasn't just Black people had to go through things like working in the fields?" And they said, "No." And so I thought that was good questioning and that may be something you want to just come back and revisit again down the road. How you were talking about struggles and things like that.*

Jennifer and I continually looked back and looked ahead as we developed her critical literacy curriculum. She found it meaningful to have someone there observing her read alouds and giving her immediate feedback and suggestions. She later acknowledged that using the critical question outline (Appendix C) was helpful.

> *(I2) You gave me that outlined list of questions, and then my questions got better.*

She felt that the guide provided her with insight as to the type of questions that should be posed in a critical literacy lesson. She also felt her questions improved because she was coming to new understandings about what critical literacy meant.

Jennifer gained confidence and began to feel more comfortable with topics she initially shied away from through the processes of me generating questions and us discussing her read aloud conversations. I was able to support Jennifer through modeling question development, creating a guide, and discussing the questions throughout. Even though Jennifer still gravitated toward more superficial questions, she was starting to understand how to pose more critical questions. Considering she was also just becoming comfortable talking about critical issues in

general, posing basic questions is understandable. This process enabled Jennifer to think more about her students' reactions and the concepts they were learning. Later I will describe how Jennifer felt about my role as someone helping her plan her lessons and co-constructing questions. I not only helped Jennifer create critical questions, I also gave her suggestions for activities she could implement to support her critical literacy practice.

Activity Ideas

As Jennifer and I co-constructed her critical literacy curriculum, I wanted to raise her consciousness about the content she was teaching. To do so, I would give her suggestions about activites or resources she could use to develop her curriculum. I tried to help her think about the activities she could do before or after her read alouds and at other times. My suggestions were related to improving her students' understanding of vocabulary and content. They also could help Jennifer learn more about her own practice.

During our planning meetings, I often gave Jennifer suggestions for activities she could do as part of her critical literacy curriculum. I would suggest an activity and make specific suggestions about how she could integrate those ideas with what she was already doing:

> *(P3) Have you ever heard of an audit trail? Well, an audit trail is – I've read about some teachers that do it where you keep track of everything that you read. Like you know how you have on the wall with Chrysanthemum and then all their pictures around it? Well, it's similar to that. Like, you would maybe – you could photocopy of the cover of a book or something and you put it up and it stays for a long time. Then you could use yarn or ways of connecting other things to it, and like what spawns off things. And it continues, so it's like a trail of what leads to what. And maybe like you read "The School is not White" today, and then you can have – "Oh, that led us to 'Ruby Bridges,' and that leads us to –" so whatever – and it's not just the books, but maybe there's newspaper articles or maybe something somebody read or a clipping from somewhere or a picture of something, and it just becomes this big artifact, a living piece of artifact.*

Because I wanted to raise her consciousness, I tried to describe how the activities could connect to larger social issues. I also wanted her to think about how she could raise her students' consciousness about such issues and get them engaged in the process:

W: *(P3) Maybe there's something that they seem interested in and they want talk about, but there's not really the time…Something called invitations is where you take a manila envelope and you put things inside of it that are about what ever it was that they want to talk about. Like for example, there's one that I read about where I think two girls were talking about hair and different people's types of hair, so the teacher provided them an invitation to talk more about the hair. So they had a manila envelope, and inside of it were pictures of a hair salon and different cultures -their hair, and then there were some books about hair. So the two girls just sat around the table and talked about it. And then they wrote about it. It's an opportunity for them to continue that conversation and explore their own thoughts about it.*

J: *So do you set up the invitations?*

W: *You set it up…*

J: *That's a good idea.*

W: *I think it's neat just because it's something they're interested in, but you can get to a deeper level and more critical thinking where you can put things in it that maybe – even if it's civil rights, maybe you could find old posters… or pictures of like water fountains that say, "White Only," and things like that, and see what they talk about.*

Being that Jennifer was primarily engaging in critical literacy through her read alouds, I wanted her to think about ways to extend that practice. I gave her suggestions about activities that did not always require whole group discussions. I provided her with copies of our transcripts so she could have a record of these activities to refer to later if she chose to implement them.

In co-constructing her lessons, I also gave her ideas about supplementing her read alouds. Because so many of her books related to other content areas, I wanted her to think about using that information, rather than just looking at the surface aspects of those stories. Jennifer did not

teach social studies on a regular basis; therefore, I believed she could try to integrate it into her lessons:

> *(P2) Did it make you think at all about how you could extend that lesson, and maybe get a book on civil rights, or get some - have some other conversation or literature to maybe address that whole issue of back in the day, what happened? Because I know you don't teach social studies, right?*

She and I discussed her students' limited knowledge about past and present issues related to the Civil Rights era, so I wanted to support her in clarifying that content. I also gave Jennifer resources that could help her build her library and learn about literature.

> *(P4) I know you've asked for – part of your purpose in being in this study is to learn about more children's literature, and I just saw this article the other day and thought of you. It's from The Reading Teacher "Encouraging Ethical Respect through Multicultural Literature" and so they give you different books, some of them have pictures, but there's a reference list at the end and so I just copied it for you. I actually made my own notes in it and then was like "Oh, I should give it to Jennifer. This book reminded me of "The Other Side" as I read it. It's about friendship and freedom, "Crossing Bokchito." This is just about teacher selection, like that you have to be careful and choose literature wisely.*

Again, I would try to connect the resources I offered with what she was already doing in her classroom. I thought she could benefit from reading more professional literature, especially literature about multicultural children's books. It was up to Jennifer if and how she would implement my suggestions.

Discussion

Data revealed that developing a critical literacy curriculum for the first time without an existing framework was a challenge. From considering how to introduce this new way of thinking to concerns such as text selection, Jennifer did not have a clear vision of how she was going to launch critical literacy. She was honest in her questions about how to decide what issues to bring up in text discussions. Rather than developing a long-term plan in advance, we had to

start small and learn about the process from week to week. I became a sounding board for Jennifer to question the appropriateness of her decisions as she went through this process. As the year progressed however, Jennifer began to use units as a way to view her lessons in a broader perspective.

Our planning meetings allowed us to think together as we reflected on her read aloud books, the questions she posed, and the activities she could implement. This process of reflection enabled both of us to learn more about critical literacy as well as how to teach children about important social issues. According to Freire (1970/2005), this process of reflection is what could lead to change. There was an ongoing cycle of me raising Jennifer's consciousness and her doing the same with her students. Based on the conversations I observed, I was then able to help Jennifer reflect on that process. I employed specific strategies to help Jennifer develop a critical perspective. I modeled how to create critical questions, I suggested activities that could be integrated into her existing approach, I suggested books she could use for her read alouds, and I suggested resources to supplement or extend her lessons. As we co-constructed our knowledge of critical literacy, Jennifer and her students had to potential to become more critical thinkers.

Reflecting on Lessons

The purpose of our planning meetings was not only to plan ahead but also to look back. Jennifer took these opportunities to talk with me about the end result of many of her lessons and units. Because I observed many of her lessons and got to know her students both academically, socially, and emotionally, she looked forward to discussing the outcomes of her lessons with me. She even commented that she liked when we met directly after the lessons so that I could confirm her observations of her students. These post-discussions allowed me to question and

praise some of her practices and also to bring attention to scenarios she may not have noticed. By looking ahead at future lessons and looking back at completed lessons, Jennifer would continually learn more about this process. Data revealed two main forms of discussion we undertook in reflecting of Jennifer's lessons. We talked about her choice of text selection, and we reviewed transcripts to examine the dialogue that occurred during her lessons.

Text Selection

Jennifer and I continually talked about her choice of texts. As described earlier, we discussed books we knew from the past and tried to integrate them with the current school year. We always thought about how the books connected with Jennifer's students. When we reflected on her lessons, Jennifer would think aloud about how the books impacted her students, how they fit into her units, and how they captivated her students' attention within and beyond the read alouds. Being able to think aloud and debrief about her lessons helped Jennifer gain clarity for future lessons.

Jennifer and I would talk about the books she used during her lessons. I would often listen as she would debrief and process the different aspects of her texts. For Jennifer, being able to think aloud about her books helped her understand their myriad purposes. In looking back, Jennifer would reflect on her units based on her students' responses to the literature. She thought about how they connected to the books and how that impacted their social development:

> *(I2) We did a lot of books on friends… the kids were having a hard time getting along with one another and they were calling each other names. And we had some kids who felt like they didn't have friends and so they connected a lot to the friends and how to be good friends and we wrote about what a friend is and what makes a good friend and how to be a good friend. And we talked about "The Other Side" and how the two little girls became friends and it was a really good unit. The kids really seemed to pull out of it you know, getting along with one another, which of course that's a struggle with kids this age. You*

> *know, "I'm not your friend today and I'm your best friend tomorrow and all that kind of stuff."*

She would think about the unit as a whole and how her choice of books contributed to their understanding of the content. She would also think about the direction of future units - where to end one and begin the next. Jennifer also considered the contents of each book and how they fit into the units as a whole:

> *(P5) It was kinda a good place today to end… because now it's stopped with other than a Black family. If I go back to reading another book about it then it's gonna be back to a Black family and it kinda over does what I did today. And so that was like the perfect book.*

This process of reflection allowed her to make decisions about where she placed books within the unit. Jennifer also thought about the longevity of these books based on her students' interest in them:

> *(I2) It's kind of a unit that we've kept going back to. It's one that I'm really glad we did at the beginning because we kept relating back to that unit. Not necessarily to read aloud, but every day in class, I'm like, "Remember, we talked about this," or "Remember, we talked about that," and the kids kind of go back to it when they make decisions.*

As we moved further into the year, Jennifer looked at each unit and described how it impacted discussions beyond when it was taught. Her students gravitated toward some content more than others. For example, she and her students referred to the friends books often because that was a relevant part of classroom dynamics.

In describing her units, Jennifer also reflected on the order that she read the books. Recent books would be discussed and she would rethink some of her decisions. Based on those read alouds, she would make future decisions about text selection:

> *(P6) Today I was going to do "Always My Dad." Because we talked about "My Gracie Aunt," how the aunt – the mom had gone away and, you know, they didn't know where*

> *she went. And then yesterday it was just the dad and son (Just the Two of Us), because the parents were apart.*

Jennifer was always shifting backward and forward in trying to decide on an appropriate sequence of books for her units. She also used her knowledge about these books from her pre-service experience to think through how to have discussions with children.

Because books were the primary tool Jennifer used to implement critical literacy, our text talk became an integral part of planning. We both used our prior knowledge about books to plan ahead. Rather than just write plans and move forward with them, by having me there to engage her in reflection, Jennifer was able to continually evaluate her lessons and make future decisions. As she would reflect, together we would think about the next step related to text selection.

Transcript Reviews

Early in the study, Jennifer requested copies of the transcripts from my observations. When I observed her read alouds, I would script everything that occurred, including the dialogue between Jennifer and her students. Sharing this information with Jennifer proved to be very useful in having her reflect on her teaching. It also helped us plan ahead based on what already occurred. Not only would I give her copies of the transcripts, but I also highlighted some aspects, which I would discuss with Jennifer during our planning meetings. As we reviewed the transcripts, I would raise Jennifer's awareness about some of the critical issues she discussed. I helped her see areas that may need clarification for her students, I pointed out teachable moments, and I confirmed for Jennifer that her students were capable of having critical conversations based on their comments and questions.

I provided Jennifer with transcripts from my observations, but before handing them over to her, I would often review particular parts of her discussions. Many times I used these opportunities to clarify her students' comments and raise her awareness about what was said:

W: *(P8) This is from "Something Beautiful," and "A Shelter In Our Car." There was one part, somebody asked about the car. "How did they have a car if they didn't have money," or "How did they get to school if they didn't have money?" and then I think you said "Well, she has a car." But it was an interesting question.*

J: *Yeah, right here it says "Mrs. Rossini, how can they get to school and they don't have any money. Well, they have a car so she takes her."*

W: *But, how do they fill the car with gas? That was just what I was thinking. It was smart of that child to ask that, but that may even be something in that child's life that makes it relevant that – "well, we have a car"- They probably could have a car sitting outside their house but without money to fill it up with gas. And so it was a big question for the child if well, yeah, there's a car but how do they get to school?*

J: *Yeah, that's true; which, I don't think that in depth when they were talking a lot of times times.*

During these transcript reviews, I would raise her awareness about important questions her students raised. Because Jennifer didn't always think about the larger social issues beyond the books, I tried to point those scenarios out so she could learn from them. I also helped bring her attention to things she may have overlooked. We also discussed vocabulary that may have needed clarification:

W: *(P6) This is from the Secret Seder and I highlighted some things. There were just things that stood out to me. One of them was about them crying, and they asked, "What is wine?" And one of the kids, I thought I heard her right, said, "When you get out of the tub and you drink it."*

J: *Oh, how funny. Yeah, so those are the things like I don't hear.*

I knew that Jennifer could not be conscious about every aspect of her children's dialogue, but I thought she could benefit from learning about their misunderstandings. She had the option to reteach those concepts or just be mindful of those misunderstandings in the future.

Through our co-constructive process, I was also able to help Jennifer think about social issues and how she was representing them in her discussions:

W: *(P5)I wanted to ask you about when you talk to them about how Lafayette Elementary, how we're all together, but realistically thinking of the make-up of your class, do you feel like it's an equal picture of Black and White all together?*

J: *Probably not… I guess I didn't never really look at it as –*

W: *…It stood out to me because when you're doing that and you were like, "Oh, we're not separated and then, you know, "we're all together" and then we always have these conversations how there's two White girls in your class and you. And I'm like, hmm, we're all together, but – they are minorities in this class.*

J: *Right.*

I tried to raise her consciousness about oversights she made in talking about critical issues. This would allow her to think about future conversations and how she would direct the conversations. I also helped her think about the questions she would pose related to the content of the stories.

Having the opportunity to review the transcripts together also allowed me to point out teachable moments. For example, when she read *The Secret Seder* (Rappaport, 2005b), some of the text was written in Hebrew. Her students started giggling in response to her attempt to read that part. I tried to help her think about how she could have used that opportunity to talk about being a second language learner or trying to learn to read something new:

W: *(P6) Remember when you were reading the Hebrew words and they started laughing? You were trying to read it, and so I just thought, "Oh, that's kind of a teachable moment that they were laughing," And that's not your strength reading Hebrew, but, you know—*

J: *That's not something that's really just reading.*

She often concurred with my observations. When she was in the moment as the reader, she did not necessarily think about it, but looking back and having someone point it out helped Jennifer.

As we reviewed the transcripts and reflected, I was able to confirm that her students were grasping the content. I often observed Jennifer's uncertainty about her students being able to engage in critical conversations. Therefore, I used the transcripts to show her the important questions and comments her students made. Again, being the reader, Jennifer did not always think about the value of her audience's comments. Having another set of eyes and ears enabled her to look more closely at her students' ability to have these conversations:

W: *(P5) This is from Ruby Bridges. I highlighted some things just to bring your attention to. You know, that the kids, they said their thing about Martin Luther King, why he made things better. They noticed about the church, that there's all Black people in it and why the police didn't help her and it's because she's Black. I mean, so, well sometimes when you're questioning, you know, do they get it? Here are just some things that they got. You know, she's Black –*

J: *They got more –*

W: *And they're White. That's why the police didn't help her and, you know, when you said why wouldn't they go back and the little girl said "so they won't get hurt." You know, they, they realize it.*

Jennifer often wondered where her students acquired their prior knowledge. She also believed they did not have enough of a foundation to understand the deeper issues in these stories. I wanted to show her that her students did know enough to make meaning from the stories in relation to larger social issues. They made insightful comments and asked thoughtful questions throughout. I continually pointed out important comments her students made to let her know that she was helping them build a foundation about these issues.

Reviewing transcripts together enabled us to evaluate how her critical literacy curriculum was progressing. It also helped us make decisions about future lessons. The more Jennifer was

able to reflect on her lessons and see everyone's questions and comments, the more she learned. She told me that she took the transcripts home, reread them, and could recall the comments her students made. She found humor in seeing their dialogue and also learned to find meaning in comments she previously overlooked. Through this process of co-constructing knowledge about critical literacy, Jennifer came to see that there are many teachable moments during her instruction and her students were capable of having thoughtful critical conversations. Being able to see this is what motivated Jennifer to continue pursuing critical literacy.

Discussion

As Jennifer became more immersed in critical literacy, our conversations became deeper and stretched farther. Having the opportunity to reflect on her lessons also helped future planning. Jennifer was open while reflecting on her lessons. Her honesty seemed to support her own development as she reflected back and looked ahead. Jennifer courageously allowed me to capture her dialogue and challenge her to rethink some of her comments. I pointed out things she overlooked as well as her accomplishments. As described earlier, Jennifer faced many obstacles throughout this process. However, rather than let them defeat her, she continued to improve her practice. I was continually there to show her the positive aspects of her instruction. I thought Jennifer was brave in choosing to read critical literacy literature and undertake the conversations she pursued with her students. Yet, she acknowledged that having those conversations was not easy. Talking about people in jail or discrimination is difficult in general. When compounding those issues with teaching first graders who have firsthand experiences with those issues, it would not be a comfortable discussion for anyone. Jennifer used children's critical literacy literature to open the doors for having dialogue about these difficult issues. Throughout my

observations, I was able to see her students enter those open doors and reveal their personal connections to the books. In doing so and in listening to their peer's stories, they were beginning to learn about the world beyond themselves.

Discussion of Co-constructing Critical Literacy

From pre-service to in-service, in order to help Jennifer implement her critical literacy practices, she and I co-constructed our knowledge of this process. My co-constructive role in this research was similar to other critical literacy researchers such as Comber (2001), Kempe (2001), Simpson (1996), Paugh, Carey, King-Jackson, and Russell (2007), Van Sluys, Lewison, and Flint (2006) Vasquez (2001), and Chafel and Neitzel (2007), who also collaborated with elementary school teachers to implement critical literacy practices. They too encouraged teachers to engage children in discussions and activities to develop critical perspectives. Jennifer and I relied on books that we knew about, conversations we had with others, and professional literature to give us insight into this process. While I had more experience and had read more about critical literacy than Jennifer, I too learned through this process. Transformative education is about learning by doing and discussing. Our planning meetings enabled both Jennifer and myself to continually reflect, which in turn helped us think about future lessons. Jennifer and I would talk about text selection before and after her read alouds. We developed questions and I suggested activities she could implement to supplement and extend her lessons. One of the most important parts of our co-construction came when we reviewed the transcripts from her read alouds. This allowed Jennifer to use another lens to learn about her practice. She was continually receptive and responsive of the feedback I provided.

McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004a) stated that "critical literacy helps teachers and students expand their reasoning, seek out multiple perspectives, and become active thinkers" (p. 52). My role throughout this process was to help everyone in Jennifer's classroom become critical thinkers. For someone who did not have an existing framework for critical literacy, Jennifer was able to start the process of building one and was beginning to develop a critical perspective throughout this process. She primarily focused on her read alouds, but she also tried to incorporate other elements before and after them. As a first year teacher, she started to build her curriculum based on what was tangible. She was inspired by my suggestions; yet for various reasons, did not always implement them. Like most first year teachers, she was continually looking toward next year and the chance to improve her practice.

In order to understand how Jennifer implemented critical literacy, I examined the elements that made up her curriculum, including what took place before and after her read alouds. I also examined how she and I co-constructed critical literacy, which contributed to her implementation. We planned her lessons and reflected on them throughout. As I have stated, Jennifer was continually open to learning about critical literacy. There were aspects that she embraced and some she never approached. I will now conclude this section on Jennifer's implementation of critical literacy by describing what I see as opportunities she missed.

Missed Opportunities

Throughout my research process, I observed and discussed various elements of Jennifer's curriculum. However, even though I provided many suggestions, there were opportunities Jennifer missed in her implementation. Jennifer limited her students' writing to aesthetic or efferent (Rosenblatt, 1978) responses, rather than encouraging them to take on a critical

perspective. I tried to encourage Jennifer to engage her students in activities to extend and enrich her lessons. However, she rarely implemented my suggestions beyond her read alouds. Together we taked about getting her students involved in taking action for social change; yet, that activity was also never implemented. Jennifer missed these opportunities for various reasons, which are described below.

Implementing Critical Writing

Jennifer read children's critical literacy literature and engaged her students in conversations around these texts. However, Jennifer missed the opportunity to allow her students to critically write in response to the read alouds. Having higher expectations for their writing could have led to deeper conversations and meaning throughout. Jennifer transitioned her students into writing without encouraging them to write about the social issues in the books. For example, after reading *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001), she closed the discussion talking about Black and White children; yet, she did not ask them to elaborate about this issue in their writing:

> *(O1) So we do have Black and White – Do I say "all Black sit together and all White sit together?" I say "sit together." Like short and tall or our book about hair today... Write about your favorite part of the book or a question you have about this book.*

Jennifer initiated discussion about difference, and her students brought up the idea that difference can be the colors of their skin, Black and White. Jennifer pursued that aspect in discussion, yet when she told them what to write about, she only asked that they write about their favorite part or a question they had about the story.

After reading *The School is Not White* (Rappaport, 2005a), which is about a Black family starting to attend an all White school during the Civil Rights movement, Jennifer conducted a whole group follow-up discussion comparing students' past or present schools to the school in

the story. After that comparison discussion, she asked them to write an aesthetic (Rosenblatt, 1978) response, rather than to generate a critical response:

> (O2) *Okay, think about you and how you felt as we read the story. For Writer's Workshop, write about that or like you did earlier, you can write your letters to your soldiers.*

Students were given a choice to write about their feelings toward the story or to work on another project. I observed their writing, and most of the students continued writing their letters for soldiers in Iraq. Writing an aesthetic response to the story did not attract many of the students' writing interest.

Data reveal that Jennifer has not yet reached for a critical element in her expectations for students' writing. Similar to the scope of Jennifer's read aloud conversations, her students' writing was based on the context of the stories. They were not encouraged to question or critique the social problems, the ramifications of these issues, or to elaborate on creating change. Because Jennifer was only beginning to develop a critical perspective, which was reflected in the conversations she pursued, her expectations for her students' writing was impeded. Being able to encourage critical writing may be another level of critical literacy that can only develop as Jennifer becomes more immersed in it over time. However, Jennifer did become aware of the impact reading these stories had on her students as it ignited their desire to write in general. In retrospect, I too fell short in this area to raise Jennifer's awareness about the writing element of critical literacy. I never brought writing into my critical literacy instruction when Jennifer was in her teacher preparation program. I also never emphasized this aspect in our discussions.

Perhaps once Jennifer becomes more confident in her students' writing capabilities in general and in herself related to critical literacy, she will begin to incorporate critical thought into her discussions and follow-up activities. For now, her follow-up activities are based on meeting

the students where they are. She helps them make connections on a psychological level and feels the need to have them express themselves relating to critical issues in the books. In follow-up discussions and writing, she does not ask them to challenge, trouble, or elaborate in these issues.

Implementing Planning Meeting Suggestions

Throughout our co-constructive process, I would suggest a variety of activities that Jennifer could pursue with her students. However, her critical literacy curriculum was primarily limited to read alouds. Jennifer missed the opportunity to implement additional activities that could have extended and enriched her lessons. Factors such as the developmental age of her students, lack of resources, and the effort required to plan these activities may have contributed to Jennifer not implementing them.

At one point, I suggested that Jennifer could have her students respond to the books on sticky-notes just as she did with her cohort during the previous year. This would have given them the chance to write their own personal connection to the story or make comments that could be shared with the class. We talked about various ways to make this activity appropriate for first graders. But Jennifer never engaged her students in that activity. Her rationale was that her students could not write proficiently enough to do so:

> *(P3) I would love to do that, but right now I'm like going through my head, "Some of my kids can't even – they don't even know all their letters." Like I wanted to do the Post-Its today really bad for the same and different, but I was like – my kids would be, "How do I spell this?" or, "How do I write this?" They're not at the level yet where they can write. I think that a lot of these ideas are gonna bloom in the spring. Like what we're talking about now will bloom in the spring.*

My response was that they don't have to write; they could draw, use invented spelling, or she could even make pre-made pictures or word cards for their responses. I wanted her to know that it was not about their writing proficiency, it was about letting them think and engage beyond the

read aloud. Again, the developmental age of Jennifer's students became an obstacle, which was a reoccurring theme.

As we continued co-constructing her lessons during our planning meetings, Jennifer specifically requested copies of our transcripts. Rather than try to take notes on my suggestions, she thought that having the transcripts could serve as a guide:

> *(P3) Do I get a copy of all these so when I forget what we've talked about through these meetings…If I could get a copy of that, then I can try and figure out what to do from there with those.*

I immediately began providing her with a copy of our transcripts, past and present. Jennifer had a record of all of our planning meetings, so she could refer to my suggestions. Earlier I described an activity I suggested called "Invitations" (Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006). Jennifer never implemented this activity either. It required more planning ahead of time on Jennifer's behalf; yet, I wanted her to know that she did not have to go overboard and could modify the activity to a discussion between two students. Some of her students became deeply engaged in their read aloud conversations, so I wanted her to think about letting them take that interest a step further:

W: *(P3) They don't have to write. Like even invitations, maybe just to have them talk. Maybe they want to talk more. Some kids seem to be really engaged in the book. I think it was Hector. He had comments for everything and he probably could have a great conversation with somebody like that. And so maybe just some of those kids. Or maybe your kids that need more challenge, that's something that doesn't have to be that they're writing about it, but maybe they could have a little private discussion together. And if they want to draw about what they're discussing or just look at it and leave it at that until they're ready to go a step further.*

J: *You could almost make that a social studies center.*

W: *Yeah, yeah.*

J: *I'm trying to think of things.*

Jennifer showed interest in trying to think about how she could implement this activity. She even thought about how to incorporate it into an existing part of her schedule, center time. Unfortunately, this activity never came to life.

I also suggested doing an audit trail (Vasquez, 2001) to help her students reflect on previous lessons while looking ahead. Because she was doing thematic units, I thought this would be a good way for her students to see a broader perspective instead of working book by book. An audit trail is a visual record that lets students document their knowledge. This too was a missed opportunity. When a unit concluded, Jennifer had her students talk about the books they read and independently write. They rarely got to follow the different paths their talks led them on.

Engaging her students in activities beyond reading and writer's workshop may have helped them make connections between reading and writing and language and literacy. Jennifer resisted adding on additional activities primarily because her expectations for her students were limited. She was confident that they could "talk" about the stories or "write" about them; yet she could not grasp having them do anything beyond that. Time was also a factor; and for a first year teacher to develop and implement a new curriculum without any of the resources in place, trying to keep it simple makes sense. When Jennifer was given the teacher's guide that supplemented *The School is Not White* (Rappaport, 2005a), that seemed to be the best way to support her in trying to implement something beyond her regular activities. Jennifer needed a tangible guide, not just suggestions from our discussions or copies of transcripts. Perhaps if she had a step-by-step guide describing how to set up these additional activities, she would have used them. As far as my role, maybe I should have not only modeled how to create critical questions, but also how to create critical activities.

Taking Action for Social Change

As documented above, Jennifer faced several obstacles in her practice related to students, books, and time. Those may have contributed to some missed opportunities. However, as the year progressed, Jennifer appeared eager to engage her students in taking action for social change. She and I brainstormed ideas about her Thanksgiving unit. In doing so, I took that opportunity to help her think about the connection between being thankful and being appreciative for things that not everyone has, especially people less fortunate:

> *W: (P7) Well, I'm just thinking like Thanksgiving is also a time for families, like I wonder, I mean I know you did family. Or – Did you do "The Lady in the Box?" 'Cause I'm wondering also like, soup kitchens and things like that are being appreciative that we have a family and have Thanksgiving…*
>
> *J: That's true. It could be a whole thing on being thankful.*
>
> *W: Being thankful and showing things that other people don't have.*

Because the purpose of my research stance was to raise Jennifer's consciousness about critical issues and how to engage in transformative education, I saw this unit as an opportunity to help Jennifer engage her students in the process of making a change.

I tried to help her think about how to get her students actively involved in doing something positive for the community:

> *W: (P7) So the idea of Thanksgiving – I wonder – and I don't know how you feel about this, but you can even do something like a food drive where they can – maybe you can – your class as a whole can help do something to give to someone in need or donate something to a shelter or help them think of things that they want to do to help or maybe vote. Everybody can brainstorm ideas. And in reading all these, you can, you know, this book alone, there's graffiti in that girl's neighborhood, there's trash around.*
>
> *J: And we could even do something as simple as walking around the school and picking up trash.*

W: Maybe have them wear a little nametag or a little sign that says something so people know what they're doing and –

J: "We're thankful for our school."

W: Yes being appreciative and not just appreciative, but helping make a difference.

J: That's true. That'd be a good idea.

I offered ideas about making a change on a community level, but Jennifer reverted back to the comfort of the school. In trying to balance my role as both a consciousness raiser and a supporter of a new teacher, I supported her ideas. We discussed how she would engage her students in thinking about being thankful as a class. At the conclusion of that discussion, she excitedly invited me to her class on the last day of that unit:

> *(P7) If we walked around the school, you could go with us because you got to see the whole thing and see how the kids respond…Like talk about, now that we've talked about being thankful, what are we gonna do? How are we gonna make a change for things. You know? We're gonna walk around - or on Friday read the last read aloud and talk about all the different things you're thankful for and then this day do our make a change. We could call it a "make a change" or…This could be our "We're thankful make a change day."*

When I arrived on the scheduled "Make a Change Day," Jennifer began by asking the class about the things they were thankful for as she wrote them on the board. She then dismissed them to writer's workshop, and they were given the following directions:

> *(O11) So this is what were gonna do. Either draw a picture of or write a letter to somebody you are thankful for.*

Shortly after, they were dismissed for lunch and "Make a Change" day ended.

Jennifer missed the opportunity to take action for social change. She followed through on part of her plan for the "Make a Change Day." In her wrap-up discussion, she engaged her students in "talk" about being thankful and making a change. However, she never engaged them in "taking action" to make a change. This lack of engagement in making a change is consistent

with the way she engaged students in follow-up activities described earlier. Jennifer started off with great intentions and had important discussions around her read alouds, yet she became passive when the activities moved away from the books. This passive behavior speaks to the vital nature of taking critical literacy from text talk to hands-on activities. Praxis, which according to Freire (1970/2005), involves the transformation of consciousness through the process of self-reflection. This reflective process leads to taking action to positively change the world. However, taking action for social change would come as a result of a high degree of reflection, which occurs over time. Jennifer was in the early stages of becoming a reflective practitioner and developing her critical perspective. It is understandable that she was not at a level to take on such a challenge.

Discussion of Missed Opportunities

Throughout my research, I visited Jennifer's classroom on a weekly basis to either observe or plan with her. We talked about the various elements of her curriculum and how to align them with the needs of her students. Based on my observations, I was able to provide Jennifer with many insights about her lessons. She continually expressed interest in discovering new books for her read alouds and wanted to know more about how to implement critical literacy. However, even though I provided many suggestions, there were opportunities Jennifer missed in her implmentation. I too was not always mindful of each aspect of critical literacy. I was aware that as I pushed her to become more critical in her conversations, she would pull back. Therefore, I knew I could only make suggestions and let her determine if and when she felt comfortable using them.

Jennifer initially felt that her students' writing ability was not strong enough to take on a larger role. However, over time, she began to praise the amount of writing her students did in response to the critical literacy stories. Even so, she still limited their writng to aesthetic or efferent (Rosenblatt, 1978) responses. I tried to encourage her to engage them in activities beyond the read alouds, yet I never pursued writing specifically. The other activities I suggested seemed to be beyond the rhelm of possibility for Jennifer. Had she had a guide and the resources already in place, she may have implemented additional activites including those that engaged her students in taking action for change. Again, as she continues to reflect on this process and pursues critical literacy in the future, she may gradually incorporate some of what she missed this year.

Summary

To understand how this first year teacher implemented critical literacy, I examined the elements of her curriculum, how she and I co-constructed critical literacy, and the opportunities she missed in her implementation. The primary element in Jennifer's curriculum was her read alouds. Therefore, books became the center of our discussions. We talked about text selection, the conversations around the books, the purpose in using critical literacy literature, and how the students responded to this. Jennifer and I continually shifted our discussions from looking ahead to reflecting on the past. Both of our experiences during Jennifer's pre-service year contributed to how she implemented critical literacy this year. We recalled prior read aloud conversations and our interpretations of the books from that time. In order to implement critical literacy as a first year teacher, Jennifer needed support. She faced many obstacles that could have caused her to refrain from utilizing this practice. However, I tried to help her overcome those obstacles by

giving her suggestions, helping her plan, and by providing evidence that she was doing something positive as we reviewed the transcripts from her read alouds.

Jennifer was initially reluctant to discuss critical issues with students. However, over time, she changed her perception about the appropriateness of such conversations. While there is always room to grow and areas to strengthen, especially when implementing something that has so many layers and ambiguous parts, Jennifer maintained her belief in the value of critical literacy. She took the initiative to develop and implement a difficult practice. She came from a different background than her students and was introduced to concepts she never discussed as a child. Through implementing critical literacy, Jennifer and her students came to learn about each other and the world. As she moves forward, she has the potential to make deeper connections between power, language, and literacy when teaching about the world.

Chapter Summary

The specific purpose of this project was to find out what happened to a first year teacher's perceptions of critical literacy; what influences impacted her development of critical literacy perspectives; and how she implemented critical literacy. Through typological and inductive analysis of numerous data sources, I identified a number of patterns throughout Jennifer's critical literacy journey. This led me to report generalizations related to the research questions. I found that Jennifer consistently perceived critical literacy as being valuable for teachers because it helps them learn about their students' lives and their emotions and for students because it helps them learn about the world and about critical issues. Jennifer's percpetion about the appropriateness of having conversations related to "taboo" topics such as homelessness and race changed as she became more comfortable with these issues.

Data revealed five obstacles Jennifer faced throughout this research as she tried to implement critical literacy: other teachers' attitudes towards her use of critical literacy literature; parental influence related to race; the developmental age of her students; and a lack of books and limited time. Facing these obstacles caused Jennifer reluctance as she implemented critical literacy. However, she also came to rely on the sources that supported her. Data revealed three sources of support throughout this process. I was a constant source of support, her knowledge about critical literacy books helped her gain confidence in using them, and her students' reactions confirmed that she was doing something positive. All three sources of support helped move Jennifer beyond her reticence about using critical literacy approaches.

Data revealed that Jennifer's read alouds were the primary element in her critical literacy curriculum, which were often followed by a written response during writer's workshop. Other than writer's workshop, limited activities were implemented before or after her read alouds. Because of various obstacles and Jennifer's emerging critical literacy perspective, her questions were more traditional than critical. These factors limited the depth of her read aloud conversations. Most of these conversations were based on the context of the stories and not the underlying issues present in the literature. Through the process of reflection, having support and the right resources, and observing the positive impact these discussions have on her students, I am confident that Jennifer will continue to develop a critical perspective and become more proficient in her critical literacy endeavors.

In Chapter 5, I will provide conclusions based on the findings of this dissertation; implications and recommendations for researchers, teacher educators, and teachers; and my final thoughts on this research, critical literacy, and teaching.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, REFLECTIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to describe and analyze a critical literacy journey for one first year teacher as the teacher and I co-constructed our understandings of that process. Specifically, the study examined if and how a first year teacher who explored critical literacy during her teacher preparation would develop and implement a critical literacy curriculum. The study utilized multiple data sources from Jennifer's pre-service year and her first year of teaching. The data sources were analyzed for common themes.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study, presenting the problem, purpose, research questions, significance, and limitations. In Chapter 2, I presented a review of the literature, including the theoretical framework. In Chapter 3, I provided a description of the research methodology and data analysis procedures used in this study. In Chapter 4, I presented the findings of this study by describing the themes and patterns I identified from the data analysis phases detailed in Chapter 3. This chapter presents conclusions from the study, implications for researchers, teacher educators, and teachers, and my reflections on this process.

Conclusions

The research questions that guided this study were: (1) What happens to a first year teacher's perceptions of critical literacy from pre-service preparation to in-service teaching? (2)What influences impact this teacher's development of critical literacy perspectives? and (3) How does this teacher implement critical literacy? Based on data collection, the following general conclusions have been derived from the findings: implementing critical literacy is difficult for new teachers; developing a critical approach to literacy instruction is a process; and new teachers are capable of moving toward critical literacy practices.

The Difficulty

Implementing critical literacy is difficult for new teachers. They are confronted with many challenges, as they try to deliver thoughtful and purposeful instruction to their students. Critical literacy practices do not come with instructions, teacher's guides, or a checklist. Stevens and Bean (2007) note that critical literacy is an elusive concept, and Green (2001) acknowledges that what constitutes critical literacy varies. New teachers' interpretations of critical literacy may reflect that ambiguity as they are trying to understand its meaning and how it fits into their reading instruction. Luke and Freebody (1997b) point out the following essential questions: What is the nature of reading, its social functions and effects? How it is learned? And how it is best taught? New teachers grapple with these questions, as they try to meet the needs of diverse learners, while doing their best to follow school policies. Teacher education programs typically provide traditional reading instruction to their teacher education candidates. Those that incorporate a critical perspective cease their support once coursework is complete, leaving new teachers to independently develop a critical literacy curriculum within the literacy framework already in place at the schools in which they teach.

Serafini (2003) notes that instructional practices based on a critical perspective are not predetermined or included in the commercial reading programs that many U.S. schools now employ because of NCLB mandates. Within a critical literacy framework, instructional decisions are made by teachers as they take into consideration larger social contexts, viewing the classroom space as "part of society, influenced by the political, cultural, and historical forces contained therein" (par. 33). Power and privilege and how they are implicated in language, culture, and learning have typically been invisible in school discourse, and making them visible

is difficult for seasoned professionals (Nieto, 2002). Questioning the status quo before new teachers have had the chance to learn their school dynamics and develop their professional identity can be a daunting task.

Throughout my research with Jennifer, the following obstacles caused this first year teacher reluctance during the implementation of her critical literacy practices: other teachers' attitudes toward critical literacy and their limited expectations of her students; Jennifer's concern about parental perceptions of the content of her discussions and her choice in books; and her own discomfort in discussing sensitive issues, especially because she was from a different background than her students. Beyond read alouds, Jennifer limited the activities she implemented as part of her critical literacy curriculum. She was also anxious about the young age of her students and a lack of time and resources were also part of the problem. All of these factors are consistent with Stevens and Bean's (2007) findings that teachers find it difficult to take up a critical literacy stance in their first years of teaching. I suggested various activities to help Jennifer enrich and extend her lessons; yet, as a first year teacher, she was balancing these obstacles along with other typical first year teacher challenges. Jennifer had been exposed to critical literacy during her pre-service year and had the support of a researcher throughout this process; however, implementing critical literacy as a first year teacher was a difficult and complex process. This process required time, support, and reflection.

The Process

Developing a critical approach to literacy instruction is a process – a complex individual process. For Jennifer, that process began during her pre-service year. Initially she was reluctant to have conversations about sensitive social issue, such as homelessness and race, with young

children. After being immersed in literature that included those issues, her comfort level changed. Jennifer's increased comfort led her to change her perception about the appropriateness of having conversations with children around sensitive topics. Once Jennifer's perceptions changed, she began to use books inclusive of these topics in her classroom. The books became the tool Jennifer used to initiate talk about critical social issues.

While Jennifer was limiting the scope of these conversations, she was at a solid starting point in the development of her critical literacy curriculum. Transactional reading was a part of her reading instruction. Jennifer relied on aesthetic and efferent approaches (Rosenblatt, 1978) as she invited her students to acknowledge their feelings and recall information from the reading process. She also saw her students as individuals and valued their different perspectives. Going beyond a modernist view of reading, Jennifer took her reading instruction further in search of deeper meaning in the texts she used. Stevens and Bean (2007) note that any definition of literacy includes meaning - meaning derived from each individual, their life experiences, society, and the ever changing world. Jennifer continually activated her students' prior knowledge about themselves and their experiences to help them find meaning in new information. She helped increase their knowledge and vocabulary related to critical concepts within and beyond her read alouds. The next step will be for Jennifer to move beyond the context of these stories and examine social issues in relation to the world. She then can start to make connections across language, literacy, and power during her instruction. McDaniel (2006) believes that the implementation of critical literacy is possible, but teachers have to develop an understanding of what this process entails in order to formulate their approach appropriately. As Jennifer continues to learn more about critical literacy, becomes more confident in her teaching practices,

and finds her voice within her school community, she has the potential to move forward in her critical literacy practices.

The Potential

New teachers are capable of moving toward critical literacy practices. As new teachers become engaged in reading professional literature, talking to others, and working with their students, they have the potential to gain increased competency in developing a critical literacy curriculum. In this study, Jennifer went from being apprehensive about discussing homelessness and race with children to using and discussing books containing those elements on a regular basis. Jennifer was faced with many obstacles along her journey; yet, she continually moved forward, seeking new literature, talking to others in search of suggestions, and assessing her students' progress. She was also very receptive of the feedback I provided, believing that it helped move her toward greater understandings of critical literacy.

Like Lankshear and Knobel (1997) and Luke and Freebody (1997b), Jennifer viewed critical literacy as a social practice. This social practice enabled her students to verbalize their text-to-self and student-to-student connections, even when those connections were based on taboo topics. Her critical practices also served to increase her students' vocabulary and comprehension as they were introduced to new information from books and their peers' comments. Jennifer rejected what Freire (1970/2005) referred to as the banking concept of education as she engaged her students in discussion. Rather than depositing knowledge *into* her students, she co-constructed knowledge *with* them in a two-way transmission. She viewed herself as a participant in the learning process and was open to new understandings based on both class discussions and discussions between herself and me.

Delpit (1998), McDaniel (2004), Dyson (2004), Dozier, Johnston, and Rogers (2006), and Freire and Macedo (1987) believe that in order for students to understand the role of language in culture, their teachers first need to be reflective and develop their own understandings and beliefs about the world. Throughout the research process, as Jennifer and I co-constructed our knowledge and reviewed transcripts of her lessons, she was becoming a better reflective practitioner. She was starting to find her own meaning about the world and discovering relationships between reading, social issues, and her students.

Jennifer's curriculum may not have encompassed all elements of critical literacy, but she displayed evidence of growth from pre-service to in-service. She eagerly sought out books that addressed complex social issues and engaged young children in talk around those issues, thus providing a foundation for herself and her students. She was reflective about this process and coming to new understandings about her own reluctance and growth. Pongratz (2005) stated that critical pedagogy empowers people to become actively engaged in their quest for knowledge. Jennifer was empowered throughout this process as she continually strove to improve her practice and looked ahead toward future lessons. Observing her students' engagement validated for her that critical literacy was a viable practice.

Based on the findings of this study, I found that implementing critical literacy is difficult for new teachers. Trying to implement practices that question language, culture, and power, while also trying to teach and build relationships with the school community is a challenge. Developing a critical literacy curriculum goes hand-in-hand with developing a critical perspective. Both aspects do not happen in a standardized way; rather they are part of an individual process. Engaging in conversations, reflecting, and reading professional literature

about this process helps move teachers forward in their thinking enabling them to continually improve their practice.

Implications

The purpose of this dissertation was to describe and analyze a critical literacy journey for one first year teacher as the teacher and I co-constructed our understandings of that process. After completing this journey, implications for researchers, teacher educators, and teachers will next be described. I present my suggestions for further research and ways to engage in critical practices based on my own experiences as a researcher and teacher.

For Researchers

The co-constructive design of this study is a viable approach to critical literacy research, especially because it shares important assumptions with a critical pedagogy framework. A two-way transmission of knowledge is important for researchers and their participants when conducting this kind of research. Co-construction can serve as a model for teachers to help raise their awareness of the value of exchanging dialogue in order to come to new understandings and to view all participants as partners in the construction of knowledge. This co-constructive process enables researchers, teachers, and students to learn about themselves, others, and the world through dialogue and reflection. This process also provides a framework that makes it possible for all participants to work toward positive social change.

I recommend that when untertaking this type of project, researchers try to remember that they bear some responsibility for the teachers and students they are working with. New teachers are in the introductory phase of their career in education. They are learning the culture and

climate of their schools and the instructional framework. McDaniel (2004) stated that teachers may be criticized for engaging in critical practices. I found in my study that Jennifer's co-workers talked her out of doing critical literacy because they believed it was too challenging and Jennifer also became concerned about her students' parents. Therefore, researchers who are trying to encourage this practice need to be aware of the delicate position new teachers face. Researchers should provide encouragement to help them develop critical perspectives, but they also should be mindful of obstacles and opposition. It would be unfair to co-construct this process with a new teacher without taking into consideration the political climate in their schools.

When undertaking a co-constructive research process, the journey should be well documented. Research protocols should include data that documents the contributions of both the researcher and participant(s). Since this kind of research is based on raising others' consciousness, it is important to document how this process unfolds. To capture the full story, researchers should record all the dialogue related to the issues at hand as well as the reflective processes that occur as the study unfolds. All of these elements add to the richness of the story to be told.

Once researchers conclude data collection and begin analysis, it is important to go beyond description. There are often hidden stories when participants confront complex constructs like critical literacy, and if the data are rich, those stories can be revealed with careful analysis strategies. Many interrelated factors impact the development of teachers' critical literacy curriculum; therefore, going beyond description is necessary in order to help others understand the processes a new teacher goes through. It is the story behind the stories that needs to be captured. Critical literacy helps readers question what is missing in a story, which holds true for

researchers of this process as well. The untold story in critical literacy implementation may become the focal point in the final report. Description alone will not lead the researcher to those untold stories.

Based on the findings of this study, I was left with questions for future research. I wonder if and how elementary classroom teachers ever achieve the full expression of critical literacy. For those who do implement critical literacy, I wonder how they were led to this practice. What would happen if a grade level or school would subscribe to critical literacy and provide professional development to support their teachers? I would also like to know more about the role co-construction takes on for teachers implementing critical literacy at various stages of their careers and how it is utilized at those varying stages. I would also like to see further research regarding student perspectives on this process and what factors influence their engagement in critical conversations. I am also curious to know how critical literacy impacts children's listening and reading comprehension.

For Teachers Educators

If teacher educators are going to introduce pre-service teachers to critical literacy practices, they need to understand that it is a complex process. It should not be assumed that all pre-service teachers will embrace, feel comfortable with, or understand this approach during their pre-service year. Becoming critical is a process requiring personal reflection that leads to new understandings. Individuals come to these understandings at various times in different ways, and these understandings will continue to evolve over time. Success also depends on the instruction and resources used to introduce pre-service teachers to critical literacy but teacher

educators need to convey to their pre-service teachers the complexity of this process for themselves and their own students.

In order to introduce pre-service teachers to critical literacy practices, teacher educators can incorporate some of the strategies I used with Jennifer's cohort, such as: introducing them to children's critical literacy literature through read alouds and discussion; having them read professional literature about critical literacy; modeling how to facilitate critical conversations and develop critical questions; and scaffolding this approach throughout. I recommend that teacher educators also model activities they expect pre-service teachers to eventually implement in their own classroom such as: invitations (Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006), audit trails (Vasquez, 2001), writing and sharing connections (Wooton, 2000), and carousel reading (Van Sluys, Legan, Laman, & Lewison, 2005). Activities like these allow pre-service teachers to be exposed to and interact with many texts in various formats. Critically writing in response to critical literacy literature should also be emphasized with pre-service teachers. In addition, I recommend going beyond my own strategies and having more conversations related to the role of language, literacy, and power and their implications for reading instruction. Pre-service teachers should also read professional literature that includes theoretical perspectives to help them understand reading instruction from a broader view and to help establish a foundation for implementing critical literacy in their teaching.

For Teachers

Teachers trying to implement critical literacy practices need to understand that it is a process, an ever changing process that is complex and requires time and reflection. It is important to be mindful of the premise of transformative education, which entails reflecting in

order to take action for social change. Taking action can start small within the classroom or school, but at some point should move toward the community to teach students about their role in the larger society.

Implementing critical literacy does not come without criticism. Teachers should be aware of the obstacles, especially other people's perceptions of their practice. They should be mindful of school and community dynamics and politics when implementing critical literacy. It is also important to think about the school's existing literacy framework and philosophy, which can be integrated into this process when questioning society and education. Teachers should encourage their students to transact (Rosenblatt, 1978) with texts both aesthetically and efferently but also to think beyond the text and examine sociocultural perspectives and how such understandings impact the role of a reader. Teachers should not be limited to modernist approaches, seeking more than one correct answer. They should value multiple perspectives and teach their students to do the same.

The implications presented offer important understandings about studying new teachers and exploring the development of critical literacy practices. A co-constructive design is a viable approach for this type of work. Researchers need to remember that when conducting critical/feminist research, they bear some responsibility, should document the journey and go beyond description. Teacher educators need to understand the complexity of critical literacy processes. They should utilize and expand upon my suggestions when working with pre-service teachers. Teachers need to be aware that developing critical perspectives and implementing critical literacy practices are part of a process, an ever changing process that is complex, requires time and reflection, and does not come without risk. With the insight I gained from this study, I will now share my final reflections on this journey.

Reflections

Going through this journey with Jennifer, I continually shifted my thoughts forward and backward, reflecting on my own classroom experiences and looking ahead at the teachers I would prepare in the future. I began my quest for knowledge about critical literacy when I discovered literature that mirrored my own students' complex lives. As a teacher, I was often confronted with issues that I did not know how to address. Critical literacy literature seemed like a way to confront those issues in a meaningful manner. However, once I began discussing and reading more about critical literacy, I found that there is another layer to those issues that should become part of the conversation. Critical literacy is not just about the issues students face or the issues presented in children's books. Over time, I came to understand that those issues are imbedded in larger social contexts related to language, culture, and power. Trying to prompt Jennifer to come to this understanding was difficult because she was so focused on current issues in her students' lives. Like all well intended teachers, her students came first, which is one reason why she was not ready to confront larger social issues.

As Jennifer and I co-constructed our understandings, I found out how complex it is to implement critical literacy in a first grade classroom with a first year teacher. Researching this process within a critical/feminist paradigm was a challenge. I felt responsible for Jennifer and her students. Because I was involved in trying to raise others' consciousness, I wanted to know that I was going through this process appropriately. I also was aware that Jennifer was a first year teacher and viewed me as a more seasoned teacher that should have answers to her questions and problems. Critical literacy practices in an elementary classroom, however, were new to me too. Therefore, I did not always have an answer or know what outcome to expect. That is also a part

of qualitative research of this sort. When I set out to conduct this case study, I knew I was studying a process and was unaware of how it would unfold. In hindsight, there are additional aspects I would have liked to include; yet, I would not take back anything that occurred.

I found data analysis to be extremely insightful. Just when I thought I had captured the story, I went deeper and discovered missing pieces that changed the story. Initially, I did not think about the obstacles that would cause Jennifer reluctance or how certain aspects would serve to support and encourage her. Interpreting this give and take process enabled me to see beyond the elements of this first year teacher's critical literacy curriculum. Data analysis was a complex process because I constantly shifted between data sources, which contained past, present, and future elements of Jennifer's curriculum. Once I became confident that I answered the research questions of this project, I stopped analysis. However, I am aware that continued analysis can lead to deeper understandings about this practice. I am sure I will return to the data for future projects.

Most importantly, I learned how courageous Jennifer was as she undertook such a complex undertaking as a first year teacher. Not only did she agree to implement a difficult approach, she allowed herself to be studied in the process. She was honest about the obstacles she faced and was not afraid to draw the line when she needed to pause. I also treasure this experience with Jennifer because she allowed me to observe and interact with her students as they engaged in this process. Her students were resilient, engaged, and excited throughout this entire process, and being in the classroom with them helped me envision my own students having these discussions. I believe Michael, Jessica, Jashaun, and all of my previous students would have embraced critical literacy just as Jennifer's students did this year.

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APPENDICES

A: Informed Consent - Pre-service

Informed Consent Statement

Pre-Service Teachers Confronting Diversity through Children's Critical Literacy Literature

INTRODUCTION

As part of the 2006-2007 Urban Multicultural Internship Cohort, you are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine if using children's critical literacy literature with pre-service teachers will help them to learn to believe they can become a change agent. As part of this study, you will be exposed to various children's literature based on critical issues. The literature focuses on issues that may be present in urban communities such as homelessness, immigration, racial differences and diversity. As an Intern, you will have discussions and write reflections in order to help you confront these differences prior to becoming a first year teacher.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Procedure

Data will be collected from your cohort of approximately 12 Intern Teachers in the Urban Multicultural Teacher Education Program. This study will take place during the 2006-2007 school-year. You are being asked to voluntarily participate in the study. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The data collection consists of three parts: 1.) a survey, 2.) reflections, and 3.) in-class text connections. The components are outlined as follows:

1.) <u>Survey</u>

This is a pre- and post- online survey regarding your attitudes and perceptions of critical issues in an urban community and a teacher's role in that environment. The pre- and post- online survey

will be completed two times. The pre-survey will be completed in August as you begin your coursework and internship. The post-survey will be completed in April as you complete your coursework and internship. The survey should take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. This is the only additional requirement outside of the regular coursework. The online survey will be password protected.

2.) Reflections

You will post reflections onto your Personal Learning Portal (PLP) through www.learningcentral.org under the title: Critical Literacy. You will journal your own personal thoughts about the critical literacy topics as well as your thoughts and attitudes about being a teacher and leading these discussions in your own classroom. You will post your responses weekly after each class session which is a regular course requirement. The Personal Learning Portal is password protected. You will grant permission for the Principal Investigator to specifically have access to your reflections.

3.) In-class Text Connections

Part of the regular coursework using children's critical literacy literature will include Writing and Sharing Connections based on *Valued Voices; An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching and Learning* (2000) by Deborah Wooton. The Researcher will initially read aloud a critical literacy story and then you will be given a sticky note to have a brief personal response to or a transaction with the literature (Wooton, 2000). The sticky note will then be placed onto chart paper and used for discussion among the class. Each intern will assign a category to their response making text- to-text, text-to-self, text-to-other connections (ex. family, history, literature, equal rights, media, self…). Then you will be able to voluntarily share your connections within your community of learners. Later in the year, each Intern will have an

opportunity to choose a critical literacy text on their own and lead a discussion with the class. Each sheet of chart paper used will be kept for the year and used as data in the study. The chart paper will be kept in the professor's locked office at [Address].

The data will be analyzed by the researcher throughout the year. If you choose to participate, your identity will be kept confidential in the researcher's write up and all of the online components are password protected, therefore placing you at minimal risk. Data that is part of the regular coursework (on-line reflections and in-class text connections) will be used in class with the Urban Multicultural Instructional Team. The pre- and post- survey will be available only to the researcher and the advisor.

If you choose not to participate, you will not complete the pre- or post- online survey, your reflections on the Personal Learning Portal (PLP) will not be used as part of the data collection, and your in-class text connections posted on chart paper will not be used as data in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Wendy Meller, at [Address], [Phone Number] and [Phone Number] through Karen Walker (Senior Secretary). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at [Phone Number].

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you want to withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data from the survey will be returned to you or destroyed. The data from your online reflections and in-class text connections will be collected just as part of your regular course requirements and not as data in this study.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____

Date _____

Investigator's signature _____

Date _____

B: Informed Consent - In-service

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

I am conducting a study called "A Critical Literacy Case Study: Pre-service Exploration to First Year Implementation" and I would like to invite you to participate in the study. The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of implementing critical literacy as a first year teacher as you and I co-construct our knowledge of that process.

If you agree to participate, I will visit your classroom weekly during the fall of 2007 (August through December) to observe your read alouds and follow-up activities. I will take on the role of observer and low level participant taking notes as I keep interactions with children to a minimum. I will at times informally interview you before and/or after these lessons. I will take notes either during and/or after these brief conversations.

I will conduct three tape-recorded interviews with you. They will take place at the beginning, middle, and end of the study. I will ask you a series of open-ended questions designed to capture your thoughts on critical literacy. These interviews will take approximately one hour to complete and will be transcribed by me or by a typist who will have signed a confidentiality agreement.

I will also visit you when you plan your lessons each week. I will tape-record our discussions during these planning meetings and request that you provide me with a copy of your weekly lesson plans. These planning meetings will also be transcribed by me or a typist under a confidentiality agreement. Additionally, any email communication we have, will be included as part of the study to capture our dialogue leading up to or after your lessons.

I may seek permission to copy or photograph products made by you or the class to help me understand the critical literacy lessons. Any identifying information from you or the students will be covered prior to photographing or copying.

You should not experience any foreseeable risks because of your participation in the research project. Your participation is completely voluntary. Pseudonyms will be utilized for all names and locations. Your identity and that of the school will be protected as much as possible in published reports of the research or in research presentations at professional meetings. Data will be stored securely and will be made only available to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give me permission to do otherwise.

While you will not be compensated directly for your participation, you may benefit from opportunities to reflect on your teaching practice. In addition, it may inform your planning decisions for future teaching practice.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you want to withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data from the interview will be destroyed.

_____ Participant's Initials

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Wendy Meller, at [Address], [Phone Number] or through her secretary Karen Walker at [Phone Number]. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at [Phone Number].

_____

CONSENT

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. I HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS FORM. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Participant:

Name	Signature	Date

Researcher:

Name	Signature	Date

C: Critical Questions Handout

October 4, 2007

Critical Questions Handout

All questions should be modified for different children's text as appropriate.

Questions about how characters and situations are portrayed:

- Who do you like in the story?
- Who is always in the background in the story?
- Which people don't you hear in the story, and what might they say if you heard them?

Questions about how information is presented:

- Are there other ways to show this person/place/event?

Questions about how texts are probably intended to be read:

- What do you think the writer wants readers to think?

Questions about how they as readers respond to the text:

- What did you notice about this story?
- How does this make you feel?

Additional:

- Who has the power in the story?
- Who makes the decision in the story?
- Who is obeyed and tells the other characters what to do?
- How is the power distributed among the characters in the text?

Reference:

McDaniel, C. (2004). Critical literacy: A questioning stance and the possibility for change. *The Reading Teacher, 57*(5), 472-481.

D: Co-constructed Critical Questions

October 10, 2007

Co-constructed Critical Questions

Always My Dad (Wyeth, 1997)

Wendy's Suggestions	Jennifer's Questions
Dad can't keep a steady job, why?	Why do you think he has so many jobs?
What do you think the dad would say if he knew how much she missed him?	Why do you think the mom just left and just dropped them off?
The lights flickering, who do you think it is? How are they arriving (bus, car, train, walk?)	She just got there and is looking for something, what's she looking for?
What do you think the author wants you to think about the story?	What would her daddy would say of he knew how much she missed him?
Who is missing in the story? (mamma)	What do you think the flickering light is?
What do you think she would say (to dad) if we heard her voice?	You see daddy in the picture, how'd he get there?
So did mamma drop them off and go where?	Who didn't get him?
Why don't we hear the grandparent's voice – what would they say to their son?	So how long has it been since she had seen him?
How do you think she feels being the only girl now?	What do you notice they are all doing?
How do you think she felt running to daddy in the game? How would you feel?	How do you think she felt?
Daddy has a new trucking job, why another new job? What do you think about him always looking for new jobs? What could prevent him from keeping a steady job?	How does she feel as the only girl?
Better with mom having a "regular" life, what do you think he means by regular?	What do you think happens when she is by herself and he (daddy) is not there?
What is your opinion of the dad?	Why did the author not give them (grandparents) a voice?
Why do you think the author wrote this story?	How do you think he felt having to tell them he was leaving?
How would you write the ending of the story?	So why did dad have to leave?
	What do you think the dreams about?

October 11, 2007

Co-constructed Critical Questions

Visiting Day (Woodson, 2002b)

Wendy's Suggestions	Jennifer's Questions
Who do you see on the cover? What do their faces tell us?	What do you think they are doing right now?
What are the pictures of in grandma's house? Who is missing?	Look over there, who are the pictures of?
On daddy's wall, who could be in those pictures? Where is daddy?	Who is missing?
What color are all of the people on the bus? How do they look?	Where do you think he (daddy) is?
What does "doing a little time" mean?	How do you think she (little girl) looks?
Where are they? How can you tell? (Wires) What is daddy wearing?	Look at all those people lined up by the bus, where are they going?
Can you tell who else stays in prison, how? (same clothes)	Why do you think the little girl is sad?
Why do they have to wear the same clothes?	Have you ever been on a bus receiving food like this?
What types of people are missing from the picture? Does this remind you of another book, (like "The School is Not White")?	What does it mean "doin' a little time?"
How do they each feel saying goodbye? How would you feel?	How did you know it was jail?
Why do you think daddy stays away? What will he do when he leaves jail?	How do they (inmates) look?
Is it a happy ending? Why?	How do the families look?
Why does the little girl stay with grandma?	Look at their faces, where are they going?
Who else could be in the story?	How does the little girl feel and the daddy?
Looking back in the beginning, remember they were happy, why were they so happy?	What do you think about this book, is it a happy book or a sad book?
How would you feel going for visiting day?	Does anyone have a connection to "Our Gracie Aunt?"
How is this book similar to other books like "Always My Dad" and "Our Gracie Aunt"?	

E: Survey Questions

Pre-service Survey Questions (August 2006 and May 2007)

	Name:
	Date:
	Questions
1	Describe some critical issues present in an urban community?
2	What is your community role, as a teacher in an urban school?
3	What do you think you may struggle with when teaching diverse students?
4	Please describe the similarities and differences of your own school(s) growing up to the schools you will be in during your internship.
5	Are there any topics that you feel may be disturbing or should be forbidden to talk about with young students? Please explain.
6	How would you handle talking about topics such as homelessness, racism, discrimination, diversity or poverty with young students?
7	What role does your race play in discussing racism with students?
8	How do you feel about students questioning their world?
9	What can be done with students to work towards changing their world?
10	If you learned that a student in your class was homeless and other students were finding out about it, as a teacher how would you handle that situation?
11	What would your reaction be if a parent questioned you teaching about racism to your students?
12	What would be an effective method to teach multiculturalism and diversity in your own classroom?
13	When teaching students about history, what does “history” mean to you?
14	How would you define “thinking critically” when using books for a read-aloud?
15	What are your thoughts on children making connections with books to other things such as television, family, history, school, advertisements...?

F: Interview Questions

August 29, 2007

Interview # 1

(1) What is your literacy philosophy?

(2) What do you think about literacy in relationship to the world?

(3) What do you see as the purpose of read alouds?

(4) How would you define critical literacy?

(5) How do you confront social issues when talking to children?

(6) What is it about critical literacy that makes you want to use it in your classroom?

(7) What do you vision critical literacy lessons will look like in your classroom this year?

(8) How is that different or the same from last year during your pre-service placement?

(9) How do you determine if a book is a critical literacy text?

(10) How do you think your background, race, gender, culture, and class will play a role in classroom discussions?

(11) What would you like to see happen during your participation in this study?

November 12, 2007

Interview # 2

(1) How would you define your literacy philosophy?

(2) How would you define critical literacy?

(3) What is it about this literature that makes you want to use it in your classroom?

(4) Tell me about your friends unit?

(5) Tell me about your family unit?

(6) Are your critical literacy lessons what you thought they would be this year?
What is different?
What is going as planned?
What has impacted your implementation of these lessons?
Through read alouds, what would you say are some critical topics you have touched on this year?
Where do you see yourself going next?

(7) How did your students respond to talking about segregation?

(8) Your students started to use the term segregated during the school day for example when they lined up in a boy and girl line to go to the bathroom, what do you think about that?

(9) What do you think about the role poverty plays in the literature you have read?

(10) Do you find yourself uncomfortable with any aspect of critical literacy?
Are there some aspects you think you avoid consciously or unconsciously? Why?

(11) Your teaching assistant joined the group when you read *Visiting Day*, how were you feeling about her being there for that particular story and did it impact the questions you posed to the students?
In general, what are your feelings about having visitors when you read critical literacy texts to students?

(12) How would you define my presence in your classroom during read alouds, writer's workshop and in our planning meetings?
If I was not here this year, what do you think would be different?
What aspect of my being here has supported your teaching?

(13) How do you compare your critical literacy lessons now to those you implemented during your pre-service placement?

(14) How do you think your background, race, gender, culture, and class plays a role in your classroom discussions and activities?

(15) Tell me about your students writing abilities and how that plays a role in extending their critical thinking.

(16) Tell me about your students' ability to have critical conversations.

(17) What have you learned about your students through the discussions you have when reading critical literacy texts?

(18) What is the value in having children talk about critical issues?

(19) You often choose stories based on personal situations affecting your students, what would you like to see happen throughout this process for them?

(20) If there was something or something(s) you could change to improve your ability to implement critical literacy in school, what would that be?

(21) Tell me a little about what you think when you read over the notes from my observations of your read alouds.

(22) How has participating in this study impacted you?
What would you like to see happen during the next phase?

December 11, 2007

Interview # 3

(1) What do you foresee happening for the rest of the school year as far as critical literacy?

(2) How does critical literacy influence other areas of your literacy practice/other content areas?

(3) If you did not learn about critical literature in your pre-service program, what do you think your read alouds would have looked like this year?

(4) If you were to tell someone entering teaching about critical literacy, how would you describe it?

(5) What would you tell them about the books?

(6) What would you tell them about critical questions?

(7) How has your students writing abilities played a role in your critical literacy lessons?

(8) As a first year teacher, what would you say were barriers in implementing critical literacy lessons? What were the supports?

(9) How do you vision critical literacy lessons for you in the future (1-5 yrs. later)?

(10) What type of projects would you like to do in connection with critical literacy?

(11) How did you view critical literacy last year?

(12) How has your knowledge of critical literacy evolved from pre-service throughout this year?

(13) What do you think about literacy as being a social practice?

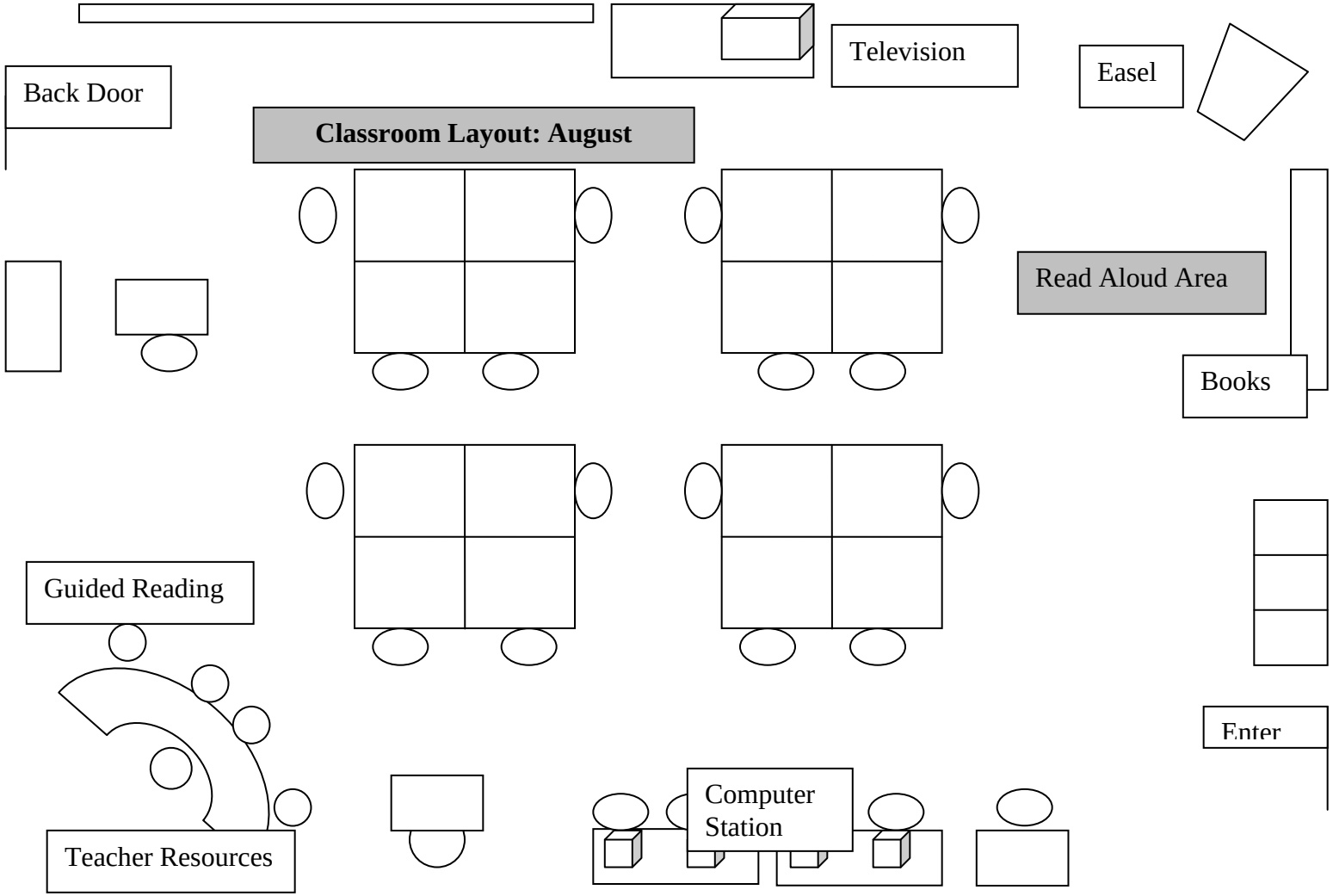
(14) A critical literacy curriculum as described by Leland, Harste, Ociepka, Lewison, and Vasquez (1999) focuses on building students awareness of how systems of meaning and power affect people and the lives they lead" (p. 1). Books can help teachers and students start and sustain these critical conversations. What do you think about that statement?

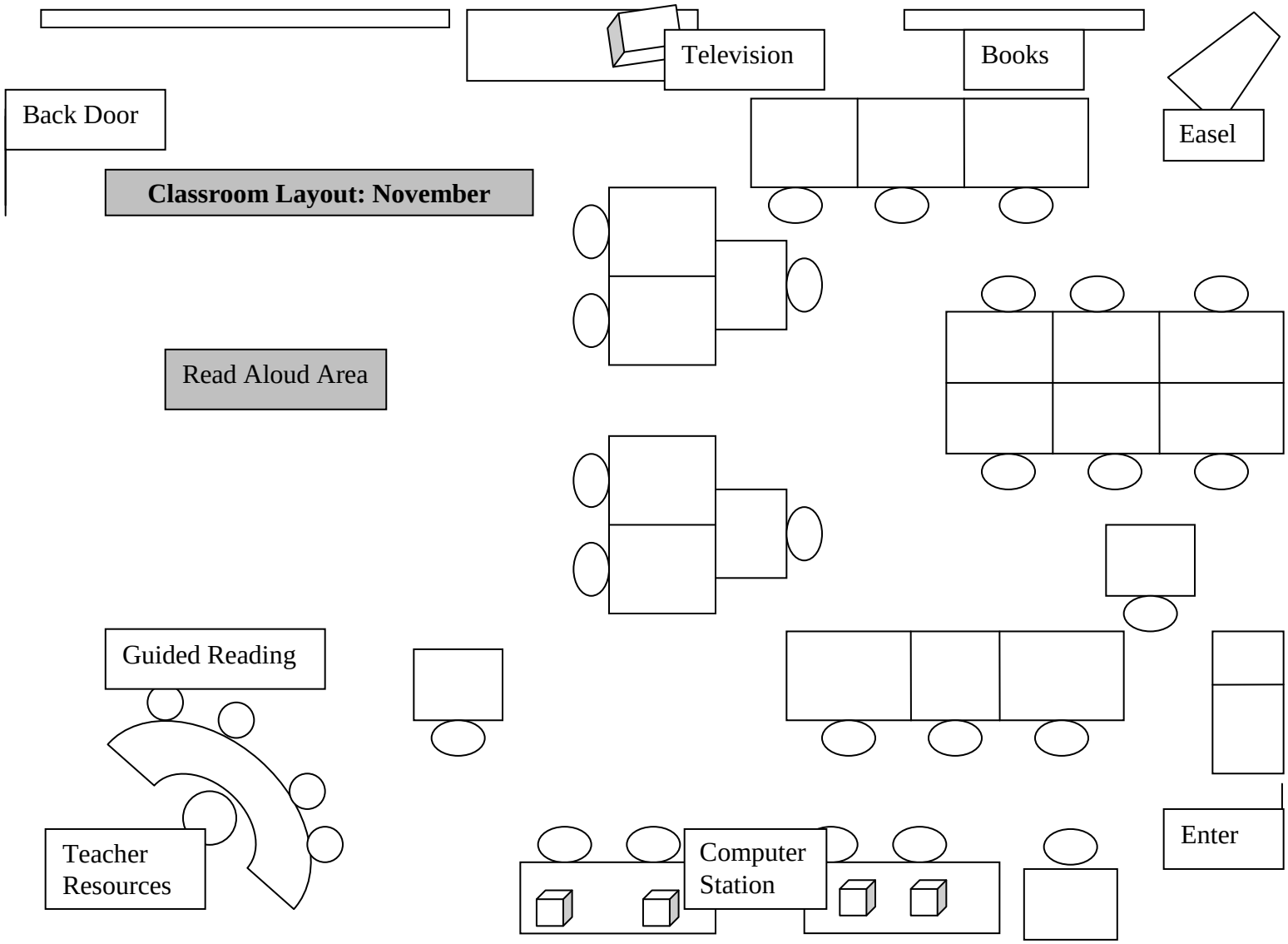
(15) Would you have had conversations about segregation, jail, poverty, and difference without these books?

(16) How did you decide/what criteria did you use to determine if a book was "critical"?

(17) What do you think about developing an understanding of critical literacy as being a process?

G: Classroom Layout


Back Door
Classroom Layout: August
Television
Easel
Read Aloud Area
Books
Guided Reading
Teacher Resources
Computer Station
Enter


Television
Books
Back Door
Easel
Classroom Layout: November
Read Aloud Area
Guided Reading
Teacher Resources
Computer Station
Enter

H: Conceptual Outline

Conceptual Outline

I. Perceptions of Critical Literacy
    A. Consistent Perceptions of Critical Literacy
        a. Valuable for Teachers
        b. Valuable for Students
    B. Changed Perceptions of Appropriateness of Critical Literacy
        a. Homelessness
        b. Race
II. Influences Impacting Critical Literacy
    A. Obstacles
        a. Other Teachers' Attitudes
        b. Parental Influence
        c. Students' Developmental Age
        d. Lack of Books
        e. Limited Time
    B. Sources of Support
        a. The Researcher
        b. Books
        c. Student Engagement
III. Implementing Critical Literacy
    A. Curricular Elements
        a. Before and After Read Alouds
            1. Pre-Reading Activities
            2. Follow-up Activities
        b. Read Alouds
            1. Read Aloud Environment
            2. Critical Conversations
            3. Critical Questions
            4. Critical Literacy Literature
    B. Co-constructing Critical Literacy
        a. Planning Lessons
            1. Text Selection
            2. Critical Questions
            3. Activity Ideas
        b. Reflecting on Lessons
            1. Text Selection
            2. Transcript Reviews
    C. Missed Opportunities
        a. Critical Writing
        b. Suggestions
        c. Taking Action

I: Data Overview

Date	Reflection	Text Connection	Survey	Research Journal	Reflection	Observation	Cancel Read Aloud	Testing	Read Aloud/ Activity	Planning Meeting	Cancel Planning Meeting	Reason	Photographs	Lesson Plan Copy	Formal Interview
Pre-service															
Tues. 9/5/06	1	1	1	1					*The School is Not White* Doreen Rappaport						
Tues. 10/3/06	1	1		1					*The Lady in the Box* Ann McGovern						
Tues. 10/10/06	1	1		1					*A Shelter in Our Car* Monica Gunning						
Wed. 12/20/06	1	1		1					*Going Home* Eve Bunting						
Tues. 3/6/07	1	1		1					*Visiting Day* Jacqueline Woodson						
Tues. 3/27/07	1	1		1					*Always My Dad* Sharon Dennis Wyeth						
Tues. 4/3/07	1	1		1					*The Three Questions* Jon J. Muth						
Tues. 4/10/07	1	1		1					*Now Let Me Fly* Claire Johnson						
Wed. 5/9/07			1												
In-service															
Mon. 8/13/07				1											
Wed. 8/22/07				1											

Mon. 8/28/07				1											
Wed. 9/29/07				1											
Tues. 9/4/07				1						1					1
Wed. 9/5/07				1											
Tues. 9/11/07				1		1			*The Other Side* Jacqueline Woodson						
Fri. 9/14/07				1			1	1		1		Testing		1	
Sun. 9/16/07															
Tues. 9/18/07				1	1	1			*The School is Not White* Doreen Rappaport	1			3		
Wed. 9/19/07							1	1				Testing			
Thurs. 9/20/07				1	1										
Fri. 9/21/07				1											
Mon. 9/24/07				1	1	1			*The Story of Ruby Bridges* Robert Coles						
Wed. 9/26/07				1	1		1	1		1		Testing			
Thurs. 9/27/07								1							
Fri. 9/28/07								1							
Mon. 10/1/07							1								
Tues. 10/2/07				1	1	1			*The Secret Seder* Doreen Rappaport	1					
Wed. 10/3/07				1			1								
Thurs. 10/4/07				1	1	1			Writer's Workshop – Friends Unit Closure						

Wed. 10/10/07				1	1	1			Writer's Workshop Mentoring	1			7		
Thurs. 10/11/07				1	1	1			*Always My Dad* Sharon Dennis Wyeth				7		
Mon. 10/15/07				1	1	1			*Visiting Day* Jacqueline Woodson				6		
Thurs. 11/1/07											1	Literacy Meeting			
Mon. 11/5/07				1	1					1			7		
Mon. 11/12/07						1			*Something Beautiful* Sharon Dennis Wyeth						1
Tues. 11/13/07				1	1	1			*A Shelter in Our Car* Monica Gunning						
Thurs. 11/15/07							1					Thanksgiving Parent Luncheon			
Mon. 11/19/07				1	1	1			Make A Change Day		1	Personal discussion			
Mon. 12/3/07				1						1					
Tues. 12/4/07				1	1	1			*A Busy Year* Leo Lionni						
Thurs. 12/6/07						1			*Tillie and the Wall* Leo Lionni						
Mon. 12/10/07						1			*The Biggest House in the World* Leo Lionni						
Tues. 12/11/07						1			*Great Joy* Kate DiCamillo						1
Totals	**8**	**8**	**2**	**32**	**13**	**15**	**6**	**5**		**8**	**2**		**30**	**1**	**3**
Date	**Reflection**	**Text Connection**	**Survey**	**Research Journal**	**Reflection**	**Observe**	**Cancel Read Aloud**	**Testing**	**Read Aloud/ Activity**	**Planning Meeting**	**Cancel Planning Mtg.**	**Reason**	**Photographs**	**Lesson Plan Copy**	**Formal Interview**

VITA

Wendy Beth Meller was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on December 20, 1974. She graduated from George Washington High School in 1992. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Development and Family Studies with an emphasis on children and adolescents from Penn State University, State College, Pennsylvania in 1996 and a Master of Education degree in Elementary Education from Holy Family University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 2000. Wendy became a mentor and took graduate education classes through the Teacher Opportunity Corps at Hunter College, New York, New York. In 2005, she earned her certificate as a Cosby Scholar at Fordham University's Young Readers at Risk Program and became a Reading Specialist. Wendy taught grades K-3 in both public, private, and charter schools in Japan, New York City, and Philadelphia. In Knoxville, Tennessee, she supervised elementary education interns in the urban multicultural and neighborhood schools teacher education programs through the University of Tennessee. At Tennessee, she taught various undergraduate and graduate education courses. Wendy helped establish the Knoxville Jewish Day School and served as the Curriculum Coordinator. In August 2008, Wendy will earn her doctorate in Education with an emphasis in Literacy Studies. In the fall of 2008, she will begin work as an Assistant Professor in Early Childhood Education at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey.