ABSTRACT

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP INIATIATIVE IN A SMALL URBAN HIGH SCHOOL SETTING

By

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This qualitative study explored the experiences of 3 high school students and 1 high school principal to understand how a leadership initiative rooted in critical pedagogy impacted their personal and academic development as students and as a leader. The conceptual framework, of critical pedagogy, provided an analytical lens to explore the experiences of the 3 participating students in this study as well as the 1 high school principal. Portraiture methodology was incorporated to describe the rich narrative that unfolded both with him and his students in the study.

The findings in this study revealed data that supports the existing literature in critical pedagogy as it relates to student learning. The literature details how students involved in classrooms that utilize critical pedagogy are intrinsically motivated to learn about their world within the context of a larger society. Additionally the findings further developed the literature that discusses how critical pedagogy as an instructional practice motivates

students to have a desire to engage in their community to make positive change. The findings related to the role of the principal in a critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative revealed that when students are provided the opportunity to engage in academic work related to notions of critical pedagogy they thrive and excel.

Recommendations for policy and practice include: All school site principals are encouraged to teach a research seminar class rooted in critical pedagogy. Areas for future research include further exploring a longitudinal study of students that have taken the research seminar class analyzing the impact the class has had on a larger sample of participants and continuing to collect data on the principal as he leads the initiative and how it impacts his leadership.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My Own Portrait as an Educator

I begin this dissertation with my own story. It is a story that is filled with many experiences throughout my life that will provide everyone reading this dissertation with an understanding of how I developed into a social justice oriented school leader who incorporates critical pedagogy into his leadership initiatives. I start my story in elementary school where many of my schooling experiences were positive. I was categorized as a "late bird," the students that were perceived to have higher academic ability based on standardized test performance. This continued until the fourth grade and then something occurred in my educational experience that school year. It was the first year that I remember a teacher talking at us rather than with us. Collaborative learning was a large part of my schooling process from kindergarten until third grade. Most of our classroom time was spent collaborating with other students. We designed science projects in small groups. Our reading was always completed in pairs. The math that we worked on was typically completed in a large group and then we divided into smaller groups during math lab hours.

The collaborative learning stopped in the fourth grade when I went to a new school within the same school district. The new school that I transferred to did not use the collaborative learning process. Instead it was a lot of individual work that we were

expected to complete on our own. It was also a time in my schooling experience in which my teacher failed to make connections with my life outside of the classroom. Fourth grade was a time of discovery for myself, namely around hip hop music. From the break dancing, to the DJ'ing, and the battles that other people in my neighborhood had with MC'ing[1] (Chang, 2005), it was something that deeply intrigued me as a young boy creating an identity for myself as a Pilipino growing up in the Bay Area. Hip hop culture was something that was not seen as worthy of our teacher's time during the instructional day even though it was something that consumed many students' creative energy. Through the silence of not acknowledging what was important to us as youth, our teachers passively told us through their silence that our youth culture was not important to them.

I then started listening intently to the words of some of these albums, especially Public Enemy[2], and they started to make sense of the often senseless things I was forced to learn in school. At a very young age, I was reading a text (in the form of music) that critiqued the narratives I was receiving during formal instructional time. Many of the hip hop songs that I was listening to at this time discussed the inequitable treatment of Black students in their classrooms. My texts were songs of freedom and justice that would set

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[1] Hip Hop has several elements that encompass it as a popular urban youth culture. MC'ing are poets that recite their lyrics over jazz and soul orientated instrumentals. Break dancing is a form of dance where the participants use elements of Brazilian martial arts and other improvisational moves. Graffiti art is spray paint art often completed on the walls and subways in major metropolis cities.

[2] Public Enemy is popular hip hop music group that focused on many sociopolitical conditions of inner cities across the United States from an African American perspective. Recently our students were able to meet some of the group members at the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles.

the foundation for me to become a social justice leader in my immediate community and later in my profession as a teacher and as a principal. Public Enemy's powerful lyrics provided me the academic framework to examine my own oppression as a Pilipino growing up in the United States. For example, many of the songs on their first album discussed the negative impact colonization has had on the Black community. Although the album was not discussing the experiences of the Pilipino community, the challenges the Black community faced were very similar. These parallels that I was observing between the Black experience with my own experience as a Pilipino had a significant impact on my initial development of social consciousness.

This initial beginning of my social justice minded thinking in fourth grade continued to develop throughout my years in elementary school, middle school, and high school. In middle school, I experimented with MC'ing and wrote my first verse along with the help of school friend named Mike. It was a simple rhyme scheme that we developed together. The quality of the lyrics were not good, however it was a turning point in my life as it would spark my passion for writing lyrics to document my own experiences with oppression. I wrote lyrics periodically from seventh grade until my senior year in high school. Many of the songs were battle rhymes[3] that developed during this time period. On occasion, I would write more socially conscious lyrics, particularly ones that examined my skin color and how some individuals in my family made me feel inferior to them because of my darker skin. Even though we were all Pilipino, there was

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[3] Battle rhymes are a form of lyrical writing in hip hop music where the MC develops songs that brag about his skills. MC competitions were often called battles and it was essential that one had a catalog of battle rhymes ready for competition. I would later enter an MC Battle that a local radio station hosted and won two nights in a row.

a hierarchy premised on skin color. The lighter your skin, the higher ranking you would have in the family. The darker skin you had, the more likely you were to experience teasing and treatment as a second-class citizen from other family members. It was a terrible experience to endure as a young child, but it would later make sense to me in my freshman year in college when I listened more to the struggles of the Black community through hip hop music. I realized that this was a technique that our Spanish colonizer utilized to create division within our own Pilipino community and in my case, our own family.

This idea of colonization would appear sporadically throughout my high school years during some of my classes and at social gatherings at a local university near my neighborhood. A high school friend of mine invited me to a social gathering at University of California, Berkeley. I was introduced to college students attending the university and started attending the social gatherings frequently held at some of their apartments near campus during my junior year in high school. It was the first time that I experienced Pilipino poets expressing personal stories and connecting them to larger systems of oppression. The poets would take turns in the middle of their living room or the kitchen expressing words of indignation, pain, hope, and love for themselves and our Pilipino community. I immediately began to make connections to this art form to the socially conscious Black hip hop groups like Public Enemy, Brand Nubian, and The X Clan. These three groups were at the forefront of a social and cultural movement in the Black community, and I was hearing for the first time their Pilipino counterparts conveying the same messages but specifically for our community. I intently listened to their words and began to formulate my ideas for my own poems and songs that I would

develop later in college. It was a memorable year in high school, and these social gatherings in Berkeley would ignite a creative spirit within myself that was now focused on the issues of my Pilipino community.

Now let us fast forward to my first year in college. I attended a local junior college in the San Francisco Bay Area because I did not have a high enough grade point average to enroll immediately in a 4-year university. My academic interest in the formal schooling process was low during my high school years. I was learning about myself as a Pilipino outside of class with friends at social gatherings, but my formal classes did not interest me. I only did enough in my high school classes to meet the minimum requirements to remain eligible to play sports, as I was on the football and wrestling team.

During my first year in college I became even more politically conscious through a series of introductory history classes. The first book that we were assigned to read was Howard Zinn's (1980) *A People's History of the United States*. Considering that I have never read an entire book from cover to cover, Howard Zinn's work looked intimidating. The pages were as thin as the ones in a phone book, and the book was at least 2 inches thick. I almost quit the course after learning that we would read over 200 pages a week for a 3-unit course. However, once I read the first chapter of Zinn's book I knew that I needed to major in history. Everything that Zinn covered in his first chapter connected all the pieces that I had learned throughout my life with regard to how oppression operated as a system. Zinn gave me a colonial framework through the detailing of the Native American's plight in the Americas and the genocidal killings of their people.

I began to make connections to my personal challenges with internal hate in my own family and the reasons why my dark skin was the topic of teasing and ridicule as a young child. I understood that one of the reasons Tagalog or Illocano (two languages that were spoken fluently in my family) were not taught to my sister or me was partially due to the Pilipino colonized way of thinking. This way of thinking placed English as the superior language and anything native to our country needed to be abandoned. I could see the similarity to Zinn's description of many of the immigrant groups losing their cultural identity to assimilate into the dominant White culture of the United States.

I was so excited when Zinn's book began to describe our colonial history in the Philippines. I learned for the first time how brutal the American invasion was in our homeland. The grotesque details of killing young children, pregnant women, and the burning of entire villages had a tremendous impact on me. It was at this time that I also learned through the social gatherings at Berkeley, which I still attended on occasion, that our religion of Catholicism was forced upon our people by Spain before the American invasion. The Spanish names in our islands often came through force and our indigenous names were taken away from us. And even my own last name of Gordon, I finally made a connection to the stories that my father would tell me as a young boy about my great grandfather who was in the U.S. Calvary during the war in the Philippines. When my father told these stories he left out a small detail, why the Americans came to the Philippines. It is not that he intentionally left it out, but similar to many other Pilipinos, anything that is critical of United States policy is never discussed. But it was all beginning to make sense for me--the larger theme of colonialism and invasion of the United States. Our history was similar to any other colonized people in the world. It

infuriated me, particularly on a personal level since one of the major reasons why my skin color was always criticized as a child related to this larger system of colonial oppression.

The power of colonial oppression became even clearer when I attempted to have discussions with my mother about the facts I was learning in Zinn's book. When I asked her if she knew about the American invasion of the Philippines she responded affirmatively. However, she defended the American invasion and told me it was for our own good. In her mind we were a backward nation that was uncivilized before the Spanish and Americans came to our country. For my mother, Spain and the United States gave us their religion and civilized ways of living. I could not believe that my mother was defending these horrific acts that the Americans and Spaniards participated in during their invasions. It infuriated me that despite the facts before her, she justified the mass killings during the invasions because we were uncivilized. But it did make sense, and the colonization process was very successful with my mother's ideology about her own people. My mother's way of thinking was typical of many Pilipinos, and it was a small minority within our community that critiqued American policies. Our legacy and rich history of resistance and rebellion both in the Philippines and here in the United States was always overshadowed by an almost blind allegiance to anything American. Douglas MacArthur's[4] words of, "I shall return" rang true in the hearts of most Pilipinos who have long forgotten indignant resisters such as King Lapu Lapu or Jose Rizal. With

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[4] Many Pilipinos refer to MacArthur's famous speech when reflecting on their allegiance to the United States. He is seen as the savior of the islands from Japanese oppression.

a strong historical foundation now in place that centered my Pilipino colonial experience into a larger world context, I wanted to share what I was learning with my community.

This began my process of informally becoming a social justice teacher, or as some of my friends nicknamed me, "Little Malcolm," referring to a young Pilipino version of Malcolm X who always wanted to engage in dialogue about U.S. oppression and what we as a community needed to accomplish to improve our lives. At weekend gatherings in the garage of my friend's house, I was always looking for an opportunity to discuss what I was learning in my history classes and the plight of our Pilipino community. When I transferred to a local 4-year university, I became active in a group that went to local high schools to teach students about the importance of Affirmative Action (which was under attack during my junior year in college). It was during these talks with high school students that I realized teaching would become my chosen career.

My first officially credentialed teaching position was a challenging assignment in many ways. The school was located in a predominately White middle class community in the Bay Area. Additionally, a high percentage of the student body was the sons and daughters of employees at a nuclear weapons manufacturing plant. I frequently was challenged by these students when I would ask questions about the U.S. involvement in Iraq at the time. A controversial topic at this time was the use of human shields, where American soldiers were using Iraqi people as shields to protect themselves from being shot. Many of the students did not see this as an issue and frequently would respond that these people were subhuman so why would it matter if they were used as shields? These responses took me by surprise, and I could not believe some of the answers they were providing. My principal at the time was supportive of my social justice oriented teaching

style, but the parents and larger community were furious with the way I taught my history classes. They would frequently e-mail me accusing of me being a Communist and that I should leave this country if I hated it so much.

These were interesting comments that I was receiving from parents, considering that my teaching style is always one that conveys only facts and is never opinionated. I would present facts to their students that were often left out of traditional narratives (for example the details of the American invasion of the Philippines) and ask questions to create a critical dialogue during class. I found it peculiar that I was being accused of espousing Communist rhetoric when I never revealed my own thoughts on any of the topics that we would cover in class. My choice of topics and how to create an alternative narrative with facts often left out of history books, created a perception that I was being politically insensitive and too critical of United States policy.

As I continued my journey as a classroom teacher, my social justice oriented practices continued to improve every school year. I transitioned into the world of charter schools where the students I served were 100% socio-economically disadvantaged. The student body was also majority Latina/o and Black with a large portion of the student body also being English language learners. It was a complete contrast to the previous student body that was predominately White. The response of the students to my social justice oriented teaching was well received at my new school site. The principal was equally supportive as were my teaching colleagues. As a school, all of us had the same educational vision in mind, which was social justice oriented. Our teaching faculty were frequently challenging each other in our craft to improve the connections with our classroom lessons to our students lived experiences in the community. Many of our

classroom projects incorporated the voices of our students' families and their struggles that they had to endure just to survive in the United States. From 30-mile peace walks with Reverend Jesse Jackson, candlelight vigils at San Quentin to protest the death penalty, and indigenous peoples' celebration day on Alcatraz Island, the struggles of the community were always incorporated into my daily lessons as a history teacher in the charter school environment.

As I was promoted to high school principal in my charter organization, I incorporated my social justice oriented teaching practices into school site leadership. My vision of the school site as the principal was just an extension of my successful practices in my classroom. The school site would have administrative practices that were social justice oriented such as (a) listening to student concerns that were occurring at school and in their community through casual conversations during classroom visits, (b) analyzing student discipline to see if there were any trends of excessive referrals for a particular sub-group of students, (c) supporting ethnic clubs and gay male and lesbian student clubs, and (d) having an continuing dialogue with teachers that discussed their pedagogical practices as they relate to critical pedagogy.

It was also during my first year as a principal that I was formally introduced to the work of Paulo Freire. My wife took a class in her doctoral program that examined Freire's work. We would have conversations about Freire's ideas of critical praxis and whether his work was too theoretical to be applicable to our educational challenges in contemporary times. Freire's work would resurface when we had a professional development day with a presentation from a local colleague who was also a principal at a local charter high school in the Los Angeles area. His professional development day

detailed the successes that his school site was having with social justice oriented curriculum. The foundation of his school site's social justice approach began with reading Paulo Freire's, (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* He discussed how his teachers developed small reading groups and would frequently share what they learned from Freire's work. After several months of reading Freire together as a school site, they began to incorporate some of his ideas of education for liberation and slowly changed their school's culture. As our staff listened to the words of wisdom from our guest presenter, I began to think how our school site could incorporate some of these ideas from Freire. I began to talk to more individuals who were teaching at local universities about the power of Freire's work with high school reform. I became inspired through these theoretical frameworks of critical praxis and later critical pedagogy to attempt to resolve one of the toughest challenges that plagues many of our urban high schools, student academic engagement. This is the challenge of academic disengagement.

The Current Problem in Education for Urban Youth

Lack of engagement in urban high schools has negatively impacted urban youth who attend these schools (Morrell, 2004). This issue is of great importance because of the high push out rate[5] that often stems from students resisting an irrelevant, de-contextualized pedagogical approach (Rodriguez, 2009). This problem is especially pronounced in California urban high schools where more than half of the students are pushed out. Moreover, the number of these students that attend college is below 10% (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2005). With the high numbers of students being pushed

[5] The term "push-out" is an alternative way to describe students who drop out of school. It places the accountability more with the school system since it implies that students were pushed out of their schooling process due to inadequate academic services.

out of their high schools, many students feel that our educational system is no longer serving their needs.

This is true among some of the student population at the school site that will be studied in this dissertation. Urban Academy Charter High School, which is the focus of this study, has many students that feel disenfranchised because of their previous educational experiences. An Urban Academy Charter High School (UACH)[6] student commented on the disengagement process that she experienced in her previous schools, saying that the previous high schools she attended did not have meaningful classes.

Student disengagement that results because the curriculum lacks focus on relevant issues is what the literature on critical pedagogy describes and supporting data suggests a need for implementing a curriculum that will engage all students (Akom, Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2008; Camangian, 2008; Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Rogers, Morrell, & Enyedy, 2007). Additionally, throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), Latina/o and African American students from Locke High School, Garfield High School, Crenshaw High School, and Manual Arts High School have all concluded that their teachers lack an engaging pedagogical approach that situates their lived experiences of being poor Students of Color. These students have said repeatedly that the problem of urban high school youth disengagement would diminish if a relevant pedagogical approach grounded in explicit attempts to transform their oppressive conditions were implemented at their respective school sites. Such a

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[6] Urban Academy Charter High School (UACH) is a pseudonym for the school site being studied for this dissertation.

transformational curriculum would make school an engaging place worth their investment of time (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2007).

Problem Statement

The problem with urban high school student engagement has been the lack of a curriculum that provides a knowledge base for transformative experiences (Morrell, 2004). In order to address this problem of non-White urban youth disengagement in the classroom, there has been an emerging interest in using critical pedagogy as an instructional strategy (Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006a; Rogers et al., 2007;). Critical pedagogy acknowledges schools as places of oppression and attempts to liberate students and teachers from oppressive educational structures. The seminal work that begins to theorize how educational systems are oppressive is Paulo Freire's (1970*) Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* At the core of this oppression is the "banking" approach to education where learning, "becomes an act of depositing in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (p. 72). The banking concept of education allows the oppressor to maintain an ideological structure through these deposits to the students. The banking method of teaching secures the ideological structure because it does not allow students to question the teacher. The banking method is posited on the assumption that the teacher has all the knowledge and that the student enters into the classroom with little knowledge. Thus, oppressive conditions can be kept in place since the students do not have reciprocal power in the learning process. Students in a banking system are never provided an opportunity to interrogate their oppression in order to transform the structures that limit their freedom (Freire, 1970).

Freire (1970) argues that this oppressive educational process dehumanizes students and treats them as things rather than people. Students lose the opportunity to construct reality based on what they are thinking about the world since their classroom curriculum does not highlight their lived experiences. Thus, students must be involved in this process of shaping the world on their terms so that they can transform the oppressive structures that keep them oppressed. But as Freire (1970) says, "such transformation, of course, would undermine the oppressors' purposes; hence their utilization of the banking concept of education to avoid the threat of student conscientizacao"[7] (Freire, p. 74). Therefore the problem with urban schools that service large proportions of disengaged Students of Color is their inability to provide liberatory instructional approaches. Freire's idea of a liberatory education has taken many shapes and forms since the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970. Later in this dissertation, I will discuss the contemporary adaptations of Freire's original idea of a liberatory educational framework that was based in rural poverty in Brazil rather than the urban context in the United States, which is the site of this study. Recent developments and interpretations of Freire's ideas will be explained in detail throughout this study.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how critical pedagogy, as an instructional leadership initiative, impacts urban high school students in their academic and personal development. In previous studies of critical pedagogy (Camangian, 2008; Duncan-

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[7] This is a term that Freire uses in the context of developing a social consciousness about the world. This is one of the goals of a liberatory education, developing a social consciousness and more importantly acting upon the newly found ways of thinking to create a more just society.

Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006a; Rogers et al., 2007) the focus has been on how teachers who use critical pedagogy impact students from a classroom perspective. What distinguishes this study from previous ones is that it explores the effects of critical pedagogy from an instructional leadership perspective rather than from a classroom perspective. In this study, the initiative to utilize critical pedagogy as a curricular and instructional approach was implemented by the school site principal, not the teacher. Previous studies that have examined this topic document how the teacher initiates the critical pedagogical approach with the administration supporting or resisting these efforts. This study will examine a principal-initiated school level program based on critical pedagogy.

Another purpose of this study is to investigate how school site leadership in the area of critical pedagogy impacts student development. Thus, this study will attempt to provide some initial findings on this topic that has not been explored by previous researchers in the field. This study will provide a leadership context to critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership initiative providing the educational leadership community with data to consider when developing a change in curriculum, instruction or both to reform their schools with a critical pedagogical approach.

An Overview of the Research Seminar Class

Two English teachers at the school site and I co-designed the research seminar course where the critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative was implemented at Urban Academy Charter High School. It is an elective course that all students at the school site have an opportunity to enroll in if they decide to participate. The goal of each research seminar is to expose students to basic social science research tools; provide them

with an opportunity to develop a plan of action to solve a problem in their community and present their research findings to an audience that has institutional power to make changes in their community; and create a safe classroom environment where they can develop their skills as a social science researcher. I will provide a brief overview of the major components of the research seminar including books and articles that are assigned; student assignments; how topics are chosen for the seminar; research methods that students learn and utilize in their project; and an overall timeline of the length of the research seminar class.

Training and Engaging Teachers to Co-Develop the Research Seminar Class

One of the first items that I needed to address in the initial planning phase of implementing the research seminar class was creating a sense of trust and a good working relationship with a few instructional staff that would act as my support system for this leadership initiative. I will discuss this at length later in this study, but I did want to briefly describe the process of how interested teachers were initially trained once they made a commitment to co-teach the class with me.

The first step in their training was providing them with some literature to read providing them with examples of what other high schools have implemented similar to the research seminar class we would design. I had them read a series of essays from Louie Rodriguez and Tara Brown's, *From Voice to Agency: Guiding Principles for Participatory Action Research with Youth.* The two interested English teachers read the essays and then gave me their feedback on the possibilities for designing something similar to the action research projects they read in Rodriguez and Brown's work.

Once we developed some initial ideas, we began to gather input from our students for possible research topics. Students gave us general topics that they wanted to study at length, but never had the opportunity to examine in other high school classes. Some of the more popular topics that emerged from our students included: (a) race and racism, (b) the poor quality of their previous schools and teachers, (c) reasons why they did not produce successful outcomes in their previous schools, and (d) police brutality. We then gathered these initial topics from the students and began to design our first research seminar around the issue of reasons why students do not perform well in high school.

I lead the first week of classes for our first research seminar. We spent a lot of time reading and conceptualizing educational concepts from Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* The two teachers did more observing of this first research seminar and assisted students in guided practice once I provided the general overview of the information for that class period. After observing this first research seminar, the two English teachers then took the lead on our second and third research seminars, which analyzed race and racism within an educational context.

Books and Articles Assigned

The books and journal articles that were assigned to students depended on the topic of their research seminar. However, one book that every student was exposed to was Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* The students read passages from Chapter 1 that explore concepts of colonization and the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. A careful analysis of the concept of oppression is discussed with all research seminar students since most of them have never examined it at length in previous high school classes. Additionally, Freire's framework of libratory education

often becomes the framework students utilize as their conceptual framework to analyze their data for their topic in the research seminar.

Once foundational knowledge has been established on the concept of oppression and colonization, the next set of readings will align with the students' specific research topic. For example, research seminar cohort number five (see Appendix for a complete syllabi for their course) read sections of Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States*. Once students had a general understanding of this theoretical model, we transitioned to teaching them a research methodology for conducting their research. Thus far, all research seminar groups have been provided a basic understanding of how to use the research methodology of portraiture and read sections of *The Art and Science of Portraiture.* The authors of this methods book are Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffmann Davis. I invited a college professor from the local area who utilizes portraiture as a methodology in her research. Our students are provided a Power Point presentation on portraiture that would provide them an opportunity to ask questions of someone currently using it in their profession. Some of the main ideas that are presented in the portraiture presentation included (a) the power portraiture has as it relates to student voice, (b) the importance of capturing the student story through portraiture, and (c) storytelling as an art and a social science research tool. It gives the students a real life perspective on what their research methodology is utilized for in the world of professional research.

Student Assignments

Student assignments in the research seminar class are varied in nature. Most research seminar classes will include a series of writing formal and informal assignments,

a group research project, and a final group presentation. During the first week of the research seminar, students write an initial essay after our first class together detailing what they anticipate to learn and their general understanding of the topic that they will be researching. Students are also required to keep a daily journal of reflections on their readings, class discussions, and overall thinking of the class as we move through the topics. Other writing assignments may include a culminating final paper of their overall thoughts and feelings of the class, a final research paper that they must complete with their cohort group, and individual reflective essays aligned to their research topic. Finally every research seminar class has a final group Power Point presentation that is presented in a public venue. The presentation will explain their research findings as well as how they conducted their research study and any suggestions they have to change or implement new policy related to their research topic. The final PowerPoint has been presented at local universities, our charter school's central office, and other administrative meetings within our charter organization.

An Overall Timeline of the Research Seminar class

The research seminar class is usually about 3-4 weeks in length. The length of the class will depend on my availability to teach the course and also when a public venue will be available for the students to share their research findings. The public venue is usually a university audience of either graduate or undergraduate students. I initiated contact with an interested professor who had topics in their class related to our research seminar topic. We will then align our research seminar topic to the professor's syllabus. The 1st week of every research seminar class is similar in that they are learning the basic concepts of a libratory education from Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.*

The 2nd and 3rd week (if the seminar is 4 weeks long) are dedicated to learning research methodology and designing questions for their interview protocol. The 3rd or 4th week is final preparation week where students are completing their PowerPoint presentation and rehearsing it at the school site. At the end of their public presentation, we end the course with one to two classes and reflect on the entire class and some of the major outcomes that emerged from participating in the class on an individual and collective level.

Examples of Past Research Seminar Topics

The research seminar class has taken place over the course of 2 school years at my current school site. I initially began the research seminar at another school site where I was the principal and successfully completed one cohort of students before I left. Some examples of previous topics include (a) Listening to Voices of Youth: An Action Research Study on the Drop Out Crisis, (b) Transformative Resistance, (c) A Student Perspective On Teacher Professional Development, and (d) The Power of Racial and Ethnic Formation: Exploring Who We Are Through Lived Experiences. The three students who were interviewed for this study participated in one of these topics that took place at my current school site.

Research or Guiding Questions

The central research questions is:

How does critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership model impact student academic and personal development in a small urban charter high school?

The sub-questions are:

1. How does a school site leader implement an instructional leadership initiative rooted in critical pedagogy?

2. What is the role of the school leader during a critical pedagogical instructional reform initiative?

3. What kind of effects does a critical pedagogical instructional leadership reform have on a school leader?

Conceptual Framework

Critical pedagogy is a teaching strategy that strives to develop a student's understanding of social oppression and also instill a desire to alter these conditions through social action (Freire, 1970). Critical pedagogy acknowledges that classrooms are not neutral learning spaces (Shor, 1992) and teachers are charged with the responsibility of interrogating power structures (McLaren, 2003) to instill hope in their students so that they can create a more just society (Darder, 2002a). Thus, learning is a cycle of critical praxis (Freire, 1970) where students identify oppressive situations, research them, develop plans of action to transform them (Solorzano, 2001), assess the effectiveness of their plan of action, and redesign aspects of their plan to improve the process (Freire, 1970).

General Understanding of Critical Pedagogy

Generally, the topic of critical pedagogy as a best practice in urban high schools discusses the different teaching strategies that some urban teachers are utilizing to reengage disconnected poor urban Students of Color (Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006b; Rogers et al., 2006). As practiced in schools by

teachers, critical pedagogy consists of the following core strategies: (a) countering oppression, hegemony, and dominant discourses in teaching strategies, (b) empowering students to critique their lived experiences with oppression and provide opportunities for liberatory learning, (c) acknowledging that all knowledge is subjective to the interpretation of the individual that is learning the material and many truths exist which counteracts a master narrative, and (d) teachers working with their students in a collaborative effort and constantly evaluating their teaching practice as it relates to emancipatory strategies to free their students from oppressive conditions (Kincheloe, 2008). Critical pedagogy is different from other teaching approaches because it acknowledges that all knowledge is situated in a power structure, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to interrogate the dominant oppressive ideologies in all content taught at school (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006a). The value of critical pedagogy is that it engages students in relevant academic work that encourages transformative resistance (Solórzano, 2001) from their localized oppressive conditions (Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006c; Rogers et al., 2006). Furthermore, it is a teaching approach that extends the previous work of postcolonial studies (Cesaire, 2001; Fanon, 1967, 2004; Memmi, 1965) situating the current oppressive conditions that colonized people are still subjected to on a regular basis. Critical pedagogy utilizes a relevant curricular and instructional approach that acknowledges the oppressive lived conditions of poor Students of Color and centers this as the general body of knowledge one designs his or her lesson plans around to engage students (Camangian, 2008; Morrell, 2006a; Duncan-Andrade, 2006).

Relevant Background or Contextual Information About Critical Pedagogy

Studying critical pedagogy as an instructional strategy in urban schools has its roots in Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Henry Giroux's (1983) *Theory and Resistance in Education: Toward a Pedagogy of the Opposition.* Additionally, practicing critical pedagogy as a teaching tool in urban classrooms is informed by the work of Peter McLaren (2003) in his book, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy and the Foundation of Education.* This instrumental piece of research in addition to many other developers of critical pedagogy--Ira Shor, Antonia Darder, bell hooks, Carter G. Woodson, Lolita Lebron, Franz Fanon, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua, Subcommandante Marcos--have been useful for current researchers and practitioners to further develop the theoretical models and particularly investigate how critical pedagogy applies to instructional practices with poor urban Youth of Color.

These critical pedagogy theorists utilize various theoretical frameworks to examine schools as spaces of hegemonic practice that support the dominant ideologies of society. The main perspective in education (dominant ideology) is that student achievement is based on the individual student. In short, a student's success or failure is determined by their perceived academic effort. The dominant ideology suggests that the reason students fail is because they do not attempt to be successful or that they lack the ability to be successful. Researchers in this area are concerned with how dominant discourses negatively impact educational environments and student learning as revealed for example in standardized test scores. More importantly, they are concerned with how dominant discourses harshly impact student engagement, or more specifically, student

disengagement (Akom et al., 2008; Camangian, 2008; Cammarota and Romero, 2009; Rogers et al., 2007).

Operational Definitions

Critical Pedagogy: An instructional approach that attempts to identify oppression within a student's life in order to research, develop, and implement a plan of action to eradicate or lessen oppressive forces in their lives for the betterment of their neighborhood, their community, and themselves (Kincheloe, 2008).

Urban Academy Charter High School (UACH): A pseudonym for a charter school that serves disenfranchised high school students throughout the Los Angles County area. The Los Angeles County school site that is studied for this dissertation is one of several schools that are a part of a larger charter school organization that also serves disenfranchised students throughout various areas in the country. I created the pseudonym for the purpose of this study.

Research Seminar Class: An elective course that was co-developed by some of UACH's teaching faculty and me for the purpose of offering students the opportunity to learn social science research skills to solve problems in their community.

Push-Out: A concept that identifies the school and the system of schooling as the main factor in students not being academically successful, particularly as it relates to African American and Latina/o high school students. Rather than blaming the student as the term, "dropout" does and assumes that it is the student's fault for their failure in schools, "push-out" forces educators to look at the problem from a school system point of view identifying problems that exist in the way that schools service or do not service high school students and consequently pushes them out of the system.

Critical Praxis: Paulo Freire's conceptual idea of identifying a problem in a community and then researching the problem. Once the problem has been researched the community should develop a plan of action to solve the problem. After implementing the action plan over a reasonable period of time, the community assesses the effectiveness of the action plan. After assessing the effectiveness of the action plan, the community looks at possibilities to improve the plan and continually strive for better results. This is the basis of the research seminar class that the students participated in and every student was taught the idea of critical praxis in developing their projects in the course (Freire, 1970).

Assumptions and Delimitations of Study

There are some delimitations to this study. First, the sample size of 3 for this study might be considered to be too limited to gather any substantive data to suggest anything of significance. However, the researcher sees this delimitation as a strength of the study because it allows for a more in-depth analysis of a limited amount of participants to capture detailed experiences and stories of each participant. A second possible delimitation of this study is the homogenous population of the participants involved. The school site where the study was conducted is predominately Latina/o and African American. Consequently, because the school site lacks other racial and ethnic groups, there was a lack of diversity in the participant pool with only two students that were not Latina/o or African American. A third delimitation of this study is that it was conducted at one school site. All of the participants in the study are students of one school site and there is no comparison group to examine the data to see if there are similarities or differences in their experiences with the research seminar class that implemented critical pedagogy.

A fourth delimitation is the power differential that exists between the interviewees in this study and me. This may create a situation where the students feel an obligation to present only positive information in their interviews. I am aware of the power differential that exists with the students, and there are some things that were completed to mitigate the difference. One way I mitigated this power difference is how I have approached this study where I spent more time with the students beyond just the scope of time for the interviews. By the time students were chosen to be participants in this study, I had spent an entire school year with the students as their principal. A time of familiarity was thus in place that established a solid working relationship with each of these students. Therefore when I conducted interviews with the students, they did not feel as inclined to produce answers that I wanted to hear for the purpose of this study. A large part of my instructional approach is to encourage students to interrogate systems of power including the administrative practices of my own leadership. The students knew that when it was their time to share their thoughts during these formal interviews for the study that I wanted them to answer honestly, candidly, and not be concerned about how their answers were expressed. I believe that the working relationship with each student by this time was effective in this area of being able to share his or her perspectives without any reservation due to my positional power as the school site principal.

A fifth delimitation of this study is that all the student participants were male. Although female students were more than welcomed to participate on this study, there were none that wanted to discuss their responses at length. When I approached some of the female students about the possibility of participating in this study, the ones who were interested did not have time in their schedule to fully engage in all the interviews that

were needed to collect the data. Despite this delimitation, the voices of the three male student participants were powerful. I would like to attempt to gather more data at a later time so that a female perspective can also be included and examine if their experience with the research seminar was similar or different.

A final delimitation of this study is my own perspective and bias as a social justice oriented school site principal. Some may suggest that my closeness in proximity to the subject being studied and my leadership style of being social justice oriented would not provide me the skills to be an objective researcher for a topic on critical pedagogical instructional leadership. However, I would respond that this is precisely what provides me insight as an "insider" to be able to collect and gather the data that would only be accessible to someone that is deeply involved at the school site level with their students and teachers.

The level of trust that one has to develop as a researcher with a topic such as critical pedagogy would be very challenging for someone not at the school site every day with the students and teachers to develop a good working relationship and rapport in order for them to trust the researcher with the data being collected. This is particularly true for our students who have a high level of skepticism toward school administrators because their past experiences with school administrators have often been negative.

This does not mean that I would not be aware that my own bias and perspectives could taint the data and research process. Therefore mitigating factors would be implemented to ensure that they do not occur in this study. One such mitigating factor utilized in this study was assigning an administrator from my charter school organization (who did not have any working knowledge of this research topic or our students

participating) as an outside reader. I met with this administrator twice during the course of this study and they provided me feedback to ensure that my personal bias and perspectives were not negatively impacting the study. The feedback that he provided verified that the power differential between the students and myself was not negatively impacting the study. He based this evaluation on his conversations with the research seminar students, concluding from their comments that I genuinely wanted their honest feedback even if it was critical of my instructional practices.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it seeks to examine and document the effects of critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership initiative and its impact on student development when the school site principal implements the reform. In California, African American and Latina/o students are 3 times more likely than White students to attend high schools that have a significantly higher push-out rate. Also, high schools with the highest dropout rates contain a 90% minority student body. Additionally, high schools with a high percentage of students in poverty have higher push-out rates than schools with higher income students (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2005).

African American and Latina/o students from Los Angeles frequently comment how their previous teachers lack an understanding of their socioeconomic context. A high school Latina student described the lack of understanding when she said, "me and my family drive to Mexico every Christmas break because we can't afford to fly. We miss the first 3 weeks of school and our teachers don't let us make up the work" (Student interview, April 5th, 2011). Additionally, many African American students commented on the inability of their White teachers to make their classes relevant and meaningful.

When African American students encouraged their White teachers to utilize more culturally responsive instructional approaches, they were met with resistance from their teachers (Student interview, April 5th, 2011).

Conclusion

In summary, this dissertation will attempt to provide some preliminary findings in regard to how critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership initiative impacts student development. The researcher is hopeful that the findings in this dissertation will provide some assistance to other school site leaders who are attempting to institute similar instructional models that incorporate critical pedagogy. Additionally, the researcher hopes that district level leaders and even educational leaders at a national level can utilize the findings in their attempts to decrease the large push-out rate of African American and Latina/o students. What follows is a summary of the succeeding chapters. Chapter 2 will synthesize the literature related to critical pedagogy and studies that have examined it within the context of a high school experience. These previous studies will illustrate that there is a gap in the research literature because no scholarly research has been completed within the context of examining critical pedagogy from an instructional leadership perspective. Hopefully this dissertation will provide some insight into this important piece of the literature that is currently missing. In chapter 3, the researcher will discuss the methodology of how the study will be conducted. A detailed discussion of how the procedures, methodology of choice, and the reasons why the study was conducted using that particular method will be explained. Chapter 4 will discuss the findings as they relate to the central research question and sub-questions. Finally in chapter 5, the researcher will discuss the implications for further research that may be continued by

others who may be interested in furthering or extending the initial questions that were asked in this dissertation. Additionally in chapter 5, the researcher will discuss policy changes that could take place as a result of the findings from this dissertation. In addition to policy changes for instructional leadership, the researcher will examine what implications this study may have for school site leadership in other high school settings aside from the research site. It is the hope of the researcher that after completion of this dissertation, individuals in educational leadership positions can use the findings from this study to incorporate critical pedagogical perspectives into their own school site or district wide initiatives. The researcher also hopes that this dissertation will provide insight on how to improve the instructional program at the charter school organization where the study was conducted. It is the researchers desire that this will allow UACH to have a stronger academic program than the one that currently exists.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Critical pedagogy is in many ways an appropriate response to the high stakes accountability that currently exists in educational settings. The No Child Left Behind legislation (2001) has done exactly what it claimed it would not do, leave children behind. Within the Latina/o and African American communities, the leaving of children behind has unfortunately become common practice. Although NCLB was designed to close the achievement gap and make access to college available to all groups, it has not achieved its lofty goals. For example, in many urban high schools across the country, only 10% of students attend college. Additionally, these same schools have high school dropout rates above 50% for Latina/o and African American students (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2005). Moreover, the push-out rate for African Americans and Latina/o students has been at a higher rate than White students for more than 30 years. The gap has not closed between African Americans, Latina/os and White students and it has continued to be a problem in our public education system (Chapman, 2010).

In order to reengage poor, non-White, urban students, there has been emerging interest in using critical pedagogy as an instructional strategy (Camangian, 2009;

Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2006). Critical pedagogy is crucial for all students but in particular for Students of Color because it extends the theoretical concepts of Freire's praxis education.

Critical pedagogy acknowledges schools as places of oppression and attempts to liberate students and teachers from oppressive educational structures. The seminal work that begins to theorize how educational systems are oppressive is Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). At the core of this problem is the banking approach to education where learning, "becomes an act of depositing in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (p. 72). The banking concept of education allows the oppressor to maintain an ideological structure through these deposits to the students. Students in a banking system are never provided an opportunity to interrogate their oppression in order to transform the structures that limit their freedom. Freire argues that this oppressive educational process dehumanizes students and treats them as objects rather than as people. Students lose the opportunity to construct reality based on what they are thinking about the world since their classrooms are removed from their lived experiences. Thus, students must be involved in this process of shaping the world on their terms so that they can transform the oppressive structures that keep them oppressed.

Researchers are interested in this pedagogical approach and its impact on student learning because of the high push-out rate of poor Students of Color. Additionally, researchers have examined how critical pedagogy as an instructional practice has impacted their classrooms. Ultimately, the importance of critical pedagogy as an instructional strategy is it empowers urban youth to assert their identity within an urban

high school context. It helps develop their academic skills to take action in their community to eradicate oppression. In other words critical pedagogy is a teaching strategy to develop "warrior scholars" who are armed with the academic tools of a critical researcher to fight for social justice in their community.

The value and importance of critical pedagogy as a research topic lies in its ability to examine what are effective pedagogical practices in urban education. Unlike, traditional research that often focuses on all that is wrong with urban schools; critical pedagogy embraces "goodness" in order to assist those that practice it with their personal development as students, teachers, and scholars. It situates the students and their community in a strong enough position to frame their own cultural, racial, and ideological constructs from their lived experiences. This challenges the hegemonic practices of school systems. More specifically, critical pedagogy challenges classrooms that do not acknowledge the funds of knowledge (Duncan-Andrade, 2004) and community cultural assets (Solórzano, 2001; Yosso, 2006) that students and their communities bring to the schoolhouse but are too often silenced and repressed because they are not deemed capable of academic study (Duncan-Andrade, 2004).

Review of the Literature

The literature on critical pedagogy as an instructional method utilized in high school classrooms is sparse. Thus, the review of the literature in this chapter will analyze in great depth the small handful of empirical studies that are currently available on this area of research. In reviewing the literature, I will discuss four areas as they relate to critical pedagogy in urban schools as well as social justice leadership. These areas include: (a) contemporary empirical studies, (b) transformative resistance theory, (c)

critiques of critical pedagogy, and (d) social justice leadership. After discussing these four areas of critical pedagogy as they relate to best practices in urban schools to reengage students, I will provide a critique and analysis of the literature. In this critique I will examine the quality and effectiveness of the researchers' process. Additionally, an analysis of how researchers arrived at findings, how they collected their data, developed their literature reviews, and other aspects of their work will also be discussed.

Contemporary Critical Pedagogy Empirical Studies

Earlier scholarship in critical pedagogy has been centered on theoretical rather than empirically grounded studies of practice (Apple, 1979; Freire, 1970; Fanon, 1967; Giroux, 1983); however, contemporary scholars are now applying theory to practice through empirical research. Thus far, the findings are impressive. Teachers are developing urban youth identity within the context of their lived experiences without assimilating dominant ideologies of society (Akom, 2008; Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2004, 2008; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2007). Furthermore, applying critical pedagogy has assisted non-White students to realize their transformative potential (Solórzano, 2001) to change themselves and society in meaningful ways that are no longer self destructive to themselves or others around them. These spaces where students are safe to express themselves on their own terms are ideal (Akom, Ginwright, & Cammarota 2008) because students and their teachers are able to develop communities of practice that are critical in nature (Rogers, 2007).

Camangian (2008) utilized performance poetry to reengage disconnected youth in a relevant and meaningful way in his high school English class. Students developed critical literacy skills through the examination of their oppressed lived experiences and

describe their lives in spoken word performance pieces. Camangian found that through performance poetry as a critical pedagogical instructional approach, students were genuinely engaged in their work and would spend time outside of class preparing their poems for class. Additionally, Camangian noted that student attendance was higher in his classes when compared to his other English teacher colleagues who were not utilizing a critical pedagogical instructional approach. This similar type of critical pedagogical approach was utilized by Duncan-Andrade (2004) who also taught high school English in Oakland, California. Duncan-Andrade had similar findings to Camangian (2008). Duncan-Andrade found that many of his students were anxious to present their poetry in front of their peers. Students would also routinely spend their own time practicing their spoken word pieces, yet these same students were routinely disengaged in their other classes.

In addition to performance pieces, Duncan-Andrade (2004) would also develop thematic units and supporting lesson plans around youth culture (hip hop music, film, and fashion) as a scaffolding tool to teach the English content standards. Students watched movies like the *Godfather* (1972) and analyzed the themes of the movie through a critical pedagogical lens developed in class. Critical media literacy was also used frequently in his classroom and the students were now armed with tools to deconstruct corporate messages that stereotyped their communities. Akom, Ginwright, and Cammarota (2008) developed a youth social justice curriculum that utilized filmmaking and radio broadcasting as a way to empower students in creating community change. Also in this same study, students involved in the "Social Justice Education Project" in Tucson, Arizona learned how to be critical researchers of their own school site. Students involved

in these youth groups had opportunities to learn more about local educational problems that impacted them directly. Projects often involved researching local educational problems and then students sharing their findings with local community leaders, district administrators, and local politicians to address their concerns. They found that the "Social Justice Education Project" reengaged youth in the areas that their school curriculum was unable to do. Through their participation in the "Social Justice Education Project," students increased their grades at their local high schools suggesting that a liberatory instructional approach can benefit student performance beyond the project at hand.

Although these studies show successful implementation of critical pedagogy at the classroom level, they do not address what the role of an instructional leader such as a principal would play in such an initiative. Additionally, the studies do not look at cumulative grade point averages and whether critical pedagogical instructional approaches had a positive impact on them. The studies also did not explore if their critical pedagogical instructional approaches provided students the skills to increase their performance on standardized tests, a topic that is always of interest to school administrators. By not providing these variables in their studies, educational leaders who are often under extreme pressure to produce "hard numbers" to justify a reform effort may not be able to utilize these studies to change district or school policy in regards to creating a liberatory educational instructional approach.

Transformative Resistance Theory

One of the most important studies in the area of critical pedagogy as it relates to an instructional strategy is Solórzano's (2001) study of transformative resistance.

According to Solórzano, transformative resistance is the theory that when students resist oppressive schooling conditions in an emancipatory fashion, they can transform their reality into something more effective than what previously existed. Solórzano (2001) chronicles how high school students conducting a study on the poor quality of teachers in an East Los Angeles school and reporting the findings to the central office providing suggestions on how to improve the teaching practices would be an example of transformative resistance. Although the study is not explicitly about critical pedagogy, many of the current researchers who study it as a phenomenon in urban high school classrooms frequently refer to Solórzano's (2001) work on transformative resistance theory. Transformative resistance theory was a response to the incomplete work in school resistance theory. The majority of studies on school resistance blamed the student, their culture, and their family for school resistance (Solórzano, 2001). Resistance theory is important because it created a body of work for future researchers to develop ideas beyond deficit thinking theories (Valencia, 1997). Blaming the student, their culture, their community, and their family was common practice in the findings of many of these studies. Solórzano's work provided an alternative perspective to refute the claims made by other deficit thinking scholars that the primary reason why students failed was a result of their inability to be academically successful on their own merits.

The problem that Solórzano (2001) addressed in his study is the limitations of school resistance theory. According to Solórzano, school resistance theory does not adequately address the reasons why Latina/o students are oftentimes resistant to schooling practices. Rather, school resistance theory focused on a limited understanding that is grounded in self-defeating resistance of working class male students (Solórzano,

2001). Previous studies did not take into consideration that there is a long history of transformative resistance within the Chicana/o community, which has fought for social justice and equality rather than self-defeating outcomes. Thus, the oppositional behavior of Chicana/o youth throughout historical and contemporary examples can be a positive politically empowering experience on an individual and collective level.

Utilizing Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit,) theory, Solórzano (2001) developed a theoretical framework to examine educational issues through these two lenses. The five themes that he developed include: (a) the centrality of race and racism and intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the interdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano, 1997, 1998, 2001).

Based on these five tenets derived from CRT and LatCrit framework, Solórzano provided future critical pedagogy researchers a framework for understanding their work with high school urban Students of Color. Thus, as teacher/researchers of urban high school Youth of Color, Morrell (2006) and others began to develop their conceptual frameworks for designing lessons that were transformational in a social justice fashion. Solórzano's framework provided them a foundation to build and extend other ideas from.

A second series of important studies that build on Solórzano's (2001) work of transformative resistance were the summer research seminars conducted by UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA). Beginning in the summer of 2000, university researchers (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2006) developed a summer research seminar for poor urban high school Youth of Color. The

goal of the seminar was threefold: (a) to explore critical pedagogical teaching strategies within an ethnographic longitudinal study, (b) to expose urban high school Students of Color to introductory skill sets of an educational researcher, and (c) to develop action plans to transform district policy in Los Angeles based on the findings of the research conducted by the students.

Morrell's (2006) utilization of the research apprenticeship model for poor non-White urban youth may have not been conceptualized in a concrete fashion without Solórzano's (2001) prior study. Solórzano provided Morrell a theoretical framework (transformative resistance) to analyze whether students exposed to critical pedagogy instruction desired social change through the development of a social consciousness about local problems in their neighborhood. Thus, the action research that students were conducting could be examined through the five tenets of the CRT/LatCrit framework or units of study for students could be developed utilizing this theoretical model.

Critiques of Critical Pedagogy

Although there are no research publications that explicitly refute the benefits of critical pedagogy, there are some notable studies that blame poor academic performance on the impact of race and class. Thus, previous studies have argued that there is an achievement gap between the rich and the poor because of inherited "intelligence" differences among social classes. Moreover, the idea of fixed intelligence has also been argued across racial lines, where Whites arguably have larger mental capacities than People of Color. A seminal book that presented such arguments is Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life.* Herrnstein and Murray (1994) argued that intelligence is genetically predetermined and

the disparity between Whites and People of Color is innately decided by biological factors (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994). In fact, they argued that 40-80% of intelligence is a result of genetic inheritance. Therefore, from this natural inequitable distribution of intelligence, Whites have acquired more institutional power because of their superior genetic pool. Herrnstein and Murray (1994) then extend their genetic intelligence argument to policy formation and argue that immigration laws should not allow Africans or Latina/os to immigrate to the United States. They believe Latina/os and African Americans will negatively impact the distribution of intelligence creating a downturn for everyone.

In their concluding remarks, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) described how education interventions for the poor are of no use. They stated that, "[m]uch of the public policy toward the disadvantaged starts from the premise that interventions can make up for genetic or environmental disadvantages, and that premise is overly optimistic" (p. 550).

Despite its widespread popularity among the conservative right, at its time of publication, many scholars refuted the claims made in Herrstein and Murray's (1994) study. Gould (1995) described the statistically weak data in the study. He commented, "their own data indicate that IQ is not a major factor in determining variation in nearly all the social behaviors they study and so their conclusions collapse" (pp. 19-20). Gardner's (1995) counterargument described in his study noted that the majority of the correlation findings from the Bell Curve were not tied to intelligence but rather other variables beyond intelligence. Finally, in Sowell's (1995) study he described how Herrnstein and Murray (1994) were irresponsible by equating correlation findings to causality. Sowell

(1995) argued that attempting to connect correlation to causality is one of the first ideas that researchers are instructed not to do in introductory statistic courses.

Another counterargument to critical pedagogy can be found in the work of Ruby Payne (1995). In her study, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty,* Payne argued that each social class has a culture and the way for the poor to succeed is to learn the values of the middle class. One section of her book has quizzes for the reader to take in order to assess knowledge of the different cultures of each social class. Some of the imbedded cultural values of poor people for example include (a) knowing how to get someone out of jail, (b) solving problems with yelling and physical confrontations, and (c) having the ability to move out of an apartment quickly as a result of rent not paid on time. Her test then continued with middle class values and concluded that people living in poverty have a choice on how to live their lives. Payne (1995) argued that if poor individuals assimilate and accept middle class values, they can then move themselves out of poverty. Similar to Herrstein and Murray (1994), who blamed the underperformance of minorities to inferior intelligence when compared to Whites, Payne (1995) blamed the culture of poverty arguing that the behavior of the poor is what needs to be fixed.

In response to Payne (1995), many peer reviewed journal articles have been written to refute her claims that people can easily lift themselves out of poverty if they try hard enough to enter the middle class. Gorski (2006) examined Payne's politically conservative framing of poverty that blames the student and their communities. Gorski (2006) argued that it is critical to look at the institutions of school as the source of the problem. Ng and Rugy (2006) and Osei-Kofi (2005) both described the classist statements Payne (1995) made in her study documenting the oversimplification of her

argument that does not take into consideration structural inequality and how the effects of institutional oppression of the poor and People of Color impact the life and educational outcomes of these communities.

Social Justice Leadership

Considering this study analyzed data findings from a critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative, it would be useful to survey the literature in social justice leadership. One book that provides an extensive overview of social justice leadership, is Marshall and Oliva's (2010) work, *Leadership for Social Justice: Making Revolutions in Education.* Their anthology provides research by various authors that have an understanding of how social leadership can impact school reform and the development of instructional leadership that is dedicated to social justice. For instance, in the chapter developed by Dantley and Tillman (2010) entitled "Social Justice and Moral Transformative Leadership", they note the concept of multidimensional ethical framework, which was initially discussed by Starratt (1994). The framework suggests that school leaders analyze issues by utilizing ethics of care for students and critiquing existing power structures. Educational leaders should also analyze school issues through a justice-oriented lens, particularly as it relates to student academic achievement and student discipline.

A second framework that is discussed in Dantley and Tillman's chapter is the concept of an anti-oppressive framework. Developed by Kumashiro (2000), this framework has four major areas an educational leader should analyze when social justice orientated changes within their district. They include: (a) a focus on students that are considered marginalized, (b) developing curriculum that incorporates the stories of

marginalized students and their communities, (c) developing curriculum that interrogates all sources of privilege, and (d) an educational approach that explicitly attempts to change how students look at issues in society. Dantley and Tillman (2010) also summarize how they define social justice leadership, which includes the following five areas of analysis. They include: (a) leaders should be conscious of the larger social contexts that schools exist within particularly as it relates to cultural and political aspects, (b) leaders who critique behaviors that marginalize students and their communities, (c) leaders who implement democratic principles within their sphere of influence, (d) leaders who explicitly resist hegemonic educational practices, and (e) leaders who are civil rights activists.

Another section in Marshall and Oliva's (2010) work that is useful for analyzing social justice leadership is Merchant and Shoho's (2010), chapter entitled, "Bridge People: Civic and Educational Leaders for Social Justice". In this chapter, Merchant and Shoho interviewed eight leaders describing their commitment to social justice and how they developed their leadership style. The 8 participants in their research study were from various positions within the educational pipeline. The group comprised three school site principals, one retired superintendent, three university administrators, and one attorney, who worked for a social justice oriented firm.

Drawing from their personal experiences with injustice in their lives, all of the participants shared in their interviews how this impacted their leadership style. The events in their lives created an awareness of inequality in society and impacted their leadership to incorporate a social justice framework as they entered their respective positions in education or law. One suggestion that all of the participants provided was

every student in leadership programs should have opportunities for field work in communities that they are unfamiliar with. For example, White students in administrative credentialing programs should be required to complete fieldwork in a predominately Student of Color community that will provide them a perspective they are unfamiliar with. Some of the participants also suggested that future school leaders complete a certain amount of hours in political advocacy. The participants argue that many school leaders have minimal experience in this area, which is critical to developing a social justice lens in their leadership skills.

The final data findings from this chapter revealed a number of similar characteristics that all of the participants exhibited in their vision of education. They include: (a) a strong orientation toward social justice and equity issues that was incorporated into their lives early on by a parent or significant adult, (b) a strong sense of purpose and belief in their ability to succeed that was reinforced by their parents or a significant adult, (c) life changing experiences with marginalization, (d) a lifelong commitment to social justice issues, (e) a deep appreciation for the value of creating community, (f) being highly visible in their community with a sense of humility, and (g) being cognizant of the social and political movements they were involved with in their previous lives before educational leadership and how it shaped their leadership style.

Critiques and Analysis of Critical Pedagogy Literature

Critical pedagogy literature as it relates to teaching practices in urban school settings are sparse and still in development. This is particularly true with current empirical studies, as many of the scholars attempting to study critical pedagogies in urban schools do not have many school sites to analyze the process. Thus, the following

critiques and analysis of literature relating to critical pedagogy are important to researchers who have an interest in further extending knowledge in this area of education. In this section, I offer the following analysis and critique of the following aspects of the literature review: (a) the process of the research conducted by the researchers; (b) the quality and effectiveness of the literature reviews, (c) the quality and effectiveness of the researchers' purpose of the study, (d) the quality of the research design, (e) the data collection process, and (f) the data analysis and findings in their studies.

Areas of Overall Strength in Each Study Examined

The articles reviewed in this chapter address problems that have been best examined through a qualitative design because the variables were unknown. For example, in Duncan-Andrade's (2004) study of youth popular culture, the participants in the study were former students from when he taught high school English. Since the variables for the transformative teaching process are hard to accurately assess, a qualitative study was the best method to address the impact of critical pedagogy on student learning. Additionally, Rogers (2007), Morrell (2006), and Duncan-Andrade's (2006, 2007) studies of youth participating in summer research seminars also were best informed through a qualitative study. Camangian's (2008) study of critical poetry performance pieces and Akom's (2008) analysis of youth social justice oriented school groups also benefited from a qualitative design.

One of the highlights of the process of research for all of the studies was the detailed level of reporting of words and visual images that described the participants' views. Solórzano (2001), for example, used vivid descriptions of his participant's stories, describing the process of school resistance through their experiences. Solórzano (2001)

also documented more than five pages of data from a discussion he had with a student that expressed her internal and external forms of resistance within the context of the 1993 Chicana/o protests. Gloria (the name of the student in the data set) discussed her conflict that she was having over how to "properly" participate in the protests. She questioned whether her passive approach of deciding not to overtly participate in the protest indicated that she was not completely supportive of the cause.

Camangian (2008) also utilized the voice of his participants effectively by painting a picture for the readers through student poetry. Additionally, Duncan-Andrade (2006, 2007), Rogers, (2007), and Morrell (2006) all reported high quality data through the documentation of student interviews that discussed their transformative (Solórzano, 2001) experiences in their development of critical researcher skills during summer seminar. Finally, Duncan-Andrade (2004) provided insight of student transformation in his study through a vivid description of their documentaries that described social problems in their neighborhood. Through the analysis of student work (student produced documentaries), Duncan-Andrade (2004) was able to generate themes that aligned to larger theoretical frameworks.

In regard to examining the literature review sections of each of the studies, there were many noteworthy strengths. First, the comprehensiveness of the literature reviews and situating their specific studies into a context was commendable. The commendable quality of this process was not in the quantity of research reviewed but how some researchers had to conceptualize their studies often with no prior work in their area of interest. Solórzano (2001) made use of two legal research frameworks Critical Race Theory and Latina/o Critical Theory and past studies in these fields to understand his

interest in researching problems of Chicana/o school disengagement. Akom (2008) utilized a similar approach of combining Critical Race Theory and youth participatory action research to inform his research of social justice youth groups that worked in conjunction with local schools in Northern California. Morrell (2006) examined three areas of previous research (practitioner research, youth participatory action research, and research for social justice) to inform his work of critical participatory research. Finally, Camangian (2008) utilized past studies of power and the struggle to attain it in an educational context.

A second strength of the literature review was the high quality of the publications that were cited. Akom (2008) cites Fine (2003), a seminal classic study in his research area. Camangian (2008) follows this same pattern with citing the following significant studies: Chomsky's (1988), *Language and Politics*; Freire's (1972); *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; Hirsch's (1987), *Cultural literacy: What every American needs to know*; and McLaren's (2003), *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*. Duncan-Andrade (2004) also cites several important works in the field: Apple's (1990) *Ideology and Curriculum*; Dewey's (1938) *Experience and Education*; Giroux's (1983) *Theory and Resistance: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition*; Grossberg's (1994) *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the politics of cultural studies*; and Valenzuela's (1999) *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*.

A third strength of the articles was the use of literature to describe the problem of critical pedagogy as it exists in urban schools. Cammarota and Romero (2009) utilized several works from critical pedagogy theorists to develop their own theoretical model of

"critically compassionate intellectualism". First, Cammarota and Romero (2009) borrow from Darder, (2002), Freire (1970) and McLaren's (2003) ideas of criticalness and incorporate these ideas of critical pedagogy into a practical application of cooperative learning spaces that challenge the banking method of traditional education. In these classrooms, students and teachers work together to develop instructional and curricular opportunities that are grounded in the students lived experiences to achieve academic literacy in the content areas that are being studied.

Cammarota and Romero (2009) also build on the past research of Noddings (1984, 1992) and Valenzuela's (1999) notion of caring, and Lopez's (2003) examination of building trusting classroom environments that work to humanize the educational experience particularly for oppressed students. Finally, Cammarota and Romero (2009) frame their understanding of developing a student based intellectual consciousness on Freire's (1970) development of the human capacity to become critically conscious of structural oppression.

Additionally, the other studies also build on past research for theorizing their own conceptual frameworks to implement as researchers and as teachers. The research seminar studies (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2007) utilized critical pedagogy research to inform their work with urban high school youth. Borrowing from Fine's (2004) application of youth participatory action research, Freire's theoretical model of working to liberate the oppressed through liberatory education, (1970) and a host of scholars that argue for a more culturally relevant curriculum (Banks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll, 2000). Classroom and social justice student organization research studies (Akom et al., 2008; Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2004) also

described the problem of urban schools through a Freirean framework that argued only through a liberatory education that is grounded in the lived experiences of the oppressed will students and their communities begin to live and define their lives on their own terms.

An area for further literature that all the researchers could benefit from is citing more recent studies of critical pedagogy and how it is being used in the classroom. On the average, most of the studies cited works that were more than 10 years old. Morrell, (2006) Camangian, (2008) and Akom, (2008) were the exception to this rule as more than 50% of their citations were newer than 10 years old. However, because of the groundbreaking nature of the kind of work that all of these researchers are conducting, the likelihood of finding studies that are exactly the same as their interests will not be great.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose statements of the majority of the studies are clear and concise. For example, Duncan-Andrade's (2004) study, which he described clearly: "Ultimately this paper aims to synthesize data and theory as a means of discussing promising ways to teach urban students" (p. 313). A second purpose statement that is also clear and concise is illustrated by Akom (2008):

> The first is to present an alternative approach to raising the critical consciousness of young people in traditional and non-traditional educational settings by facilitating the creation of what we are calling – Youthtopias . . . the second is to discuss the importance of challenging issues of race and racism as they intersect with other forms of oppression for young people in the emerging field of critical youth studies. (pp. 2-3)

Third, in Camangian's (2008) study, his purpose statement is also clear and concise. He writes: "As an English teacher who taught social justice performance poetry as part of, not apart from, my composition curriculum" (p. 36). Finally in Cammarota and Romero's (2009) study, they outlined a three-tiered purpose of their study in the third paragraph of their paper. The rest of the research articles (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2007; Solorzano, 2001) all had clear statements regarding the purpose of their studies and all mentioned them on the first page.

One area that the researchers could have considered revising is their literature review sections, which lacked clear subheadings indicating a literature review section. Seven of the 10 studies had ambiguous subheadings that left the reader wondering if the section is indeed the literature review part of the study. For example, Duncan-Andrade's studies (2006, 2007) had no subheadings. Morrell's (2006) study also had no subheadings. Studies that did have subheadings (Camangian, 2008; Morrell 2006; Rogers; 2007) were still not that clear in their focus for their study.

Research Design

The researchers do not explicitly document the type of qualitative design used in their studies. All of the methods sections begin with general statements that the researchers will employ qualitative methods for the study, but do not mention whether narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory, case study, or ethnographic research was used to inform the design process. However, one can infer that the researcher utilized case study methods since many of the salient qualities of this method (multiple forms of data collected to report thick description, themes, and lessons learned) are apparent in the data collection and data analysis sections. Furthermore, the

researchers are all exploring a bounded system (urban high school students and their learning experiences through critical pedagogical teaching strategies) another key characteristic of case study design. The researchers used rigorous procedures of data collection and analysis illustrated by detailed discussion of how each student sample data set was impacted by critical pedagogy.

Data Collection

In the data collection section, most of the researchers all had high quality procedures. All the researchers intentionally sampled small numbers of participants for their studies in order to provide richly detailed descriptions. This was illustrated in Solórzano's (2001) high quality interviews with three Chicana students in his study that described student experiences with transformative resistance. Camangian (2008) also had very detailed descriptions of how performance poetry challenged students to critique dominant discourses in society through a familiar medium that they were heavily invested in. In the summer seminar research studies (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2007) observational field notes taken both by the university researchers and the students provided rich detail on the emerging transformation of student consciousness developed over the course of their community research project. Finally, in Duncan-Andrade's study (2004), students vividly described their transformative process of reengaging in meaningful ways with their high school English class. By empowering students to use their own experiences with oppression as an initial topic of inquiry, they no longer saw their English class with the same perspective. They were learning to interpret the larger social context that their individual stories connected to, or as Paulo Freire described: "reading the world through the word" (Freire, 1970).

Additionally, the data collected from these studies provided many insightful details of the developed themes that emerged. Akom (2008), Ginwright (2008), and Cammarota (2008) empowered students to document oppressive schooling and living conditions of their Berkeley and Oakland communities and share it through video and radio broadcast. The summer seminar research studies (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2007) and Tucson Unified School District's social justice project Cammarota and Romero (2009) empowered high school students from South Central Los Angeles to question issues of school equity and provided them the research tools to civically engage in policy reform with their local school district. In Duncan-Andrade's (2004) and Camangian's (2008) studies, students wrote empowering hip-hop performance poetry to understand, share, and empower their similar experiences of oppression in South Central Los Angeles and Oakland, California. The researchers clearly identified specific types of data collection that included observational data of classroom instruction, focus group interviews with students, analysis of student work, and one-on-one interviews with students and teaching staff.

One area that all the studies could benefit from in the future is describing the process of how data was collected beyond the technical aspects. For example, how long did it take to transcribe the qualitative data? Was there a team of research assistants involved to transcribe the vast amounts of data in each study? If this was the case, how were the researchers able to secure funds for the assistants and how much were they paid? In regards to rapport building, it would be interesting to know how the researchers developed this with the community members, students, and teachers. Was there a process (informal or formal) of introducing themselves to community members? How receptive

were the community members and if there was initial resistance, what strategies were implemented to develop trust?

Another area that would benefit all of the studies is a description of the interview protocol. For example, how were the questions designed for the formal interviews conducted with the participants? Were they done in a collaborative fashion with input from the participants? If the questions were not developed collaboratively, how did the researchers generate their questions? Did they draw on theoretical models from critical pedagogy to base their interview questions? Also, for the informal interviews, was trust with the participants initiated first before having casual interviews? What key rapport building strategies worked best in keeping the participants engaged during the interviews? If and when participants were reluctant to share in the interviews, how did the researchers negotiate the tension?

Qualitative Data Analysis and Findings

In the qualitative data analysis and findings section, the researchers had some areas of strength. The first strength was their high level of analysis applying existing theoretical frameworks in critical pedagogy to practice. Since there is not a substantial amount of research documenting how critical pedagogy is being implemented in classrooms, all of these studies provide groundbreaking data analysis and findings that were not previously accessible. The summer research seminars (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2007) studies showed what Paulo Freire's initial idea of praxis education could look like in urban schools in the United States. In fact, this was a strength of all of the studies, since Freire's initial theory was developed during the 1970s with poor Brazilian adults living in rural areas. This has been the problem that many

urban practitioners have expressed: the lack of research on the application of Freire's ideas in contemporary urban high school settings in this country. Thus, the analysis and findings in these studies provide the insight that many social justice educators are searching for. Moreover, they also provide social justice leaders with a general framework of how to apply Frerian principles in contemporary urban high schools.

A second strength of these studies was the themes and sub-themes developed to extend current theoretical models, develop new ones, and inform practitioners. New models that were developed included: (a) Morrell's (2006), critical participatory action research in his meta-analysis of three different areas of interest, (b) Solórzano's (2001) development of the transformative resistance model that extended school resistance theory, (c) Cammarota and Romero's (2009) development of the critically, compassionate, intellectual, and (d) Akom's (2008) synthesis of Critical Race Theory and youth participatory action research to create a new conceptual model of critical youth spaces known as "Youthtopias." The summer research seminars, (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2007) and Camangian's (2008) study of performance poetry are useful to urban teachers and school leaders in providing concrete examples of how to implement critical pedagogy in the classroom. Additionally, Cammarota and Romero (2009) offer a districtwide model in implementing critical pedagogy across multiple school sites in the same district. The leadership to initiate this reform came from the central office of the district where Romero's Office of Mexican American Studies was asked by the district to create instructional programming that would reduce the high Latina/o push-out rate in the district's schools.

A third strength of these studies was the emerging theme of student empowerment through critical pedagogy teaching strategies. The common methods of data collection included observational data of classroom instruction, focus group interviews with students, analysis of student work and one-on-one interviews with students. The interviews in all of the studies provided the students an opportunity to reflect on their transformation process and how critical pedagogy changed the way they viewed the world.

With any set of research studies there is always an opportunity for growth and the following are some of the suggestions for this growth. First, the researchers could have described their personal backgrounds in greater detail. Since the nature of the work they are conducting is very subjective, explaining their ideological, professional, and personal backgrounds is of great importance. None of the researchers described their educational backgrounds in detail and it will leave readers wondering what their intentions were. However, this may have been strategic to leave their subjective realities out of the study in order to create a higher sense of objectivity to discerning audiences. By silencing their voices (the researchers) and allowing the data and findings to speak on their own terms, possible critics of this type of research may be more likely to read their studies and take the findings seriously.

Recommendations for Further Research

Research Questions that Should be Addressed

One research question that needs to be addressed is what role a school leader can play in the process of implementing critical pedagogy. The studies presented in this literature review examined how to implement critical pedagogy from a teacher's

standpoint and what impact it has had on students' transformative process. However, none of the studies discussed what a school leader can do to successfully implement critical pedagogy as a school wide instructional practice. This is a gap in the research and it is the intent of this dissertation to begin to fill this void through documenting how instructional leadership can impact student development and academic achievement.

Another research topic that still needs to be addressed are how effective can critical pedagogy be as an instructional strategy in schools beyond urban settings? All of the research focused on how critical pedagogy is an appropriate instructional strategy for urban teachers. But how useful would this strategy be in suburban, White districts? Would White students and their communities also benefit from critical pedagogy? Would the students and the community welcome the interrogation of their own power structures? Would wealthier students in upper-middle class homes begin to question their own power and demand that structural inequality be eradicated?

Methods and Designs that Can be Used

Because there are multiple methods that can be used in a study of critical pedagogy, the methods and research design should depend on what type of research questions the researcher wished to pursue and who is the subject of the study. For the first question regarding the school leaders' role with critical pedagogy, an ethnographic research design could be a useful way to explore this topic. Similar to the researcher-teachers in the studies presented in this section, (Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2004; Morrell, 2006) an ethnographic design that followed a principal over a period of 2-3 years exploring their instructional leadership role with critical pedagogy would provide the qualitative data necessary to generate themes about the topic.

Additionally, if there were more than one school leader that was instructionally leading with critical pedagogy as their focus, a narrative design could be used to explore the differences in the individual participants' experiences. These research designs would benefit from extensive field notes taken by the school leaders, outside researchers taking field notes of school observations (interactions with teachers and students), videotaping lesson plans, and conferences with students, teachers, and community members, and analysis of teacher-produced journals based on reflections of using critical pedagogy as a teaching strategy. For the second topic regarding a study of other schools beyond urban settings, the design and data collection methods would be similar. The safest approach for research design may be an ethnographic study since the school leader could be the primary researcher. Possibly she or he may have assistance from a co-researcher, but given the potential of the study and the controversy it may create in the district (since the study in many ways will be challenging existing norms in the community) the school leader may want conduct the study individually.

Summary

Since there is no current research on the leader's role and responsibility in implementing critical pedagogy school wide, this new focus in my study could become an important contribution to the literature. The research studies that have been conducted thus far focus on the role of the teacher with critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade, 2004, 2006, 2007; Rogers, 2007; Morrell, 2006). By exploring the role of the school leader with critical pedagogy, it could extend the knowledge to a new area of interest beyond teachers. It could also create a model for critical pedagogy leadership. The research design (if I were to extend my study beyond this dissertation) would be ethnographic in

nature and data would be collected from extensive field notes that I would take over a course of at least 5 years. These field notes would include my interactions with teachers during our meetings to discuss their lesson plans related to critical pedagogy, my discussions with district office administrators, and professional development workshops that I would provide to the other charter schools in our network. Additionally, my field notes would include my discussions (formal and informal) with students and how their learning was impacted by critical pedagogy. I would also videotape lesson plans and conferences that I would have with my teachers whenever we discussed their teaching practices as they related to critical pedagogy. Finally, staff meetings would be videotaped as well whenever the topic of critical pedagogy is discussed. I would analyze the videos for themes that may emerge from our discussions.

Solutions and Recommendations for Policy and Implementation

The majority of the researchers who have examined critical pedagogy only looked at the role of the teacher (Duncan-Andrade, 2004, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2007). By exploring the role of the school leader with critical pedagogy, it could extend the knowledge to a new area of interest beyond teachers. The field of educational leadership would benefit from examining the impact of critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership tool. With the implementation of such research studies, the findings could inform urban high school leaders across the country of the power of critical pedagogy to engage urban youth and in particular Youth of Color. This research could provide the pedagogical best practices that are necessary to drive district wide initiatives to reexamine the curricular and instructional approach and redesign it based on findings from such studies. It will take the concerted efforts of the university research

community and the community of practicing teachers and administrators, along with input from students and their communities to fully realize the power critical pedagogy can have in closing the achievement gap.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership initiative and its impact on student development and academic achievement. Thus, the following are the central research and sub-questions:

Central Research Question--How does critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership model impact student academic and personal development in a small urban charter high school?

Sub-Questions--How does a school site leader implement an instructional leadership initiative rooted in critical pedagogy?

What is the role of the school leader during a critical pedagogical instructional reform initiative?

What are the effects on the school leader during a critical pedagogical instructional leadership reform?

The topic of critical pedagogy as a best practice in urban high schools discusses the different teaching strategies that some urban teachers utilize to reengage disconnected poor urban Students of Color (Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006). Critical pedagogy is different from other teaching approaches because it acknowledges that all knowledge is situated in a power structure and it is the responsibility of the teacher to interrogate the dominant oppressive ideologies in all

content taught at school (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006). Critical pedagogy is valuable because it helps engage students in relevant academic work that encourages transformative resistance (Solórzano, 2001) from their localized oppressive conditions (Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006a).

The current literature on critical pedagogy does not address urban schools that serve high school push-outs. The current literature is limited to a discussion of how critical pedagogy can be a best practice within traditional high school settings or summer enhancement programs for students still in high school (Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006a). This study will differ because it focuses on a high school push-out population in an open entry open exit program that exists at Urban Academy Charter High School (UACH). Currently, UACH at its various high school sites serves approximately 7,000 high school push-outs across four states. The findings gathered from an action research study of UACH could help other school sites in the charter organization to develop instructional practices grounded in critical pedagogy to create liberatory learning opportunities for students.

All of the studies reviewed in chapter 2 examined how to implement critical pedagogy from a teacher's standpoint and what impact it has had on students' transformative processes. However, none of the studies examined what a school leader can do to successfully implement critical pedagogy as a school wide instructional practice. This study focuses on the principal's role. Moreover, the principal has a direct role in the instructional leadership of the research seminar course that has been co-developed with teachers. Additionally, the principal co-teaches the class with the teachers, which is significant and has not been documented in previous studies. Usually a

teacher is the one that institutes a curricular or instructional change when critical pedagogy is implemented. In this case, it is the administration (school principal) that is instituting and leading the change.

Description and Background of School Site

UACH is a public charter high school organization for at-risk youth who have been pushed out of the traditional comprehensive high school. Where the traditional high school has failed, UACH reengages disconnected at-risk students through a self-paced, technology rich curriculum. UACH currently has 19 school sites in Arizona, California, Florida, and Georgia with a current student population of 3,200.

The specific school site where the researcher conducted his study is located in Los Angeles. The campus is situated in a downtown setting, making it convenient for students to access the campus by public transportation. Since the school is located in the middle of a downtown setting, campus safety can pose a challenge because it is not a traditionally enclosed school setting. Thus, the campus has a complex security system to maintain a safe environment for staff and students.

There are a total of 300 students, with 260 residents and 40 commuter students.[8] There are separate facilities for trade and academic classes where UACH occupies three classrooms in the academic building and two administrative offices for the site principal and administrative assistants. The following subjects are housed in each classroom:

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[8] The partner organization is a residential vocational school, which provides free meals, housing, medical care, and other support services to ensure basic needs of students are met. The majority of students are at or below the poverty level. A substantial percentage of the student population was previously housed in group homes or the juvenile justice system.

Classroom 1--Science, Math

Classroom 2--English

Classroom 3--Social Studies, Creative Technology, Senior Projects

All core subject teachers are fully credentialed and teach an integrated curriculum. The curriculum is project based where students learn thematically, integrating multiple core subjects simultaneously. All UACH students have their own computer with a 1-to-11 student-teacher ratio in every class. In addition, every core subject teacher is assigned one to two teacher aids for general support in their classroom. UACH teachers act as facilitators of learning, using a variety of teaching techniques with a student centered curriculum. In addition to a student centered curriculum, there are many opportunities for students to learn computer software programs. Computer programs such as Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Macromedia Dream weaver, and Macromedia Flash provide students a basic understanding of graphic design. Students create their own website and also original designs utilizing these computer programs. Additionally, students are provided access to AutoCad, a drafting computer program used by architects in their profession to design buildings. Finally, students are also given intensive California High School Exit Exam test preparation for a 6-8 week period preceding the exam date.

Sample

The population from which the sample was drawn was a total of 30 students who have previously taken the research seminar class. For the purpose of this study, purposeful sampling was utilized (Krathwol, 1998; Patton, 1990; Saldana, 2009). Specifically, criterion sampling was used in this study and a specific criterion

(participants needed to be at least 18 and have participated in the research seminar class) was developed for the sample. Purposeful sampling is used to obtain a sample of students that could discuss in detail their experience in the research seminar course that they were enrolled in at the school site being studied. Another reason for using purposeful sampling is to eliminate all minors from the study since it could complicate the IRB process. Not only could it complicate the IRB process, but it could also slow down the approval from the school board.

The age range of this population is from 18-24 years old. The population that the sample was drawn from also has students that attended at least two prior high schools before entering UACH. Additionally, all of the students are low income with the majority of them being Students of Color. There was only one White student from the population. The gender distribution of the population is 20 females and 10 males. This is representative of the larger student population where females are the majority. Some of the student population also lives in the school dormitories and go home to their neighborhoods on the weekend. Some of the primary reasons students decide to live in the dorms are (a) lack of space at their homes in their neighborhood, (b) the commute would be too far if they had to commute daily to the school site, and (c) some are previously homeless. Finally, the majority of the 30 students from the population speak Spanish as their first language with 17 of them being in this category. There were nine female students and eight female students.

The selection procedure for the participants in the study began with gathering all the names of the students who have taken the research seminar. The research seminar is a class that is offered to all students and is an ongoing course offered year-round at the

school site. The focus and purpose of the research seminar class is to provide students with the opportunity to explore existing problems in their communities and learn basic research skills to find viable solutions. The culminating project for the research seminar class is a final PowerPoint presentation and policy brief that students present to stakeholders in the community who have institutional power to make the changes they are suggesting to solve a particular problem. The research seminar class is modeled after Freire's (1970; 1997; 1998) idea of problem posing education, where students identify a problem, research it, develop a plan of action to solve the problem based on their research, put the plan into action, and assess the effectiveness of the plans implementation and adjust accordingly. The course has been co-designed by the school site's English teacher and the principal. The principal also co-teaches the course along with the English teacher. In fact, the first research seminar that was instituted at the school site was taught entirely by the principal, providing the English teacher an instructional model of how to teach the course.

There were a total of 30 possible students to choose from in the initial pool. Once all of the students were identified, an e-mail was sent to the students who were no longer at the school campus describing the study and how their participation would assist in the data collection process. Since the purpose of this study is to understand how a classroom experience (the research seminar) has impacted students, the pool of possible participants for this study needed to be very specific to the students who were previously enrolled in this course, which is a total of 30 students. The researcher intends to interview 10 students that were previously enrolled in seminar course.

Procedures

Order of Procedures

The specific order of how the procedures were carried out for this study follows. The first step was to apply for Institutional Review Board (IRB) clearance from the California State University, Long Beach. While awaiting IRB clearance from the university, the researcher sought district approval for the study from the school board. After IRB cleared the study and the district approved the study, data collection began.

The first step in the data collection process was the student interviews. Here, the researcher interviewed each student individually. Before the interview began, the researcher reviewed the consent document with the student ensuring that they understood the purpose of their interview, how the interview would be conducted, how the student would be contributing to the study, and their right to exit the research process at any time. Once students were briefed about the interview process, the researcher placed the audio recording device on the table and interviewed the student. After the interview was over, the researcher debriefed the student allowing them to ask any questions. If there were no questions, the researcher will turn off the audio recorder.

The next step in the data collection process was interview transcription. Transcribing was completed at the end of every student interview in order for the researcher to assure that the data was accurate and representative of the interviewee's sentiment. This is particularly important with respect to tone in the interviewee's voice, body language, and pauses in between sentences that are best transcribed immediately after an interview. It allowed the researcher to capture not only the verbal data that has

been collected but also many of the other non-verbal cues that are best interpreted immediately after the interview.

Before the third step in data collection occurred, member checking of the transcripts was be completed to ensure that all statements and concepts were accurate. Here, the researcher included the participants in the process. The researcher provided the transcript to each participant and had them read it individually for their review. The researcher informed them that during this process the participant is to ensure that their ideas and concepts were captured accurately. If the participant felt that there needed to be edits in the transcript, the researcher made the necessary changes. Once every participant has had an opportunity to member check his or her transcript, the researcher moved forward with the next step in the data collection process.

The third step in the data collection process was the coding of the transcriptions. After an initial reading of the interviews, the researcher began to code them for general themes. Creswell (2003) describes general theme coding as a way to gain insightful themes from your data set. Once all of the interviews were read once, a second reading of the data set was completed. In this stage of coding, the data was reviewed for sub-themes relating to the general themes in each interview. Sub-themes were developed individually within each interview. A third reading of the interview data sets was implemented next, where the researcher developed another set of general themes that may have been missed in the initial read of the data. After this second read for general themes was completed a second reading for sub-themes was completed. Once the researcher re-read for general themes and sub-themes, the researcher distributed the data to peers in the doctoral program. This provided another perspective on the data initially

collected by the primary researcher of this study and generated themes that were overlooked.

Timing of Study

This study took place over a 7-month period. It included the data collection process and also the analysis of the data through transcription review and member checking with the participating students. After initial coding was completed, the researcher shared the coding scheme with colleagues from the doctoral program. The purpose of sharing the transcripts with other doctoral researchers was to ensure that the themes developed in the interviews are logical and aligned to the questions of the study. The doctoral researchers also provided constructive feedback to the primary researcher.

In order to create safeguards for the study, all interview recordings were protected in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. During the interviews, if participants did not wish to continue the process they always had the option to rescind their participation. This also applied even after the interview was completed and the participant chose to no longer participate. During this study there were no student participants that this applied to as all of them fully participated in the data collection process.

Data Collection Methods

In order to answer the essential questions of this study the researcher needed to develop instruments that would successfully capture this data. The following instruments described were utilized in this study to answer the study's central research question and sub-questions.

Student Interviews

Student interviews were utilized to gather data on how they experienced the research seminar class. Interviewing in qualitative research is an effective way to gather data necessary to generate themes to answer the central research question (Bassey, 1999; Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1988; Merriam, 1998; Seidman, 1991; Yin, 1993). Through these one-on-one interviews, the researcher gathered insight into how the students experienced the research seminar class. All of the interviews were audiotaped and the student participants were informed of this at the beginning of each interview. Students had the opportunity at any time during the process to decline to continue if they felt uncomfortable with being a part of the evaluation. This was documented in an introductory meeting that the researcher had with the students. The purpose of this meeting was to clarify why the study was taking place and also provided an opportunity for students and teachers to ask questions they may have had about the process. In this meeting it was emphasized that their participation would have no impact on their status as students and that they are free to disclose exactly how they felt about the research seminar course.

General Methodological Design and Defense of Method Chosen

There are several reasons why a qualitative approach was utilized for this study. First, the researcher wants to understand a totality of experiences that the participants have had in their research seminar class. Second, the participants' individual interviews will be unique with each one bringing their own perspective based on their life experiences before enrolling in the research seminar. To capture the uniqueness of each participant's experience requires that a qualitative approach is utilized to ensure that their

ideas and conceptual understandings are documented effectively. Lastly a qualitative approach will be effective since the researcher will incorporate his reflective process in the data findings. The individual experience of the school site principal (the researcher in this case) can only be captured through a qualitative approach. It will provide other leaders insight into the researcher's thought process of leading an instructional leadership initiative based on critical pedagogical teaching practices.

There are several reasons why the research seminar course merits in depth analysis as a dissertation. First, the research seminar class is one that intentionally attempts to awaken student consciousness about notions of social justice through the use of a critical pedagogical instructional approach. Not only is the seminar course attempting to create a social consciousness with the students who participate in the course, but it is also attempting to initiate social change through the implementation of community action. This is worthy of further analysis since it will bring a new perspective to the body of research that has been completed in this area that focused on the teacher's impact on students. This study has a focus on what impact the school site principal has on students when a critical pedagogical classroom approach is implemented. Studies in this area of critical pedagogy school site leadership will benefit other school leaders in their attempts to institute similar reforms. It is the hope of the researcher that this dissertation will provide guidance to other social justice minded leaders in their attempts to lead change in their schools and districts.

Student Voice and Portraiture

In order for the student participants to have their voice incorporated holistically in this study, I have chosen the methodology of portraiture (Chapman, 2005; English, 2000;

Hackmann, 2002; L awrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, 1983, 1987, 2005). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, portraiture is a method that allows the researcher to approach a study on multiple levels simultaneously. The researcher, also known as the portraitist, will have an ongoing in-depth discussion with the participants in order to gain an understanding of their unique perspective related to the study that is being conducted. The researcher utilizing portraiture is seeking to paint a picture with words; in other words, a portrait of a participant's understanding of the issue that is being studied. Thus, similar to a painting, the researcher is careful to pay attention to every detail in the process of collecting the data through discussion, not leaving anything out and filtering for themes at a later time (Lawerence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Since the nature of this study is complex and the researcher is attempting to gain a holistic picture of how the participants experienced the research seminar class, portraiture provides a tool to capture the essence of the experience. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) further elaborate on the idea of capturing the whole of an experience through utilizing portraiture:

> The portrait, then, creates a narrative that is at once complex, provocative, and inviting, that attempts to be holistic, revealing the dynamic interaction of the values, personality, structure, and history. And the narrative documents human behavior and experience in context. In fact, the portraitist insists that the only way to interpret people's actions, perspectives, and talk is to see them in context. (p. 11)

Developing Empathy When Using Portraiture

Building effective working relationships with the participants in the study is necessary for any researcher utilizing portraiture as the method to gather data. The relationship is not seen as a means to an end, but rather an intimate one that is dynamic,

in constant negotiation, and is always evolving throughout the course of the study. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explain the importance of relationship building for the researcher:

> Portraits are constructed, shaped, and drawn through the development of relationships. All the processes of portraiture require that we build productive and benign relationships. It is through relationships between the portraitist and the actors that access is sought and given, connections made, contracts of reciprocity and responsibility (both formal and informal) developed, trust built, intimacy negotiated, data collected, and knowledge constructed. Relationships are never static they are dynamic, evolving and fluid. The are negotiated and renegotiated, week by week, day by day, even minute by minute as the portraitist and the actors navigate lines of intimacy, trust, reciprocity, and boundary setting, and as they work to develop a level of comfort, balance, honesty, and authenticity in their communications with one another. (p. 135)

Another important aspect of building relationships with participants when utilizing portraiture is to have empathetic regard. In order for the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the experience of the participants of the study, she/he needs to develop empathy for what participants have experienced. This is important when utilizing portraiture since the goal of utilizing this methodology is to get at the essence of the experience that the participant has had with the topic that is being studied. It requires that the researcher have a base of knowledge, understanding and possibly actual similar experiences shared with the participants. Although having similar experiences with the participants is not a requirement to have an empathic point of view, it does help the process of building empathy. Thus, in this study where the researcher is attempting to capture the essence of student experiences in a critical pedagogy research seminar class, building empathy is key since the majority of the topics that students will be

expected to discuss will be topics that deal with intense oppressive situations based on their own experiences. To not have empathy in a study of this nature would not allow for building the type of trust that is required to have deep analytical discussions about sensitive topics around issues of oppression. It is essential that empathy is built into this study during interviews of participants to gather the best possible data to understand their experiences on a personal and academic level. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) elaborate on this issue of empathy when they say, "the more knowledgeable you are about the actor's reality and the more self-analytic you are about your own, the better you will be to empathize" (p. 149).

Portraiture and Developing the Aesthetic Whole

Developing emergent themes when utilizing portraiture is drawn from the data during the construction of a narrative. The narrative is produced within the context in which the data was found paying careful attention to all of the details that existed during the initial collection of the responses from the participants. Additionally in the development of emergent themes the researcher will utilize students' own voice to make sense of what has been provided in the data. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explain this process: "The framework I brought to the research reflected a mix of my earlier research experiences, my interdisciplinary predisposition, my philosophical stance, my intellectual intrigues, and my own life story" (p. 186). Once themes begin to emerge from the data there is a five-step process to constructing the themes, which include the following from Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997):

> First we listen for repetitive refrains that are spoken (or appear) frequently and persistently, forming a collective expression of commonly held views. Second we listen for resonant metaphors, poetic and symbolic expressions that reveal the ways actors illuminate and experience their realities. Third we listen for themes expressed through cultural and institutional rituals that seem to be important to organizational continuity and coherence. Fourth, we use triangulation to weave together the threads of data converging from a variety of sources. And finally, we construct themes and reveal patterns among perspectives that are often experienced as contrasting and dissonant by the actors. Each of these modes for documenting emergent themes will be described and illustrated using passages selected from our texts. (p. 193)

Once themes are constructed and have a shape and form to them, the researcher seeks to create an aesthetic whole. The bits and pieces that have been gathered by the researcher may have a shape in the form of themes, but the ultimate goal of portraiture is to create portraits based on the data collected in the field for the topic being studied. It is not enough to just have compartmentalized themes. Rather, an aesthetic whole is a necessary final outcome that every researcher utilizing portraiture must strive for in their research. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describes this process of how to create an aesthetic whole:

> The portraitist constructs the aesthetic whole weaves tapestry while attending to four dimensions: the first in the conception, which refers to the development of the overarching story; second is the structure, which refers to the sequencing and layering of emerging themes that scaffold the story; third is the form, which reflects the movement of the narrative, the spinning of the tale; and last is the cohesion, which speaks about the unity and integrity of the piece. (p. 247)

With this multistep process, developing the conception of the aesthetic whole is the first priority when constructing the final portrait. Here, the researcher, "like the novelist, the portraitist searches for the overarching vision, the embracing gestalt that will give the narrative focus and meaning" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997, p. 248). Thus, the

shape of the overall larger picture of the study is developed in this first stage of conception. During the structuring part of developing the aesthetic whole, the researcher is attempting to provide a structure and support system for the conception that has been developed previously by the researcher. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explain:

> If conception expresses the overarching vision of the aesthetic whole (the tapestry), then the structure represents the warp and weft of the weaving. The structure serves as a scaffold for the narrative the themes that give the piece a frame, a stability, and an organization. (p. 252)

Structure is key to providing the solid foundation for the conception to be placed upon. It is the storyline that is needed to make the vision of the researcher coherent to the reader of the study. Without structure, the vision of the portrait will not be completed. In addition to structure, form is also crucial for a researcher utilizing portraiture.

Similar to how structure keeps conception grounded with a foundation for support, form, provides the life that the structure needs. The form provides the structure its nuanced details, allowing the passion and energy from the participants to come forth. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) note that form, "is the texture of intellect, emotion, aesthetics that supports, illuminates, and animates the structural elements" (p. 254). Therefore, form is an essential feature to building a portrait that is complete and aesthetically whole.

Why Use Portraiture for this Study

There are several reasons why portraiture will be utilized as a method. First, the researcher will interject his own experiences and reflections on the process as a participant in the research seminars. The researcher co-taught the seminar course with the school site's English teacher. The researcher also taught the first seminar course

when he instituted it at the school site during the 2010-2011 school year. Portraiture provides the opportunity for the researcher to explain in depth his experiences with the participants. This is described in Lawrence-Lightfoot's & Hoffman (1997), *The Art and Science of Portraiture.* Secondly, students need to tell their story in their own voice from their own unique perspective. Portraiture provides opportunities for students to utilize their unique individual story and allows them a space to convey themselves without the researcher interfering. Third, portraiture captures the goodness in whatever it attempts to study. This is important for this study since the majority of the participants have been viewed by their past educators as failures because they were not successful in prior schools.

Instruments Used

In order to answer the central question and sub-questions of this study, I needed to develop instruments that successfully captured this data. The following instruments were utilized in this study to answer the research questions. First, narrative student interviews were utilized to gather data on how critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership model has impacted their lives. Through these narrative interviews I was able to gather insight into how the students were impacted by their participation in their research seminar.

Since there were no previous studies that have asked this essential research question, the researcher was required to develop an original interview protocol and an original structured student survey. Both instruments were constructed based on the essential question of the study that needed to be answered. The interview protocol had a series of questions that initially began with general information such as student background and their reasons for enrolling in the charter school. Furthermore, the order

of the interview questions was such that as the interview progressed, the data gathered would align to answer the research questions. The researcher designed the interview protocol in this fashion in order to gain the trust and comfort of each student participant. All interviews took place after school hours in the researcher's office. The researcher asked all interview participants for their permission to audiotape them during the 1-2 hour interview. Additionally, at the beginning of each interview, each student was provided with general information about the study and the purpose of the structured interview (see Appendix A).

Protection of Participants

The participants were protected in the process of this research study in several ways. First, the anonymity of all participants will remain in place to ensure they are protected from outside scrutiny. It is important to keep their identities anonymous from possible teachers at their school site who may have conflicting views of how the participants feel about their education. As a result of having differing viewpoints from their teachers, the participants might be subjected to unfair treatment in their classes if their identities were to be released. A second protective measure to ensure the participants are not harmed is the securing of the files. All of the audio recordings will be locked in a cabinet that only the researcher will have access to in his place of residence. IRB and district clearance provides an additional level of protection for the participants.

Positionality as a Social Justice Educator

The colonial context. The origins of my pedagogical practices must begin with a brief portrait of my historical trajectory. I arise from a long line of resisters to the Spanish colonization that occurred in the Philippines. It begins with the battle of Mactan

in the Visayas region where King Lapu Lapu resisted Ferdinand Magellan's invasion of our homeland in 1521. Later in the late 1800s, Andres Bonafacio, Jose Rizal, and Emilio Aguinaldo successfully organized our people to finally gain independence from Spain only to find ourselves controlled by the imperialist power of the United States until 1946 (Zinn, 2003). My direct ties to the colonial history of my country are exhibited in my last name Gordon. John Gordon, my great grandfather was a United States cavalryman who was part of the invasion of the Philippines during the American occupation beginning in 1899. Thus, my own identity has been torn with ideological schizophrenia, being a person of colonized decent with a colonizer last name. This schizophrenic relationship that our Pilipino community has had with our former colonizers had a tremendous impact on my identity formation in education, often running in direct contradiction to my own family's ideological framework in which they were encouraged to idolize American capitalism and assimilate into the dominant culture.

As a colonized Pilipino growing up in America, I am continually faced with contradictory messages. Our parents encouraged us to be American, and when we tried to assimilate, Whites did not accept us. We were discouraged from making friends with other People of Color, yet Blacks and Latina/os warmly invited us into their homes and family gatherings. We are taught that without the American military removing the Japanese from our country we would not have all of the opportunities before us, but our parents and grandparents had limited career prospects when arriving in America because of their skin color and thick Pilipino accents.

The process of understanding my intellectual development through a colonial context is necessary to comprehend why my pedagogical practices are rooted in social

justice theories and frameworks. These seminal historical events of my colonial ideological existence have impacted why I utilize social justice pedagogical practices as a former social studies teacher and now a school principal at a predominately Chicana/o and Black high school in downtown Los Angeles. The spirit of resistance to assimilation runs deep in my history as a Pilipino, an energy that keeps me from compromising notions of social justice reminding me daily that our students need to define their education on their terms. Although some researchers would argue that my positionality is too biased to have the adequate "distance" from my study, it is this very reason why I am able to be more effective as a researcher of critical pedagogy.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The data collection process for this study has five major components, which will be briefly described before reporting the findings of the research study. The initial selection procedure for participants to be included in this study was completed after assessing who would be a participant from a pool of 30 students who enrolled in the research seminar class. All 30 students were provided an opportunity to participate in the research study. In the end, a total of 10 students showed interest in participating. Of these 10 students, I chose 3 participants from the participant pool based on who could discuss at length their experience in the research seminar and who was willing to participate. Additionally, no minors were chosen for the study to alleviate any challenges with the clearance of IRB.

Once students were selected for the research study, I conducted a series of three interviews per participant. The interview questions were aligned to the central research question: How does critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership model impact student academic and personal development in a small urban charter high school? All of the interviews were conducted within a 1-month time span with each interview transcribed the same day as it was conducted. The printed transcription was then provided to each participant and they checked their statements for accuracy. If any

corrections were needed, they were edited at this point. Finally, the data from the interviews with the participants were coded with themes and sub-themes emerging from the transcripts. The transcripts were read at least three times to ensure that all themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interviews were documented and reported for the purpose of this research study. Once all of the themes and sub-themes were documented, I began to craft portraits for each of the research participants. Additionally, to answer the sub-questions of this research study I utilized reflections from my research journal where I documented my thoughts as they pertained to my role as the instructional leader in this study. The following pages will reveal the themes that emerged from the interviews with the participants and how their experiences in the research seminar class related to the central research question. I will also share my own perspective as the researcher and research participant and how my involvement with the research study has impacted me as a leader throughout the course of teaching and leading the research seminar.

Portrait of the Warrior Scholar

In order to understand the spirit of the research seminar class and how the critical pedagogical approach in the research seminar class impacted students personally and academically, it is necessary to describe the experiences of the warrior scholar. A warrior scholar is defined as a student that has had to fight for their physical and academic survival as a result of the social conditions they experience on a daily basis in their place of residence. The warrior scholar is a major theme that resonated with all of the participants in this study. Thus, the name of warrior scholar is utilized for the purpose of painting portraits of the trials and tribulations that each of these participants had to endure throughout their academic and personal lives. The portraits that will be described in this

chapter were gathered through formal interviews, observations of the students in their research seminar class, and informal discussions.

The portraits that I will describe are also a reflective voyage that I embarked upon in the time spent with my students (reflected mainly in this study through the eyes of the 3 research participants "Chubs", "Intelligent Hoodlum", and "Nahui Xinachtli") and how my instructional leadership model of critical pedagogy impacted their personal and academic lives. Although these portraits can never fully capture what all of the 30 students experienced in the research seminar, it is my hope that the vivid stories told by the participants will provide insight on how critical pedagogical instructional leadership is imperative to the development of a warrior scholar. At the end of this study, I hope that my portraits will align with Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) role that they have defined for a portraitist. They write:

> The attempt is to move beyond the academy's inner circle, to speak in a language that is not coded or exclusive, and to develop texts that will seduce the readers into thinking more deeply about issues that concern them. Portraitists write to inform and inspire readers . . . The power of portraiture lies in its explicitly humanistic impulse. It embraces both analytic rigor and community building . . . A scholarship in which scientific facts are gathered in the field give voice to a people's experience. (p. 10)

My commitment to providing student voice in educational leadership circles is the fuel that keeps me pursuing pathways to give them true power to change their world. My dedication to empowering students is the driving force behind writing these portraits and it is my hope that their stories will move beyond these white sheets of paper and into the boardrooms of educational leadership where policy makers can destroy educational models that are oppressive and rebuild curriculum and instruction that is liberating.

Portrait of The Classroom

Before I describe the portraits of the participants in this study, it is important to understand where the research seminar was held. This is necessary because I intentionally chose my office as the space to conduct the class. The principal's office is rarely a space on a school site utilized for teaching, let alone critical pedagogical instructional practices. I wanted students to have a different perception of what kind of work was conducted in a principal's office. It was my way of countering a space often avoided by students on campus. Yet, because it is important to me for students to feel welcomed and at "home," I designed my office with this in mind so that it would become a space where critical dialogue could occur. It was in my office that the first impressions of how students were impacted by my critical pedagogical instructional leadership approach resonated the most. Therefore, my central research question--How does critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership model impact student academic and personal development in a small urban charter high school?--begins with a portrait of my office.

Re-Imagining The Classroom Experience

When I initially began my planning of the research seminar, I wanted to completely re-imagine the classroom experience for my students. Although I am still a credentialed teacher, I knew my elevated positional power as the principal of my school could be utilized in creative ways to re-imagine the classroom experience. My office was intentionally chosen as the meeting place to hold class rather than a traditional classroom. I wanted the students to feel a sense of power and since I am the principal of the school, holding class in my office would symbolize shared power with my students. In my observations of students during dialogue and discussion in my office when I was

teaching, I noticed that students would carry themselves differently than in their core content classrooms. At first, students would gently walk into my office not knowing the boundaries and parameters of where they could sit.

There were no traditional desks for them to sit in and no whiteboards to write on. Rather, two brown leather sofas and a matching brown leather chair took the place of traditional desks. The usual cold and uninviting fluorescent overhead lights of their classrooms were not present. Instead, two Japanese styled lamps rose from the floor illuminating a soft light that created a warm inviting environment for dialogue and discussion. The walls were painted candy apple red that further provided a sense of warmth with the soft lighting reflecting off of the shiny red walls. In the right hand corner of the office, a small black desk was neatly pushed against the wall with a desktop computer. A black and white poster of Muhammad Ali hung immediately above the desk. Across the office to the left of the small black desk was a massive four-paneled, graffiti-style painting of a peace sign created by Chubs. The painting greeted all who entered the office and it left many students in awe. Some students frequently stood for various minutes studying the painting and admiring the artistic talent that went into its design. To the right of the peace painting was a framed papel picado[9] of the Pilipino revolutionary Jose Rizal. Steel black bookshelves housed an array of books and magazines with a wide variety of topics in social justice, educational leadership, sociology, and philosophy. The principal's desk was a light beige color paired with a

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[9] This is a style of paper machete art that is popular in Mexico. The artist intentionally chose this medium of art to blend Pilipino and Mexican culture together in one display. The painting also reflects the solidarity between the Pilipino and Mexican communities in their similar struggles with colonialism. It is often a talking piece for students when they first enter my office.

black leather chair that was often referred to by students as the "Godfather"[10] chair. The desk was always clean of any papers--they were tucked away in file cabinets. Directly behind the Godfather chair, another steel black bookcase held white plastic binders with detailed reports about the school site. Above this bookshelf were family photos that always caught students' attention. My family photos frequently became a talking piece when students asked the nationality of my wife and rarely guessed that she is of Mexican heritage. I have consistently observed that during class time, students exhibited a higher sense of power when they sat in the Godfather chair with some arriving early just to claim the seat as their own for the instructional period.

The sense of style that the office had often sparked initial conversations with the students. As the Intelligent Hoodlum explained, "Whenever I'm in your office the style and vibe gives me a sense of peace. I can think better in your office and my thoughts are more clear when I'm in there" (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012). Nahui Xinachtli commented on his first impressions of the office space when he learned it would be his classroom for the research seminar:

> I couldn't believe it was a principal's office. It felt more like a cozy hotel lobby. The big peace sign on the wall, the lights bouncing off of the red walls. Our conversations were always real good in your office because of the relaxed vibe that always existed there. It was one of the first things that I learned in your class that having a space that is peaceful in your life needs to be in place for good work to happen. I take that now into my own life and really pay attention to my space in my apartment that is dedicated for reading and thinking. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012).

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[10] The Godfather is a popular movie from the 1970s about the Mafia. It is a popular movie among the students, who frequently refer to scenes from the movie during everyday conversation.

Chubs had similar feelings about my office when he first encountered it during his research seminar class. He described how he felt special every time he came into the office because of the peace sign painting that hung on the wall:

> My peace painting is at the center of your office and when you told me that you wanted my help in designing the look and feel of your office it made me feel important. Going to class in your office was something I looked forward to every day because I knew that my creativity was put into action in how everything was laid out. I always felt safe to express myself in any way when we had class in your office. I could say things here that I normally wouldn't feel comfortable saying in other classes, because it just had a relaxed atmosphere in there and I liked sharing more there than in other classes (Chubs Interview 3, March 18, 2012).

The Principal's Office as a Sanctuary for Revolutionary Ideas

The idea that the principal's office was a safe space to be candid about students' feelings on controversial topics was also another way my critical pedagogical instructional leadership practice impacted students both personally and academically. Chubs explained:

> One of the first things that I remember from the research seminar class and how it was different than any other class that I ever had in my life was the safe feeling I had to speak my mind. I felt that my thoughts on issues were always welcomed and I was encouraged to think big thoughts about our topic of racism. As an African American growing up in this country there are some things that I feel teachers in the past would not listen to because it would be a disruption to their class. Like this one time in my history class back in Chicago, I asked a question about Emmett Till and why didn't we study his story in more depth. The teacher told me that we didn't have time to dwell on the bad things like that and we needed to focus on more positive heroes like Martin Luther King. In your office the vibe was different. It was a place where I could express revolutionary ideas without feeling like someone was going to shut me down. It made me feel a sense of empowerment because I knew that what I was saying in your classroom was not just for the discussion's sake. We were going to take action and share our data findings with people in power to change things. (Chubs Interview 3, March 18, 2012)

This feeling of being able to articulate and express themselves freely in my office "classroom" space resonated with Intelligent Hoodlum as well. He shared his thoughts about the openness of the dialogue in my office that did not take place in other classrooms:

> In my other classes I don't feel as comfortable sharing some of my ideas that I expressed during our research seminar class. In your office it's different. There is a sense of community within the group that we had and when we met in your office it was this sanctuary for us to just release ideas and thoughts that normally we wouldn't be able to do in other classes. Our other classes there isn't really much structured time to even have group discussions, which is something that lacks a lot in other content areas. But this is one part of the research seminar that I enjoyed the most, going to your office to think freely and not worry about anyone judging me for what I was going to say. We all knew that one of the purposes of your class offhand was to think deeply about issues that are negatively impacting our community. Our topic was especially sensitive because we talked about how to improve teacher practice based on the readings of Paulo Freire and Ruby Payne. But no matter what we thought even if it was passionate hate for some of the things Ruby Payne said about us as students, I never felt I had to hold back in your office. The couches we sat on, the lighting, and red walls it all made me forget sometimes that I was at school. It just felt like we were in someone's living room talking about how to change the school system. I loved that feeling of being free so speak my mind. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012)

Nahui Xinachtli commented on how the office space felt like a planning room to solve problems in the community. He was particularly moved by some of the photographs and paintings on the wall that inspired him to start thinking more about how he could contribute to society. Nahui Xinachtli described my office as a space for revolutionary planning and action:

> The thinking, planning, and ultimately what action that would take place when we started making presentations at the universities couldn't have happened as quickly if we didn't have your office to use. I've been a class clown in the past but always wanted to have serious discussions about the problems in our community. I just never had a place, or time in some

> teacher's classroom to express these ideas for changing our communities for the better. The research seminar class and your office that we used as our classroom was a place where all of us felt a sense of vulnerability and could share what was on our minds. You made it a safe place to share ideas. We didn't have to worry about being censored here and it was the first time that I've ever been in a class where I could completely speak my mind and not worry about being disciplined by the teacher. I would get inspired by looking at the people on the wall especially the one of Muhammad Ali. He was going through changes like me in his life and when he found himself in Islam he started contributing more to society. It's similar to my finding myself through studying the indigenous ways of my people in Mexico and learning Nahuatl. The vibe in the room set a tone for planning and action steps to change our communities. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012)

Reflecting on how the office space had such a profound impact on students that were in our research seminar class, I could see that the physical environment of a classroom has to be at the forefront of planning and deliberate in the way it looks and feels to students. Nahui Xinachtli, Intelligent Hoodlum, and Chubs saw the office as a place where they could share their thoughts more freely. It was a space that where they could think out loud and not have to worry about being judged by anyone, not their peers, teachers, or any other school officials in the building. And they all had the approval of their principal to think deeply and to develop revolutionary ideas, which created a sense of empowerment that was new to them. Seeing how seriously the students took their roles in the shared power that I provided, it further supported my belief that if students are given a sense of true power they will utilize it to think of plans to improve their communities and will be ready put them into action.

Now that a vivid description has been presented of my office space and its impact on students, I can transition to sharing the portraits I have completed of our 3 participants: Nahui Xinachtli, Intelligent Hoodlum, and Chubs. The portraits that will be

revealed in the following pages document how my critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative impacted their personal and academic lives. The portraits will first provide the reader educational and neighborhood context, detailing the early lives of each participant. This was necessary to describe in order to fully understand how my critical pedagogical instructional leadership impacted them once they were in the research seminar class.

Portrait 1: Nahui Xinachtli Desire, Exploration, and Homeland

Education and Neighborhood Experiences

When I first met Nahui Xinachtli he was standing on the street corner in front of one of the local taco shops nearby UACH talking to a group of students. He was dressed in our school uniform, but styled his pants larger than most of the male students. He sagged his pants so much they barely stayed on and were nearly falling off with every movement he made. He wore black-framed glasses, which were round in shape and which he constantly pushed up when they would fall off of his face. Standing about 5 feet 10 inches, he was large in stature, weighing more than 200 pounds. Nahui Xinachtli's skin is medium brown with facial features that were more of a man three times his age. Nahui Xinachtli was only 16 at the time I met him almost 2 years ago. I still remember the first time that he told me he was 16, I could not believe that he was that young in age. His face displayed the hard life he had experienced. His skin looked youthfully smooth, but his eyes and overall demeanor did not reflect someone who was 16 years of age.

In our initial meeting, Nahui Xinachtli talked about his family life. He grew up with his mom, stepfather, two older sisters, and two brothers in an undisclosed Los

Angeles County community. I ensured Nahui Xinachtli that I would not reveal where his exact residence was since he was previously involved in gang activity before enrolling at UACH. Nahui Xinachtli's older brother was from the same biological father, whom he never knew. Nahui Xinachtli's biological father was addicted to crack cocaine and left his mother and family when Nahui Xinachtli was just a young boy in elementary school. Nahui Xinachtli commented on the anger that he had toward his biological father:

> I was real angry with my dad for a long time. I couldn't understand why he would care more about that stupid rock cocaine than he did about my mom and us. But I guess that is where addiction comes in and he couldn't help himself because he was an addict. I wish I would have known him. I hated my step dad because he always treated me badly. I guess that's why I grew up with a lot of hate in my heart. I wanted to have a father figure in my life but my real one was a dope fiend, and my step-dad always mistreated me. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 1, March 9, 2012)

In addition to the challenges that were occurring at home, Nahui Xinachtli always worried about violence in his neighborhood. At the age of 9, Nahui Xinachtli joined a gang. Since then he recalls always having to look over his shoulder wondering when the next violent episode would occur in the neighborhood. Nahui Xinachtli stated, "It was so unpredictable, it's really like living in a war zone when it can be calm for hours and days and then all of a sudden, boom, boom, boom, shots are fired and another friend's life is taken" (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 2, March 10, 2012). The ongoing violence that Nahui Xinachtli experienced in his neighborhood continued throughout his stay at UACH and it was about a year into entering UACH that his best friend was murdered. To make matters worse, Nahui Xinachtli's best friend was Nahui Xinachtli's sister's boyfriend and she was 3 months pregnant with his child when he was murdered. In addition to the

constant gang violence Nahui Xinachtli experienced, the police frequently harassed him in his neighborhood. He said:

> The cops were always giving us a bad time. I remember the first time we were harassed I was 8 years old. It was two White cops and they told me that I would never amount to anything and they couldn't wait till I was older so they could arrest me and lock me up like all of the other Mexicans in the neighborhood. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 1, March 9, 2012)

This was Nahui Xinachtli's first interaction with the police, and it was from this point on that he developed a deep mistrust of police in his neighborhood. Nahui Xinachtli's neighborhood was also going through demographic changes during his childhood, which created more challenges for him and his family. The community that Nahui Xinachtli lived in was a historically White suburban neighborhood. However, in the mid-1990s while Nahui Xinachtli was growing up, the demographics shifted. Latina/os were moving into the neighborhood at a rapid pace. Nahui Xinachtli commented on how Whites in the neighborhood would treat him and his family: "White people always made it a point in our neighborhood to make us feel dirty and unwanted. The cops and teachers were some of the worst. It made me hate going to school and it made me hate cops" (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 1, March 9, 2012).

Although the racial demographic of Nahui Xinachtli's neighborhood was changing, the schools that he attended continued to employ a majority White teaching force. All of Nahui Xinachtli's teachers in elementary school and middle school were White. Nahui Xinachtli did recall enjoying school during his earlier years. School was his safe haven from the challenges that he experienced with his stepfather at home. He was still trying to cope with the fact that his biological father was no longer in the house and school served as a distraction and kept his mind occupied with positive thoughts.

However, in the third grade an incident in the classroom altered Nahui Xinachtil's experiences.

Nahui Xinachtli was completing a math problem on the board during an all class group review of some key mathematic concepts that the students were learning at the time. Nahui Xinachtli was called to the front of the classroom by his teacher, and he reluctantly complied by slowly making his way to the white board. As he wrote down the math problem on the board, his teacher started yelling at him because his handwriting of the numbers was not as clear as she expected. Nahui Xinachtli commented on this experience:

> I remember this like it was yesterday because she made me feel so dumb in front of everyone when she started picking on my handwriting. It was in the third grade. The kids started laughing and I was embarrassed. She made me hate going up in front of groups and I started losing interest in school from that moment forward. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 2, March 10, 2012)

Critical Pedagogy's Impact on Nahui Xinachtli's Personal Development

The early childhood experiences that Nahui Xinachtli shared in our time together was critical in understanding the impact that my critical pedagogical instructional leadership would have on his personal development. Thus, at this juncture of his portrait, I can directly start to answer the essential research question: How does critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership model impact student academic and personal development in a small urban charter high school?

One of the first changes that Nahui Xinachtli noticed once he was enrolled in the research seminar class at UACH was his thirst for knowledge of his indigenous roots. In his early childhood, Nahui Xinachtli was constantly questioning his Mexican identity

because it became a source of ridicule from his teachers and the neighborhood police. Therefore, when we started reading Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* during his research seminar, many of the ideas that Freire discussed related directly to Nahui Xinachtli's challenges with racism in his neighborhood. Nahui Xinachtli said, "when I first started reading Freire and he started talking about oppression, I related to it completely with the racist treatment I experienced from cops and teachers" (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012). Reading Freire (1970) initiated an awakening process for Nahui Xinachtli in which he started to connect all the challenges he had in school with White racist teachers. For Nahui Xinachtli, reading Freire (1970) allowed him to connect his early educational experiences with racism and how it placed greater interest and value in his indigenous roots. The connection to indigenous struggles of Nahui Xinachtli's ancestors in Mexico to the contemporary plight that he experienced as a young child in school developed as a result of dialogue in the research seminar class with his peers and me. Nahui Xinachtli commented:

> As we started breaking down the theories of Paulo Freire and then began applying it to the historical roots of colonization things in my early youth started making a lot of sense. I began to make connections between the White racist people that I encountered in the form of police and teachers and the larger problem of colonization and how they needed to keep us Black and Brown people in an inferior position. I began to understand as well that even my own language that I thought was my own is really not mine. It came from Spanish colonizers who raped our motherland and destroyed our culture. It was at this time that I decided I needed to take my roots back and learn the indigenous ways of my people before Spain came in and told us what to do. At this time I began my personal journey to seek my roots out and to become more in touch with my indigenous roots. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012)

Furthermore, Nahui Xinachtli's quest for knowledge of his indigenous past was a direct result from his participation in the research seminar. This experience impacted him

on a personal and intellectual level. Additionally, Nahui Xinachtl also sought to change his physical appearance as he gained further insight into his indigenous identity. Beginning in fifth grade and through most of his teen years, he had a clean shaved, bald head. Nahui Xinachtli kept this style for the first 6-7 months when he first arrived at UACH and before his quest for his indigenous roots. It was during this time that he was still associating with his gang member friends back home in his community during his weekend visits away from dorm life. However, when Nahui Xinachtli awakened his desire of indigenous knowledge he made a decision to grow out his hair. Nahui Xinachtli commented on why he made the decision to change his hairstyle:

> Wearing a bald head in my neighborhood signified to many that you were active in gangs. Not that this automatically made you associated with gangs, but growing up in my community the bald head was often the hairstyle of choice for many gang members. When I started thinking about my indigenous culture and started going to community meetings with people involved with the Mechica movement, I had talks with men who wore their hair long. They said they did this because that's how our ancestors wore their hair back in the day. That really hit home to me and I began to reflect on my bald head and how it didn't reflect anything that was in touch with my indigenous culture. Me wearing a bald head signified two things in my neighborhood that you were actively a gang member both to other gang members and to the cops. So I didn't want that for myself anymore so I started growing my hair out. Not that my spirit of fighting went away, I was just transforming myself into a righteous warrior, one who was fighting for the betterment of our community and not one who was gang banging and doing exactly what our oppressor wants us to do: kill ourselves off. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012)

In addition to changing his hairstyle, Nahui Xinachtli also decided to alter the type of earrings he would wear. The earrings he wore prior to his transformation process were small diamonds. Diamonds were the jewelry of choice for Nahui Xinachtli because many of the young Latino males in his community wore them as a symbol of economic

status. Nahui Xinachtli pierced his ears in the fourth grade and from this point forward he wore diamond earrings. He elaborated further:

> Wearing diamond earrings in my neighborhood was a status symbol. Not everyone could afford diamond earrings. And the bigger the diamond in your ear the more status you had in the neighborhood. Some of the older guys in the neighborhood who have been drug dealing for many years had huge diamond earrings in their ears. And they would wear them in both sides. That's when you really knew that person had a lot of money and was selling a lot of dope in the neighborhood. I would idolize things like that and it was these guys that I wanted to be like because they seemed to have it all and didn't every have to worry about money because they always had big wads of cash in their hands. So when I had enough money to get those diamond earrings, I did as early as the fourth grade because I wanted to be somebody, I wanted to feel important. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 2, March 10, 2012)

The shedding of the diamond earrings was exchanged for another type of earring during Nahui Xinachtli's discovery process of his indigenous roots. After doing research on different types of indigenous cultures around the world, Nahui Xinachtli decided that he would take out his diamond earrings and replace them with another style of earring commonly known to youth today as "spacers." Spacers are earrings that are designed to stretch out the earlobe. There are varying sizes of spacers available, and Nahui Xinachtli chose to start out with quarter-inch spacers, which are the smallest ones available. The spacers have grown in popularity over the last 5 years with youth, particularly youth that are heavily immersed in punk music culture. The reason for wearing spacers varies for each individual. In the case of Nahui Xinachtli he shared the following:

> I was reading some books from social studies and how a lot of different indigenous people around the world wore spacers that some of us wear today for fashion. A lot of traditions on the African continent wore these type of earrings for cultural reasons. And even some of the indigenous people in the America's wore these type of earrings. It made me rethink the reason I wore diamond earrings and I began to realize how backwards my way of thinking was in the reasoning for having them in my ears in the

> first place. After awhile in my life I forgot the reason I wore them, but was reminded of this reason once I started to analyze everything about myself in my research of my indigenous cultures and practices. It hit me really hard when I started learning that precious metals and diamonds were the reason behind massive killings of indigenous people around the world in the ancient past and even today in places like Sierra Leone. So as a way to signify I was changing and going back in time to a time when we were more pure in our ways of living I chose to wear spacers to be in solidarity with indigenous cultures around the world. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012).

What I was witnessing was Nahui Xinachtli making a conscious effort to connect more closely not just to indigenous culture of his own people in the America's but to the world community of indigenous people. Although the research seminar class did not focus on indigenous culture, the seminar provided a classroom space where Nahui Xinachtli could think deeply about things that mattered to him. Reading Paulo Freire (1970) and theorizing about larger issues of systemic oppression provided Nahui Xinachtli academic language to critique his own practices including his physical appearance. In addition to altering his physical appearance, Nahui Xinachtli became selective and strategic about his clothing. He now selected political T-shirts to make statements, an action that he took as a result of his participation in the research seminar. He frequently began to wear T-shirts displaying revolutionary leaders of all backgrounds such as Malcolm X and Sub-commander Marcos. Another of his favorite political T-shirts was similarly designed to the IKEA shirts that their employees wear at their retail stores. The quote read on the blue and yellow shirt, "Social Justice, Some Assembly Required." Thus, his initial search for his own indigenous roots began to expand to a world population that was similarly oppressed through colonialism. As Nahui Xinachtli stated when he was reflecting on colonialism, "what I was learning is that colonial

masters were all the same, they attempted to wipe out indigenous culture. But they failed because we are still here" (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012).

In addition to Nahui Xinachtli's hunger for knowledge of his indigenous roots, he would read other types of social justice oriented books during his free time for personal development. I remember dropping off at his dorm room upon his request some books that he was interested in reading for his personal knowledge. They included: Paulo Freire's (2003), *Pedagogy of Hope*; *The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley* (1964); and Art Rodriguez's (1999), *East Side Dreams*. Additionally, his teachers also noted that Nahui Xinachtli was reading not simply to satisfy an assignment but for pleasure. His teachers would often have to refocus him on the standard assignments for his content classes because he became so consumed in the books he was reading for personal development. From his English class, he regularly borrowed Howard Zinn's (1980), *People's History of the United States*. In Social Studies, he borrowed any book on ancient civilizations, particularly books that documented Aztec and Mayan culture. By reading books, Nahui Xinachtli's transformation also involved the evolution of his educational process.

Nahui Xinachtli would often visit my office during morning break, afternoon break, or lunch to share what he was learning in the books that he was reading for his own personal development. His eyes would scrunch into small slits as he critiqued oppressive conditions in his neighborhood. In particular he enjoyed discussing Paulo Freire's (1970) ideas of critical praxis. To align critical praxis with his community, he often highlighted how the police consistently harassed, brutalized, and murdered young

Latino men in his community. Nahui Xinachtli reflected on this conversation we had in my office during his initial stages of his awakening:

> I remember going to your office and having all of those talks during my awakening period. Freire's words rang so true with all of the things that I experienced in my community. The one that really sticks out in my head one of the first conversations that we had in your office as I was reading Freire and Malcolm X at the same time is how the cops are constantly brutalizing and killing us Brown brothers. The oppression that they put on us is real and you can feel the tension every day in my community. Freire and Malcolm were just confirming all of the things that I was living in my everyday life. They gave me a way to explain and connect all the dots in my community that have existed as long as I can remember when I was a kid. The books were giving me a new way of looking at old problems in my community. Everything was beginning to click and the more and more that I read and debriefed with you in your office during breaks the more and more it was all starting to make sense to me in the grander scheme of things. There was a deliberate plot to wipe us out as Black and Brown people and we were all being fooled to believe that we created our problems in the community when in fact it was coming from an outside oppressor that's had their foot on our throats since colonial times. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3 March 11, 2012)

These informal talks also served as a place for Nahui Xinachtli to challenge some of his thinking that he was developing from reading his books. His newfound knowledge began to challenge his older ideas that he embraced when he was involved in gang life and how that lifestyle was counterproductive to solving community issues. Nahui Xinachtli's transformation process was powerful because it allowed me to observe from my perspective as his principal and his teacher his thought process, which often made me reflect on how important the research seminar had become to Nahui Xinachtli's personal development as a more complete human being.

One of the most powerful changes that Nahui Xinachtli experienced on a personal level with his participation in the research seminar class was the changing of his formal name. Nahui Xinachtli had a typical Spanish name given at birth by his parents. As

Nahui Xinachtli began to embrace more of his indigenous culture and practices, he was also reading *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. In reading about Malcolm X, Nahui Xinachtli began to think about the process of changing his name:

> When I learned that Malcolm changed his last name to "X" it really tripped me out but it made a lot of sense. I could see why he chose X because he really didn't know where he was from. He could trace his roots back to Africa but couldn't' trace them back to a specific place because his ancestors were slaves where their families were broken up. It made me think about how us in the America's something similar happened to us and I can't trace what tribe I belonged to. So I started thinking about my name and what my Spanish name meant to me. It made me mad that I had a name that wasn't even from my own culture. It made me mad that it could have been given to me by some Spaniard that could care less about me or my people. Because of that I wanted to do something like Malcolm X did and use a name that would be more fitting to me. I wanted to name myself for me and not some Spanish name that isn't even mine. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012)

The name changing process for Nahui Xinachtli is still ongoing as he is contemplating which name he will select as his official name. Additionally, he is learning the formal procedures of completing a name change that has made him reflect on whether he wants to keep parts of his colonized name or completely change his entire first and last name.

Critical Pedagogy's Impact on Academic Development

In addition to the personal impact that my critical pedagogical leadership initiative had on Nahui Xinachtli, there were also academic changes that he experienced with his participation in the research seminar. In this section of Nahui Xinachtli's portrait, I will describe the changes that occurred in his academic life, particularly in the area of public speaking and his increased interest in attending college after completing high school

Desire to Speak in Front of Groups

A major component of the academic impact my critical pedagogical leadership initiative had on Nahui Xinachtli was his increased desire to speak in public forums. When Nahui Xinachtli first arrived at UACH he was social and could be readily found at break talking for long periods of time with his peers about the latest events occurring back home in his neighborhood. The discussions were not academic in nature, but more of the updates that he was receiving from the neighborhood about the latest shooting and which one of his friends was going to jail. It was not the best way to occupy his time, as Nahui Xinachtli reflected during our interview:

> I was always talking about the latest happenings in the hood with some of the homies at school that were also new to the school. We would miss the block and often would talk for long periods of time about what was going on back home. I noticed that most of my socializing on campus even though I was at a school now that was 15 miles away in distance from my hood, that's all I did. My time, my heart, and all of my spare energy was still spent keeping up on the latest things going on back home. I was out of the life, but still wanted to know what was going on. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012)

Nahui Xinachtli would often find himself arriving late to class due to these long conversations at lunch and break. Once in class his thoughts were so preoccupied with updates from his community that he found it difficult to concentrate on his studies. Thus, he would engage his peers in class that would listen to the stories he had to share. Nahui Xinachtli comments on how this would sometimes get him in trouble with some of his teachers, He states, "I talked so much about the hood that it made me late to class, and when I got there I still kept talking about it" (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012). There was even a time when I had to intervene because one of Nahui Xinachtili's teachers complained about his inability to focus on his studies during class. Thus, I had a

conference with him in my office about his concern for developments in the neighborhood listening to his frustrations, fears, hopes, and dreams about making his community a better place. What I saw in Nahui Xinachtli at this time was a young man who wanted to make a change and who was very articulate in describing the challenges of young men in his community. At this time I knew he could develop this skill even further if provided an academic context to merge his concerns with his neighborhood and a topic in a research seminar class. Therefore, I asked him if he was interested in participating in a research seminar class as I informed him he would make a great addition to the group of students that were going to be part of this class.

Nahui Xinachtli agreed to enroll in our research seminar class entitled A Student Perspective on Teacher Professional Development. It is here that Nahui Xinachtli began to articulate his ideas about the neighborhood within the context of an academic discussion of teacher professional development for urban teachers. Nahui Xinachtli commented on how the research seminar class impacted him academically because it enhanced his desire to speak in public forums:

> When I learned that we would be talking to UCLA graduate students in the school of education and have the eyes and ears of professors and others that have the power to change things in schools in my neighborhood and others like mine, that was very exciting to here. For the first time in my life, I felt that my voice was finally going to be heard. I was very excited to know that I would get a chance to talk in front of people like this. It scared me at the same time because it was going to be a new experience in talking in front of people who have power. But to even have that chance to do it, I never would have thought this would have been a possibility. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012)

During the presentation at UCLA to doctorate students in the School of Education, Nahui Xinachtli was the same passionate young man discussing the latest developments

in his neighborhood. The only difference in this process was Nahui Xinachtli was provided an academic context to discuss the challenges that many youth in his neighborhood experienced and the lack of understanding that many of his teachers from his prior schools did not have. Once Nahui Xinachtli completed the research seminar class he was invited to UCLA by the doctoral students for an Ethnic Studies symposium. Nahui Xinachtli was very eager to speak again in front of a large group and humbly accepted the invitation to provide his perspective on why Ethnic Studies classes were important to him as a high school student. From this point forward, Nahui Xinachtli readily volunteered for any opportunity to share publicly what he learned from his research seminar class and the experiences of growing up in his community. Nahui Xinachtli would participate in other guest speaking engagements that included: (a) California State University Long Beach Doctoral Leadership Symposium, (b) UACH Social Studies Teacher's Symposium, (c) a talk show on a local radio station, (d) UACH Principal's meeting, (e) an online professional development training for teachers across the country, and (f) guest lecturer at Mount St. Mary's College. Nahui Xinachtli reflected on his public speaking engagements and why it became such an important part of his academic life:

> I've always liked to talk and have always been a social person. But speaking to people that have power to change things in my community was something completely different that I really started enjoying. I could tell that people really took me seriously and that I had something important to say. It made me feel important. And so every time I had a chance to share my research that my group did on Ruby Payne and Paulo Freire I would do it. I needed to let as many people as possible know why teachers are so important to the improvement of our community and how you need ones that are driven by love for the people they serve as, Paulo Freire says. They can't be from some foreign place and come from a rich background and expect to just walk into our communities and get respect

> from us. They have to earn it. And earning it comes from listening to us students and our families and what we need. They can't come in here and tell us what to do, like Paulo Freire says, they need to work side by side with us and give us the tools to change our lives so that we can improve our community on our terms. I felt not a lot of people in places of power were hearing from students like me. That's why I needed to speak. It was my duty to my community and to other neighborhoods like mine that I speak and provide some reason and understanding that a lot of times doesn't exist with people in power who are out of touch. I learned from the research seminar class that my voice mattered and I was going to use it whenever I had a chance to make a difference. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012)

Desire to Attend College

In addition Nahui Xinachtli's increased desire to participate in public speaking engagements, he also realized the possibilities of attending college after high school. Before the research seminar, Nahui Xinachtli did consider attending college after high school graduation. However, these thoughts began to change as his participation in the research seminar class continued. Nahui Xinachtli commented on this when he states: "the research seminar class made me realize that I had it in me to attend college. I realized that I could do this just as much as anyone else" (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012). Nahui Xinachtli also shared that he has a desire to major in sociology and has aspirations of becoming a sociologist:

> After reading Paulo Freire in your class I also realized that I really liked to study society and that I would like to become a sociologist. Basically what I did in the hood my whole life was just watch and listen and really paid attention to all the little details of how all of it worked. I was good at breaking it all down and why people do what they do in the hood and could explain it well to others that were not knowledgeable of that. That is what a sociologist does. They study society and they teach and report their research findings out from what they collect in the field. I already consider myself an expert of my community, I just don't have that piece of paper and a formal degree yet. But I understand it better than any researcher could understand it. And I have the knowledge of the people who live there better than anyone else. That's why Paulo Freire's problem

> posing education makes so much sense. It's us as the people who live in the community who will have the best answers to solve our problems. We just need those tools to do it ourselves. So that's why I'm going to get a PhD in sociology so I'll have those tools to participate in those discussions with other people in sociology and let them know what needs to happen in our communities to create lasting change. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012)

In addition to the research seminar providing Nahui Xinachtli another lens to look through and consider college as an option after high school, he was now thinking about graduate school. His aspirations of becoming a sociologist seemed to always be present. The research seminar class provided him an educational venue to explore interests that existed before taking the course but that other educators did not find an opportunity to seize during their interactions with Nahui Xinachtli. His careful attention to detail and his ability to put all the pieces together into a cohesive whole from the experiences in his neighborhood will be essential in his continued journey toward completing college. Nahui Xinachtli has shared that he has aspirations of becoming an ethnographer so that he may document the experiences of individuals in his community.

As I lay the final stroke on the portrait of Nuahui Xinachtli, I turn to another student that was positively impacted by the research seminar and the critical pedagogical instructional practices implemented during the class. We will return to Nuahui Xinachtli after a discussion of the two other students who were interviewed for this study in order to paint a portrait of the similarities and differences that each student experienced during their enrollment in the research seminar class. At this time, I will move to the second student portrait: the Intelligent Hoodlum.

Portrait 2: Intelligent Hoodlum's Conflict, Perseverance, and Leadership

It was a Thursday evening during the winter months at our campus and I was attending a spoken word event hosted by our partner organization's recreation department. A group of some of the best poets, writers, and musical artists, as well as curious onlookers gathered in the Huddle[11] every Thursday to listen to the courageous and talented young men and women that bare their souls to their peers. This gathering was one of the most highly attended events that many of our students spent countless hours preparing for during the school week. On Thursday afternoons, if you took a walk through our classrooms, you would often see many of our students working on last minute rehearsals at a feverish pitch preparing for their time in the limelight later that evening.

I entered the Huddle at the closing of the first poet's piece. I did not have an opportunity to listen to his poem, but from the sound of the applause coming from his peers it was well received. The host of the open mic night then introduced Intelligent Hoodlum. Dressed in a baggy white T-shirt, with baggy jeans, and black-framed glasses, Intelligent Hoodlum pointed to another student informing him that he was ready. The student by the radio turned on the switch and a hip-hop instrumental with thumping bass and jazzy horns started to play in the background. Intelligent Hoodlum stood there with his eyes closed for a few seconds and began bobbing his head to the beat. His face was

[11] The Huddle is the nickname that our students have called our recreation room for several years. It is an area on campus that students use to play ping-pong and pool, and congregate with peers during break, lunch, and after school.

relaxed, but with a serious look as he searched for the perfect moment to start flowing[12] to the instrumental. Unfortunately, his words were not heard clearly as the microphone was giving him technical difficulties. This did not stop Intelligent Hoodlum from continuing as he put the microphone down and began to continue rapping without it. He told stories of his neighborhood that were infused with social commentary about how he managed to survive the experiences. It was within this environment that I first encountered Intelligent Hoodlum, an environment where he found solace from the often stressful life in the streets of the San Fernando Valley where he is originally from.

Education and Neighborhood Experiences

Intelligent Hoodlum was one of eight children from a Latino family that lived in the San Fernando Valley. His parents and grandparents emigrated from Mexico roughly 40 years ago but he cannot recall the actual year when they settled in the United States. When his grandparents arrived, they worked primarily in the service industry, cleaning houses and apartments in the San Fernando Valley. Both sets of his grandparents settled in the San Fernando Valley when initially arriving in the United States. To this day, they still reside in this area.

Intelligent Hoodlum's early years in the San Fernando Valley were challenging. At the age of 9, older gang members in the neighborhood saw leadership capacity in Intelligent Hoodlum, displayed by his quick wit and the ability to solve complex math problems in his head. Intelligent Hoodlum's parents were also lured into gang life early in their lives in addition to many other family members that resided in the San Fernando

[12] A common term used in the hip-hop community that reference to a rapper's words when he begins to rap.

Valley. Intelligent Hoodlum reflected on how his childhood was different from other children in his community, stating:

> I grew up around a lot of old people instead of people my age. I didn't enjoy childhood like other kids watching cartoons. I wasn't enjoying school. I couldn't be a child I had a mind of an old person already but stuck in a child's body. I didn't know how a regular kid should feel, react, and interact with another kid. All I learned was stay on my feet and never create enemies. I was 9 years old. The elders kept telling me other things. I didn't know how to be a kid, to talk about baseball cards and things like that. That wasn't my interest; I wanted to make money. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 1, March 12, 2012)

This conflict of whether to grow up as a normal child or experience the life of money and drug dealing was one that Intelligent Hoodlum always contended with. It was something that would keep him up late at night. He knew that drug dealing was wrong but it was a way to earn quick money for the family as he felt at an early age and affinity to contribute to the household his share of the income. This conflict was challenging for Intelligent Hoodlum and it was something that was a constant tension that he experienced throughout his childhood. It was a conflict that emerged throughout his years as a young child, resurfaced during his teenage years and followed him into early adulthood. The complexities of gang life kept calling him despite his attempt to carve out a different pathway in life.

Intelligent Hoodlum's early years with the schooling system were equally as challenging to navigate as the gang life that permeated throughout his community. His early experiences with elementary school were filled with teachers that were uncaring and constantly belittling the work Intelligent Hoodlum submitted. A particularly disturbing memory for Intelligent Hoodlum, which he recalled when reflecting on his elementary school years, was with a teacher named Mrs. Smith:

> Mrs. Smith was one of those teachers that was just mad at the world. She was mad at everyone. She was teaching me science. I loved science at the time as it my favorite subject. She gave us a project to draw out the planets on cardboard and I went above and beyond what I needed to do for the project. I got some help from mom and sisters. I asked Mrs. Smith if I could turn it in one week early before the deadline. She said no one was allowed to turn it in early, yet she permitted another White girl named Kayla to turn her project in early. I didn't pay no mind to it but it did make me mad. My project was better than all of the other students and everyone was complimenting me on it, including other teachers. Then Mrs. Smith looked at it and asked if I did it by my self. I told her that I had a little help from my mom and sister but I did all of the work and thinking behind it. They just helped me glue the pieces on the cardboard and some cutting. She put an F on the project in front of everyone. She failed me because she told me I wasn't supposed to get any help from anyone. I shed tears in front of everyone and was very sad at that moment. She closed up my cardboard piece and put it off to the side. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 1, March 12, 2012)

Intelligent Hoodlum continued to share about this incident, but paused for a moment before he continued. It seemed this memory from school was bringing back some harsh recollections of life in elementary school. His eyes appeared distant, almost as if he was looking beyond the wall and into the classroom where this memory took place. He gathered his composure, took a deep breath, and then continued with his story:

> One thing I learned from that experience with Mrs. Smith is always try your best to keep your composure. In the end though, she killed the emotion of me being happy and proud of my science project at that time. She killed my hopes of wanting to be a scientist. She also told me I would never ever be a scientist because I wasn't good at math. My mom didn't argue with my teacher when I went home and told her what happened. But she did give her a piece of her mind when she saw her at the supermarket later that week. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 1, March 12, 2012)

The impact that this teacher had on Intelligent Hoodlum was severe. In reflecting on what he just shared I could not help but becoming infuriated with how his teacher treated him and her destroying his dreams of wanting to become a scientist. Teachers are

in such powerful positions and they can choose to inspire their students or completely shatter dreams. In the case of the Intelligent Hoodlum, it was the latter and he no longer had the confidence to pursue science as he always dreamed of doing.

Intelligent Hoodlum's experiences in his early educational journey were similar to Nahui Xinachtli's challenges with gang life and poor quality teachers. The oppressive experiences of Nahui Xinachtli and Intelligent Hoodlum shaped their future outlook on education, particularly as it related to their high school experiences. Consequently, both of them did not see the educational system as a place that would support them in their future goals. In many ways the message that education was sending to both of them was that they were never going to be good enough to excel in academics and they should look elsewhere because school was not the place for them. However, the research seminar class that Intelligent Hoodlum participated in afforded him an avenue to express his excitement to provide voice beyond our school walls to impact educational policy. At this juncture in Intelligent Hoodlum's portrait, I now turn to how my critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative impacted him on a personal level as it relates to the essential research question for this study.

Critical Pedagogy's Impact on Personal Development

As we began to discuss the research seminar class, and how Intelligent Hoodlum was impacted by the class on a personal level, a smile and reflective look in his eyes emerged. His black-framed glasses were pushed up as he crinkled his nose. He placed his right hand on his chin pulling on his beard, collecting his thoughts. In a slow, low deliberate speech that bellowed from deep within his chest, Intelligent Hoodlum discussed how the class impacted him on a personal level:

> One thing that I noticed about my life that started changing after I enrolled into your class was my musical taste began to change. I know we didn't study music in your class directly, but I always refer to music to help me make sense of my life with whatever is going on at that time. For me the research seminar was something that was completely foreign to me. It was a place at school for the first time that I felt free to speak my mind. It was the first time I could be me and not be penalized for it. And so as our discussions about Paulo Freire and Ruby Payne and how our teachers are taught in urban schooling programs to teach us in our communities, I was looking to music that would make sense of all of the new things I was learning. And so I started listening to Immortal Technique[13] more than ever. And from there I started listening to other political rappers who were talking about similar things that we were learning in our class. Dead Prez[14] too, I started listening to them a lot more. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012)

Although Intelligent Hoodlum was already listening to some of the artists that he mentioned in above, he started to listen to this type of music exclusively. This change in his musical taste helped him during class, particularly as it related to some of the concepts in Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Intelligent Hoodlum as well as other students would occasionally have difficulty comprehending some of the concepts that were discussed in the book. Thus, his listening to artists such as Immortal Technique and Dead Prez occasionally assisted him in understanding the text of Paulo Freire (1970). For example a constant theme that Immortal Technique and Dead Prez examine in their music is Freire's idea of true generosity versus false generosity. Intelligent Hoodlum often had difficulty understanding this concept when reading Freire. However, examples from Immortal Technique and Dead Prez that also examined the

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[13] Immortal Technique is a New York City based rapper of Peruvian descent. His music is highly political and his songs document the struggles of disenfranchised youth in New York City from a Peruvian/Latino perspective.

[14] A Black rap duo that documents the struggles of the Black community in the United States and beyond. Many of their songs critique the American school system as well as the judicial and criminal system.

concept of true generosity and false generosity assisted him with understanding the book. Intelligent Hoodlum's musical soundscape began to integrate with the concepts that he was reading in Paulo Freire (1970). It even assisted him in understanding the mindset of some of the teachers that did not think highly of him in the past.

Many of Intelligent Hoodlum's friends also began to notice the change in his choice of music. A few of his friends did not understand why he was listening to politically conscious hip-hop[15] and felt that he was losing touch with his neighborhood roots. His friends began to perceive him as selling out and no longer holding an allegiance to the neighborhood. This was a point of contention that Intelligent Hoodlum found himself placed in more often as he began to become more socially conscious. The typical party style hip-hop music that his friends at school and in the neighborhood continued to listen to was not as appealing to Intelligent Hoodlum anymore. He commented on how he began to analyze some of the lyrics of hip-hop party songs as it related to his research seminar class and Ruby Payne's (1995) ideas of disenfranchised urban youth:

> As I began to think about what some of these artists were saying and how it related to some of the ideas that Ruby Payne was saying about us as urban youth in schools it made sense how she would come to the conclusions that she did in her book about us. If your entire reality of what it's like to live in a poor neighborhood is based on songs that they play Power 106[16] then it's no surprise that people like Ruby Payne think

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[15] This genre in hip-hop has many musical artists that primarily discuss contemporary and historical political struggles of Communities of Color. It is often diametrically opposed to many of the mainstream hip-hop artists whose songs are usually framed within a capitalist lens focusing on obtaining material wealth.

[16] Power 106 is a popular urban radio station where the majority of their songs are hip-hop party songs. The majority of songs they play portray the Black and Latina/o

> the way they do about our communities. The majority of the songs that they play portray us Blacks and Browns as criminal-minded, violent felons whose sole purpose in life is to get rich by any means necessary. Of course being broke is part of the equation, which is why we do some of the things we do in the neighborhood because we are desperate at times; that's human nature. But the radio songs make it seem like that's all we are worried about is getting paid and shooting people if we have to in order to get money. Radio songs don't give people like Ruby Payne the reasons that lead to this desperation that is key to understanding our lives. With no understanding it only leads to stereotypes and decisions based on emotions that are provoked by these songs on the radio. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012)

As Intelligent Hoodlum completed his sentence he appeared to be at a crossroad in his educational journey. The journey of becoming more socially conscious has been an enlightening one for him but it has created many unanswered questions. However, it was these unanswered questions that continued to fuel his desire to find answers, and more importantly solutions, particularly as they related to creating effective learning environments for urban youth. I asked him if his desire to develop a deeper understanding of how individuals such as Ruby Payne (1995) impact educational policy had an impression on him. A large grin lit up his face and his eyes widen before he slowly responded to my question: "her ignorance inspires me to prove her and others that think like her wrong" (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012).

Changing His Dress Code from White T-Shirts to Shirts and Ties

Another way that the critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative impacted Intelligent Hoodlum was the way he dressed. Before enrolling in the research seminar class his typical dress attire was a baggy white T-shirt with matching baggy blue jeans. If the day required wearing warmer clothing, Intelligent Hoodlum would often

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community in a negative light. Song topics heavily revolve around drug use, gang violence, and glamorizing prison culture.

wear a baggy leather coat and matching leather gloves. Often there was no thought process that Intelligent Hoodlum would participate in when choosing what type of clothing he would wear for the day. The white T-shirt and baggy jeans were something that he had worn for years. A white T-shirt and baggy jeans fit the criteria for being fashionable, and more importantly, affordable. He commented on this during our interview: "When you're poor, a white T-shirt and jeans was the cheapest way to dress cool. Neither one cost much and they could be replaced all the time" (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012). Therefore, because he had limited economic resources, he dressed in this fashion out of necessity.

Yet, his conceptualization about his outward appearance changed when he learned that his seminar group would present to graduate students as the culminating project for the course. It was at this point that he realized he wanted to purchase an outfit that stretched his wardrobe beyond white T-shirts and jeans. Although students are required to dress professionally for our research seminar public presentations, Intelligent Hoodlum arrived at this realization much earlier than I announced this to him and his classmates. His thoughts about wanting a special outfit for the final presentation resonated early on in the research seminar class:

> I was so excited that we were actually going to be speaking to college students. And not just college students, but doctorate students. These were smart people that we were going to talk to in just a few weeks. I still thought it was a joke, I mean what did I have to offer to these people who were so much more educated than myself? But the more that the idea sank in, I took it for what it was worth and just accepted it. It was at this point I knew that I needed to be on point for everything. I had to have my speech down, my slides in the power point needed to look perfect. And I needed to look good as well. It was at this point I knew that I didn't have anything in my closet for this occasion. And I knew at this point that I needed to buy outfits like this, especially if I'm going to be talking

> regularly to important people. I didn't want others to judge me on what I was wearing. Not that there is anything wrong with a white T-shirt and baggy jeans. It's just I didn't want to give people a reason to not take me seriously. It's very real in our world that how you present yourself with what you dress is how some will view you even if it's not right to do, people still do it all the time. The cops do it all the time, so why wouldn't it happen at a university? (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012)

Intelligent Hoodlum made an interesting parallel of the police force and a university audience. It implied that a harassing police officer that brutalizes his friends in the community and a university graduate student studying education had something in common. Intelligent Hoodlum and his cohort of fellow student researchers were not briefed on what type of university audience they would be presenting to at UCLA. They were only informed that the audience members were doctoral candidates in the School of Education. A brief description of the purpose of the Research Apprentice Course (RAC)[17] and its facilitator, Dr. Daniel Solórzano, was provided. The power of the university was perceived to be similar in nature and equally oppressive as the police force. Therefore, similar to a court appearance where you have to wear your best clothes and impress the judge and jury. Intelligent Hoodlum felt he was under a similar condition presenting to a university audience. The facts he presented were not criminal in nature but controversial because he was critiquing something similar to the law, educational practices of schoolteachers (Morrell, 2004). Intelligent Hoodlum and his colleagues were stating a case against the educational system and he felt he had to look the part of a professional if his words were to be taken seriously. He perceived his dress

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[17] The acronym stands for Research Apprentice Class. Intelligent Hoodlum and his cohort of student researchers have presented their findings to a group of doctoral candidates at Dr. Daniel Solórzano's class.

to be even under more scrutiny than others presenting to this group of doctoral candidates since he was entering the room without any formal college degrees. Although the group of doctoral students were very supportive with many of them having similar educational experiences as Intelligent Hoodlum, he did not know this beforehand, and even if he did, he probably would find it difficult to believe this truth.

Critical Pedagogy's Impact on Academic Development

From the beginning of Intelligent Hoodlum's journey at UACH, he had difficulty adjusting to the academics, in particular mathematics. Mathematics has always been a struggle for Intelligent Hoodlum, despite his love of numbers from a very early age. He attributed his academic challenges in mathematics to early years in elementary school where several of his teachers did not provide him the confidence or the technical assistance that he needed to solve mathematical equations in class:

> I loved numbers as a child and it was one thing that I really enjoyed the most in school. It came easy to me and I loved to add, subtract, and especially multiply numbers. I remember that I memorized my times tables at a very early age; I think I was only in the first grade when I had them all memorized. But then something happened in the third grade. My teachers for some reason started giving up on me. They saw that I wasn't going to class on a regular basis. And instead of asking what was wrong and reaching out to me, they just stopped interacting with me as much and the less attention I got in class the more I started to drift away. Then some of the teachers just gave up on me altogether and looked for reasons to kick me out of their class. At this point, and this was about half way through the fourth grade, I told myself, "forget these people; I'm out of here." So I took my skill sets to the streets and started using my math there with the local drug dealers and helped them make lots of money and got a good percentage of it myself. My early math skills paid off, but when I needed to learn more complicated math like algebra and geometry in high school when I came back to school, I was completely lost. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 1, March 12, 2012)

Given this negative historical context with mathematics, it was no surprise that Intelligent Hoodlum constantly ran into mental roadblocks during his high school classes. This was also the case at our school when he initially enrolled. At first, he wouldn't even show up at his math class. Slowly after several talks with his teachers, and me, we gradually rebuilt his confidence in mathematics. Intelligent Hoodlum's attendance improved over time and eventually this was no longer a challenge. What he noticed in himself after taking the research seminar class was an improved level of concentration and perseverance in his math class:

> I always had a lack of confidence in math since I came back to school and wanted my high school diploma. I knew it was going to be the toughest subject for me to overcome and I would have to work extra hard on it compared to everything else. But I was willing to put in the work. But I started getting frustrated with it, so I started ditching class. After the research seminar class though I started realizing how intelligent I was and it shined a whole other light on me as a student. I conquered one of the biggest fears in my life. I spoke to a group of the most educated people at one of the top universities in the world and they actually listened to what I had to say. Not only did they listen, but they said I had great ideas for fixing our educational system. From that point on, I knew that math couldn't be that hard. So it pushed me to work even harder than ever in math and to once and for all prove my elementary teachers wrong that I was good in math. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3 March 14, 2012).

Intelligent Hoodlum's academic abilities in math were always present. However, his confidence was taken away at a very early age and he was never provided the opportunity to gain it back in a formal academic setting. What the research seminar provided him through the high expectations and rigorous reading and writing assignments was the confidence that he was a student of the highest academic caliber. The research seminar reinforced to Intelligent Hoodlum that his academic ability and critical thinking skills were of the highest quality that even doctoral students at a top-tiered university

applauded his efforts in his research findings. This confidence went a long way for Intelligent Hoodlum, particularly in his math class. It gave him the perseverance to continue in this class, one that he considered quitting on at least three occasions.

Gaining a Deeper Understanding of Revolutionary Leaders in Social Studies

Another way that the critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative impacted Intelligent Hoodlum academically was through his studies of revolutionary leaders. In social studies and also during his time in our English class, Intelligent Hoodlum began to study the lives of different revolutionary leaders from different countries and eras. One of the first leaders that Intelligent Hoodlum studied deeply was Gandhi. He explained why this leader sparked a passion in him to learn more about his philosophy on social change:

> After learning about Paulo Freire in your class and how most of the things that he did were based on love for the people it was natural for me to want to study other leaders that went about their lives in a peaceful way. I remember slightly about Gandhi from my elementary school years when one of my teachers talked about him for a social studies report. I remember that he was all about nonviolence and peace and that the best way to fight ignorance was through nonviolent protest. I saw how he was very similar to Paulo Freire and since Freire was very inspirational to me, I wanted to learn about more people like him. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012).

It is interesting how Intelligent Hoodlum made the comparison of Paulo Freire to Gandhi. In thinking of my first read of Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in a teaching credential course, most of my peers at that time saw Freire very differently than Intelligent Hoodlum. If they compared Freire with other leaders they were more along the lines of individuals like Karl Marx or Malcolm X who had different approaches at creating social change than Gandhi. Freire is often interpreted as an extremist,

particularly when students in teaching credential classes read his work. This was my experience during my teaching credential courses when we read his work. Intelligent Hoodlum interpreted Freire in a peaceful, loving, revolutionary way.

Another leader that Intelligent Hoodlum began to study in greater depth as a result of his participation in the research seminar class was Cesar Chavez. His reason for studying him was similar to why he chose Gandhi. For Intelligent Hoodlum, both of these men exhibited nonviolent activism while working for social change. Intelligent Hoodlum would spend hours researching Cesar Chavez in his social studies class and completed several research projects related to his life and his leadership in the farm workers movement. When I asked him to reflect on why he began to develop a higher sense of awareness for leaders of social change after taking the research seminar, Intelligent Hoodlum said:

> I always knew that these people were important, but they were becoming a lot more relevant to my life as I began to take a look at how I could begin to contribute to the larger good of what was occurring in the communities and how I could participate and begin to make some positive changes as well. I knew that I had to study some people who were doing good things for the community that I eventually wanted to do. So I knew that I had to study leaders that were successful at making change in their own communities. I've seen so much violence in my life that I was really drawn into the whole idea of love that Freire talked about when I first got into your class. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012)

Reflecting on Intelligent Hoodlum's statement regarding how the research seminar and the critical pedagogical approach had on his academic life, I contemplated these questions: What if I had more teachers that offered critical pedagogical curricular approaches when I was in high school? Would I have become more interested in academics at an early age and genuinely engaged in school rather than maintaining

minimum grades to be eligible to play sports? Would I have taken the initiative like Intelligent Hoodlum to learn more about revolutionary leaders at an earlier age? Would I have aspired to challenge myself in academics during high school so that I may have been eligible for a 4-year university immediately after my senior year? These are questions that Intelligent Hoodlum made me reflect on as he immersed himself in the research seminar. My own journey will be explored later when I further describe my own portrait as it relates to the research questions. However, before we move onto me, let us now close this portrait of the Intelligent Hoodlum and explore the final student portrait of Chubs.

Portrait 3: Chubs, Spray Cans, Freeways, and Determination

The year was 2009, and Chubs was hanging from the top of a freeway wall finishing the outline of a masterpiece painting that would be complete in a matter of 20 minutes. His eyes were bloodshot red from being up for nearly 48 hours straight with only a handful of sunflower seeds, peanuts, and soda to keep his energy sustained for the long walks in downtown Los Angeles. Chubs quickly jumped off the freeway wall when he saw a police car making its way down the road and hid in the thick green bushes below the wall until the car was no longer in sight. Once the coast was clear, Chubs resumed his work on his masterpiece, by opening up a bright blue spray paint can and filling in the first area of the painting on the freeway wall. A white protective mask covered Chubs' mouth to prevent the strong vapors of the spray paint from passing into his lungs as he continued to work at a frantic pace to complete his painting. He was perspiring profusely while painting, keeping one eye on the wall and the other on the road for any police that may come his way. The last thing that he wanted was a felony on his

record, which is the penalty if caught engaging in this art form. It is a cost that he knew he would have to pay if caught in the act, but he gladly accepted the risks and challenges as he was doing what he loves and would not change it for anything. Twenty minutes later Chubs jumped off the freeway wall, looked at his completed masterpiece on the freeway wall and smiled like a proud father who just experienced the birth of his child. He took a quick picture of his finished painting with his cellular phone, looked at it one last time, and vanished into the darkness with his painting crew of four other young men. Their mission had been accomplished for the evening and Chubs was one step closer to etching out a reputation for being one of the best graffiti artists in Southern California.

I started Chubs' portrait with this vivid description of his days when he was a graffiti artist because it was through this art form that he began to develop a purpose in life and form his artistic identity. A prolific graffiti artist and one of the most creative minds to hit the freeway walls in many years, Chubs is one of the most respected and well-known graffiti artists to emerge from the earlier years of our new millennium. What is even more inspiring about Chubs' early beginnings as a graffiti artist is how late in his life he began to develop this artistic talent. Chubs explained this in one of our interviews:

> I moved to California when I was 17 years old. And this was when I picked up graffiti. Before I started drawing in this graffiti style, I had never drawn anything formal in my life. I had no artistic talent whatsoever. There was nothing artistic about me. Or at least I didn't think there was because I was never encouraged to draw. But when I got to California, that all changed. I was hanging by myself one day at lunch when I got to my new school in California and some guy saw me doodling on my binder. He said, you should try drawing your letter like this. I watched him draw a letter. And then he showed me his black book of sketches. I was completely blown away by his work. I told him to teach me and from that point on I was hooked on graffiti and it changed my entire life. (Chubs Interview 3, March 18, 2012)

Chubs' introduction in the world of graffiti was the first time that he had a positive experience in school. Although it was not an experience in the classroom per se, it was an experience that occurred while he was attending school. This was the high point for Chubs in his years as a student and it was the first time that he felt any positive connection to school life. As I learned through our formal interviews and time spent together in our research seminar class, his early years in school were anything but positive.

Education and Neighborhood Experiences

Chubs did not have a traditional neighborhood experience[18] as he was constantly on the move. He was born in Chicago, and spent the first few years of his childhood there with his mother and father. His older brother lived with them but moved away when Chubs was only 7 due to family challenges that led him to leave and start a life on his own. Some of Chubs' earliest memories of going to school in Chicago were of how the teachers did not care about their students. Chubs would constantly get into arguments with his teachers because they would not assist him in his academic work when he requested it in their class. There was always tension in his elementary years with all of his teachers. Chubs commented on the overall quality of his teachers during the elementary school years in Chicago:

> You could tell that these teachers were not there for us students, and they did not care about what we were learning. I had this one teacher in second grade that would just sit at her desk pretty much the whole day and just let us run wild in class and play all day like it was recess in the classroom. I had a lot of fun at the time, but thinking back on those days, I can't believe that it was going on in my class. And this was pretty standard for most of

[18] Chubs did not live in one neighborhood as he lived in several. The other two participants lived in one neighborhood and did not move.

> my classes during elementary school. The teachers really didn't care, and it showed big time. (Chubs Interview 1, March 16, 2012)

These early interactions with his elementary teachers in Chicago would carry over to other schools Chubs would attend in other cities. When he was in the fifth grade, Chubs moved to Atlanta and was met with other apathetic teachers who did not care about his education. Chubs attributed his attitude toward school to the lack of care of these teachers. Since his teachers did not care enough to want to help him with his academic work during instructional time, why should he want to put in the effort? What good was it to try in class if his teachers were just going to ignore his requests for assistance? Thus Chubs was interpreting the apathy of his teachers as a sign that education was not important to invest his time in since his teachers did not want to work with him.

Eventually, Chubs began to act out at school and frequently engaged in fistfights with other students. Ultimately, this lead Chubs down the path of alternative schools since he was suspended from many of the schools that he attended. Atlanta was particularly challenging for Chubs as he was participating in fistfights almost every week. His first alternative school experience was during the sixth grade. The way he described the school, it sounded more like a prison than a school. As I waited to hear Chubs describe the experience of this first alternative school, he took a long deep sigh while raising both of his hands high above his head. Chubs then described his first experience with the alternative school system:

> The halls of this place were all white with no bulletin boards or anything on them. Just plain white walls. I remember the first thing that really stood out was how they disciplined the kids here. There was this all white room with pads on the walls where they placed some of the kids who would get out control in their

> classes. I remember the first day at this school, I saw a boy being walked over by two teachers to this white room with pads on the walls. He was struggling and kicking the whole time and I couldn't believe what I was seeing. The teachers were literally dragging this student into the room with padded walls. Then when he was in, they locked the door and walked away. The student started screaming and yelling at the top of his lungs to get him out. At that point I knew I had to do something different with my life. I didn't want to be in a school like this anymore. I didn't want to be in school period if this is what it meant to be in an alternative setting. (Chubs Interview 2, March 13, 2012).

I could not believe what Chubs just shared with me. Indeed, it did sound more like a prison than a school. All I could picture were the two teachers, but in my mind replacing their regular civilian attire with police uniforms. It was a sight in my mind that I would never want to experience in the real world. But this was Chubs' reality that he faced and he would continue to be held in this alternative school for another 3 years. At that point his family moved again to Kentucky. However, the trauma of the alternative school setting in Atlanta would forever stay in Chubs' memories, and it would take several years until he arrived in California during high school.

Critical Pedagogy's Impact on Personal Development

Similar to Intelligent Hoodlum and Nahui Xinachtli's educational experiences, Chubs did not have many positive interactions with previous educators. Chubs did not make any meaningful connections to any academic course that he took before entering UACH. His passion for graffiti grew out of lunchroom conversations with his peers while attending a high school in Santa Ana. But the academic component of school for Chubs, even at the high school level, never intrigued him. School did not offer something worth his time and effort. Eventually Chubs left his high school in Santa Ana and decided to take on the life of a full-time graffiti artist, abandoning school completely. He entered UACH right before his 19th birthday after being out of school for over 1 year.

One of the first things that we noticed about Chubs was his artistic talent, exhibited in a black book of sketches he would carry around. Thus, his personal development within the context of his enrollment in our research seminar class possibly impacted his personal life and artwork.

Chubs noticed a change in his artwork, in the direction some of his pieces took when he enrolled in the research seminar class. One of the paintings he developed when he was in the research seminar class was the large four-panel peace sign located in my office. Chubs described this process and how some of the talks in the research seminar class began to impact his thinking behind the art that was developed at this time in his life:

> Our research seminar was heavy duty when it came to the topic of race since our major area of research was how racism affected different ethnic groups in the United States over time. Our conversations were deep in class with one another as we all shared our different experiences of what it was like to grow up Black, Latino, or Pilipino and it made me start to think about all the things we had in common as minorities. Some of the things we shared were very personal and sometimes even painful. But it was worth it. What I started noticing about my sketches at this time when I was in this class was everything had a common theme of peace in it. And when you asked me to help design your office, which was at the time I was in the research seminar class, I knew I had to make a piece that had this vibe of peace within it. Now that I reflect on it, I guess that was my way of responding to all of the violence that I was hearing some of us had to deal with on different levels with racism. And the only way to fight racism is to make peace and so it started coming out in my art. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012)

Chubs could have responded in a variety of ways to the intense conversations that we were having about race and racism in the research seminar. The fact that he chose to respond in his artwork with a large emphasis on peace aligns with his personality and his core traits as a human being. One of the main reasons that Chubs developed such a

passion for graffiti art is that it provided him a safe space where he could express himself and also be at peace with the world. Thus, when faced with intense but worthwhile conversations with his peers and me on the topic of race and racism, it was a logical step in his artistic process that his paintings and sketches during this time would express many themes of peace. In fact, all of the paintings that he produced for friends and faculty during this time when he was involved in the research seminar that I saw had themes of peace integrated into the painting. A large mural for a movie set featured prominent historical activists such as Malcolm X, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. He also created for this movie set a large graffiti-styled painting that said, "Unity." When I first saw that painting on the wall on the historic building that the movie company was using in downtown I could not help but be awestruck. Chubs saw my reaction to this painting and, as a gift, created a scaled down version of the painting on a smaller canvas for our bedroom at home. He also painted a beautiful sun and moon around the time of his enrollment in the research seminar and the theme of peace could be seen throughout this painting as well. The moon's eyes and the sun's eyes in the painting have a very calming appearance to them with the soft colors of reds and oranges creating a peaceful environment for the sun and the moon to intertwine and embrace. Chubs described some of his thinking behind the paintings he created for my wife and me during this time period and how the theme of peace was also integrated into these artworks:

> I was really on a roll at that time with my art. I remember the pieces that I was developing for you and your wife at that time. When you told me the story of how you met and what you stood for, the theme of peace made perfect sense to use for both of you personally. Again, all that I was thinking of at that time in my paintings was the theme of peace. I think it's a theme that has always been in my paintings especially when I first started bombing walls. But peace took on a whole new thing for me when

> we were talking about racism on a deep level in the research seminar class. And I could see that that is what you were trying to teach us, to be peaceful even though the world could be very violent towards us minorities. (Chubs Interview 3, March 18, 2012).

The artwork that he did during this time and how it incorporated peace also caught the eye of his peers at school and they began to ask him to produce paintings for them as well. Chubs was producing up to three paintings a week during this time for his peers at school. One of his favorite paintings that he developed during this time was a graffiti styled mural on a T-shirt dedicated to a recently murdered teenager from Gardena. When he presented it to his friend, tears began to roll down the face of this young man. It was a very emotional painting that Chubs made for his friend and he was happy that he could provide some sense of peace through his artwork. The T-shirt was even duplicated for others that knew the recently deceased man and would forever be a memory captured through the eyes and heart of Chubs.

Another personal impact that my critical pedagogical instructional leadership provided for Chubs was to help increase his confidence of public speaking. Chubs had always been a social person and despite his challenges with academics in school he always had a good set of friends that he frequently socialized with. However, public speaking in front of large groups for formal presentations was something that Chubs never engaged in until the research seminar course. His cohort presented at California State University Long Beach to a group of over 80 undergraduate students. Their presentation on race and racism in the United States and its impact on minority communities was staged in one of the larger lecture hall classrooms on campus. When

Chubs and his group first walked into the lecture hall all he could feel was scared. He says:

> When we first stepped into that classroom it felt so huge. I couldn't believe that this was the room we were going to present in. I had never been in a large classroom like that one ever in my life. I remember all of us just looking at each other with that look of we are going to present in here? It was a scary thought to think the room was going to fill up with people listening to our every word. I don't think I ever got use to that idea of presenting that day, but I did it and after it was over I still couldn't believe I did that. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012)

Other cohort members shared Chubs' nervousness in presenting to a large group of college students--this was the largest room that our UACH students ever presented in. They had had a similar sense of pressure at our first research seminar cohort. The room was not as big but there were members of the press from Univision Spanish Channel and the *Los Angeles Times* present at their presentation. The lights, cameras, and news reporters were unsettling for these students, similar to how Chubs and the group was feeling in the large space at California State University, Long Beach.

Although the initial response from Chubs was fear of presenting his research findings, when he started to receive positive feedback from the college students during the presentation he was able to gain some confidence and a comfort level in speaking to the large group of students. Chubs' commented on how the facial expressions in the crowd provided him the assurance that he needed to keep moving forward with his presentation:

> When it was my turn to go up and speak I was petrified. I paused for a few minutes before I even started speaking at first because I was still taking it in that I was presenting to a room of almost a hundred people. I stood there and looked out at the people in the front row and smiled. Then someone smiled right back at me. I really needed that and it calmed my

> nerves at that point. Then once I started going, I saw that people were really listening to me. They were nodding their heads when I was making certain points about how Black males are always being harassed by the cops. It started giving me confidence and made me realize that I had something important to say to these college students. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012).

When the presentation was over, Chubs remembered breathing a big sigh of relief. The experience that he would gain in public speaking during the research seminar helped him in his pursuit of transitioning his graffiti skills to the world of graphic design. His confidence of speaking in front of large groups provided him with the confidence to approach a local graphic design company for an internship. Chubs discovered this company one day walking to the subway station on his way home after school. He heard hip-hop music playing from a storefront, which initially lured him into the company's clothing showroom at the front of their complex. Once inside, Chubs was amazed at all the artwork that was hanging from the wall. One of the company's employees greeted Chubs and even gave him a tour of the entire facility. Chubs toured the graphic design room in the back, the silk screening area, the staging area where the company premieres their clothing, and the conference area where they hold weekly meetings. Chubs reflected on how his experience in public speaking with the research seminar group provided him the confidence to not leave this company's facilities without getting an internship:

> I knew that once I stepped into this place that I was going to work there. At the end of the tour I told the person who walked me around that I wasn't leaving the building until I could get a chance to talk to the owner so I could intern there. She told me that he wasn't in that day but I could come back in a couple of days. So I did that and came back. And I kept coming back and eventually the owner saw my potential that I could provide to his graphic design team. He brought me on as a volunteer intern at first. But after about a year, he saw how I was developing as an

> artist and decided to make me a full-time salaried employee with benefits. I never would have had that kind of confidence the way that I did that day without the experience with the research seminar class. And the skills that I learned there continue to help me in my job as a graphic designer and account manager. Especially when we are at events and I have to speak to large groups of people when promoting our company. I'm very comfortable doing that now because I had that experience already from the research seminar class. (Chubs Interview 3, March 18, 2012).

When I first designed this course for our students I did not know how much of an impact the public speaking component would have on students such as Chubs. I did not realize that the skills they would develop to speak publically and present would be utilized in the way that they were. Chubs illustrated how these skills can be transferred to the workforce. What Chubs illustrates is the power of public speaking and how these skills are transferable once students leave the class to help them in their future careers. Chubs' confidence in public speaking provided him a window of opportunity to begin his dream job sooner than he anticipated. Chubs is now paid to do what he loves, produce artwork for the masses and still be able to utilize his graffiti-style influence to produce professional pieces for his company.

Critical Pedagogy's Impact on Academic Development

Critical pedagogy had a similar impact on Chubs with his academic development. One of the elective classes that we offer, Creative Technology, provides students an opportunity to learn the basics of some of the premiere graphic design programs used in the field. Students learn such graphic design programs as Illustrator, Photoshop, Dream Weaver, and Macro Media Flash. These software programs provide our students with the tools of a graphic designer if they choose to further pursue this as a career or major in college once they graduate from UACH. Students also are provided the basics in film

production. They create an original script, choose their student actors, shoot the film and edit with Final Cut Pro, an industry standard movie-editing program used by all major motion picture companies in Hollywood.

Chubs knew immediately that he would take advantage of all of these programs when he entered our school. But after he completed our research seminar class and built the confidence to begin his internship at the graphic design, he began to take his studies a lot more seriously in this area. Once Chubs secured his internship with the local graphic design company, he began learning more than just the basics for the programs that we offered him in our Creative Technology class. Chubs explained how the research seminar class began to push him to want more out of his Creative Technology Class:

> I gained a lot of confidence in myself during the research seminar class. I knew that I could do so much more with my artwork and I could still be the best graffiti artist but I had to go beyond freeway walls if I wanted to make a living from my skills. So I started pushing myself in Creative Technology a lot more. Especially after I landed the internship, I really started pushing myself to learn as much as I could in Creative Technology. (Chubs Interview 3, March 18, 2012).

As Chubs became more proficient in graphic design, it gave him more confidence to begin experimenting with film. With his graphic design teacher he created a short reflective essay video. Chubs chose the word "enlightenment" to define and create a visual representation with graffiti. With the assistance of his teacher, he had another student film him drawing the word enlightenment with graffiti-styled permanent ink pens. While drawing this picture, Chubs narrated what the word enlightenment means to him and why it is an important part of his world outlook on life. Chubs described the process of becoming a more well-rounded artist as he began to master the art of filmmaking:

> The enlightenment project was my first attempt in film. I knew that I needed to up my film skills to compliment my graphic design skills as well when I got the internship. I needed to be well rounded in every aspect of art so I could remain competitive and continue to make moves in this business. A lot of my friends saw the difference in my academic work in Creative and Technology and how driven I was to learn as much as possible. Again without the confidence booster that I got from the research seminar class, I wouldn't have excelled academically in my other classes, especially Creative Technology. (Chubs Interview 3, March 18, 2012).

Chubs was maturing not just as a graphic artist but in his outlook on academics as well. The academic confidence that the research seminar provided him, he now applied to other parts of his high school experience. It made me think of the positive experience I had with sports in high school and how my involvement with football and wrestling gave me the confidence that I could be successful at anything in life. Although it did not transfer to academic skills like it did for Chubs, I would later utilize my work ethic from sports in college and graduate school.

As Chubs' portrait comes to a close, I reflect on how his academic confidence grew in such a short time period. Similar to Intelligent Hoodlum's portrait in which his teachers did not have confidence in his academic abilities, I wondered the same thing with Chubs. How could his teachers not have seen his talent? Why did they not take the time to reach out to Chubs, which if they did, would have revealed all of the talent he had to offer to their educational environments? Why did it take a high school principal such as me at the end of his formal academic journey to finally reach him and bring out the best that he has to offer to society? I find myself asking more questions after each students portrait comes to a close and continue to be perplexed that these intelligent young men were allowed to slip through the cracks despite the talents that each of them

could have contributed much earlier in their academic careers. I often wonder, if only they had teachers or principals that believed in them and could have identified their talents early on in their elementary school years, their educational journey could have been filled with more success in their formative years. Yet despite this journey that took them down paths that many would have never recovered from, it made each of them stronger as individual young men. It shaped them into the young scholars that they are today. Their experiences, although riddled with some of the greatest challenges that any of our youth could face in their lives, did not break them. It only made them stronger. Thus, I now turn to some common themes that I witnessed in each of these resilient young men. What follows is an integrated portrait of Nahui Xinachtli, Intelligent Hoodlum, and Chubs.

Portrait 4: An Integrated Portrait of Nahui Xinachtli, Intelligent Hoodlum, and Chubs

In this section of chapter 4, I describe how the findings of the three students weave into the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy. In addition to relating their findings back to the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy, I will examine how their stories contribute to the literature discussed in chapter 2 of this study. What follows is an analysis of the major themes that emerged from their experiences in the research seminar and how they relate to the literature in chapter 2 as well as to the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy.

Theme 1: Varying levels of Transformational Resistance

In chapter 2 of this study, during the review of the literature related to Solórzano's (2001) theory of transformational resistance, I provided a framework for many subsequent studies in the area of critical pedagogy. Various authors such as Camangian

(2008), Duncan-Andrade (2006, 2007), Morrell (2006) and Rogers (2006) utilize Solórzano's (2001) theory to specifically discuss the impact of critical pedagogy on a student's development of their urban youth identity within their school settings. Transformative resistance theory was developed out of necessity to extend the limited resistance literature at the time, and specifically to explain the resistance of Latina/o students. Additionally, transformative resistance theory was a form of positive resistance--the student had an understanding of oppressive structures in society and was motivated to achieve social justice (Solórzano, 2001). Utilizing this framework, I now discuss how Nahui Xinachtli, Intelligent Hoodlum, and Chubs exhibited varying degrees of transformative resistance based on the findings of this study.

The highest degree of transformative resistance can be found in Nahui Xinachtli. What is interesting about Nahui Xinachtli is that among the 3 young men that participated in this study he was the most resistant to school before the research seminar class. Amongst the 3, he was also the one on the most destructive path before the research seminar course. If Nahui Xinachtli continued down the path he was following before he entered UACH and did not participate in the research seminar, incarceration or death may have been his reality considering the lifestyle that he engaged in on a daily basis. However, once Nahui Xinachtli began to understand his own oppressive state on a deeper level, his desire to keep learning more about systemic oppression increased at phenomenal rates. Nahui Xinachtli would often stay up all night thinking of how to devise a plan to free his community from the daily shackles of American oppression. He often dreamed of wanting to join the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico with Sub-Commander Marcos. He even mumbled this in his sleep at times when he became

frustrated with his mathematics in our classroom and wished someone would just fly him away back to his homeland in Mexico to be one with the Zapatistas. Additionally, every opportunity he had to engage in a public speech to represent our school Nahui Xinachtli graciously volunteered. He needed to be heard and the research seminar provided him a space similar to spaces developed in Akom, Ginwright, and Cammarota's (2008), classrooms where students were able to be themselves and express their ideas freely. Nahui Xinachtli had a home in our research seminar class and was able to develop a community of practice similar to the one in Rogers' (2007) study where students and teachers developed critical spaces. These were spaces at school sites that could interrogate power and oppressive structures and freely express how these systems made them feel. Nahui Xinachtli wanted nothing to do with his colonizer's culture and rejected all notions of anything remotely related to the culture of Spain that infiltrated his indigenous homeland.

In thinking of Intelligent Hoodlum and his level of transformational resistance, his journey was distinct when compared to Nahui Xinachtli. Intelligent Hoodlum in many ways wanted to escape the community where he grew up and never return to it once he had enough economic capital to sustain himself somewhere else. He currently lives with his mother and siblings in the same community where he grew up, but does not want to live there any longer. In comparison, Nahui Xinachtli wants to build a community center in his neighborhood and sees himself committed to its needs for his entire life. Intelligent Hoodlum has a desire to live in other communities outside of where he grew up.

This brings into question a debate among many activist communities who contemplate what it means to be committed to your community. One side of this debate

suggests that it is the goal to encourage students to develop their transformative critique of oppressive systems and remain within the community they are attempting to liberate (Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2004, 2006, 2007). There are others who do not necessarily feel that students need to live in the community or a similarly economically situated community to be the most effective at creating change for social justice (Cammarota, J. & Romero, 2009; Fine, 2003). For Intelligent Hoodlum, he does see himself aiding in the liberation of people from his community through social justice work, but feels it would be too dangerous for his family to reside in the neighborhood he is serving. He feels that he can help from a distance and live in a safer neighborhood, while maintaining his social justice work to the community. One way that he sees himself doing this is pursuing his music as a career and performing in similarly situated communities that he grew up in and inspiring people to change their lives through critically conscious lyrics. His career in music would then be supplemented by Intelligent Hoodlum's operating creative writing workshops in which he would partner with school districts that serve youth in disenfranchised communities.

When thinking of Chubs and his transformative resistance, he is similar to Intelligent Hoodlum's wishes to pursue something in the creative arts in order to liberate others from his community. When Chubs thinks of community, his perspective is different because he sees his fellow graffiti artists as the people that he would like to work alongside in liberating them from oppressive systems. This is particularly true with the laws against graffiti artists and the stiff penalty they receive in the form of a felony when they are caught painting their masterpieces on public walls along Southern California freeways. Chubs sees these laws as oppressive and would like to help in the

process of eradicating some of these laws as he feels it should not be a crime to want to publicly display your art on walls. He sees his career in graphic design as a place where he can have direct impact on possibly changing laws with graffiti since he now has access to many people in the music and film industry that hold key positions that could initiate conversations and forums to dialogue about the possibilities of revising some of these laws that target graffiti artists. Chubs also sees himself helping some of his closest friends from his former graffiti crew gain employment in the graphic design business so that they can earn a living from their skills.

In summation, it is clear that Nahui Xinachtli, Intelligent Hoodlum, and Chubs displayed characteristics of transformative resistance. The critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative was effective in having these young men think critically about their own oppression and more importantly how to develop plans of action to liberate more people from their communities with their newly found desire for social justice.

Theme 2: Critical Pedagogy as a Theoretical Framework to Interrogate Oppression

Another theme that emerged with Chubs, Intelligent Hoodlum, and Nahui Xinachtli, is their ability to interrogate oppression. As discussed in previous chapters of this study, the main goal of critical pedagogy as a teaching strategy in the classroom is to develop a student's critique of social oppression and instill a desire to change their immediate social conditions through action (Freire, 1970). Teachers utilizing critical pedagogy in their practice acknowledge that their classroom is not a neutral learning space (Shor, 1992) and they understand that they have a duty to interrogate power structures (McLaren, 2003) to also instill this skill within their students so they can have

hope to construct a more just society on their terms (Darder, 2002).

As their principal and also their teacher, I understood that it was my duty to instill these skills of critiquing social oppression and empowering them to have access to real power to change their communities. Chubs, Intelligent Hoodlum, and Nahui Xinachtli all exhibited high levels of analysis and were able to articulate their own oppressive conditions as well as the larger macro level oppressive systems that existed beyond themselves. At the individual level, all three of them examined how their place in society as young Men of Color was controlled by larger systems of power that often dictated their educational and personal outcomes in life.

As a young Black male, Chubs was fully aware of the oppression that he was challenged with on a daily basis living in a society that often perceives him as a threat to Whites. What the research seminar class did for him was confirm his ideas that he held before class, and most importantly provide him a framework of analysis for him to more precisely name his oppression. Thus, Freire's (1970) idea of naming your own oppression and then creating plans to eradicate it from your life were true for Chubs.

They were also true for Intelligent Hoodlum and Nahui Xinachtli, who understood their individual oppression as Latino males. As a result of the research seminar class, they gained a deeper understanding of how to examine oppression in their lives when provided with the theoretical tools to articulate it more precisely and how it develops and operates. Education for them is no longer based on the banking theory, which is oppressive (Freire, 1970). They now feel a true sense of empowerment where they are in a partnership with their teacher to develop initiatives that will assist in reducing oppressive conditions in their communities.

Despite similarities in how Nahui Xinachtli and Intelligent Hoodlum arrived at deeper levels of understanding of their oppression, there was a major difference in how Intelligent Hoodlum and Nahui Xinachtli viewed their communities, particularly the street life they once lived when both were involved in gangs. For Intelligent Hoodlum, he perceived the streets as oppressive and wanted to liberate himself from this previous life (interrogating the power structure of street life, particularly as it relates to gangs and drug dealing). As he said, "I'm not trying to glamorize the hood, I'm not ashamed of my past life, but I don't want any part of it any more" (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012).

On the other hand, Nahui Xinachtli separated himself from street life in a different way. Though similar to Intelligent Hoodlum in wanting to cut past ties to gang life, he was not making an effort to liberate himself from the neighborhood. Instead, Nahui Xinachtli wanted to remain in his neighborhood and improve it. Nahui Xinachtli wanted to share his story with youth who are active in gangs. Intelligent Hoodlum had a desire to work with youth in gangs as well, but through his music and from a distance.

Chubs was similar to Intelligent Hoodlum since he found himself working for social justice outside of his community (the graffiti community), but still staying connected through his newly found positional power as a graphic designer. Similar to Intelligent Hoodlum, who separated himself from the streets, Chubs finds himself in the same situation but was not completely severing ties with his graffiti community. Chubs was always attempting to find opportunities for them to acquire jobs where they can work legally and not risk being arrested for painting freeway walls. Chubs sometimes did not understand why his graffiti community members limited themselves in making illegal art,

but did respect their reservation for not wanting to compromise their integrity[19] as graffiti artists. Therefore, similar to how Intelligent Hoodlum changed his exterior clothing to assimilate into what he defined as professional attire (when he felt a need to dress professional for our public presentations for the research seminar), Chubs has changed his clothes so to speak in that his exterior clothing (in this sense clothing for Chubs is the presentation of his artwork in a non-graffiti artist environment) was more acceptable. His artwork is no longer on freeway walls and can now be enjoyed by wider audiences. Chubs has added to his artistic palette and has grown as an artist. His spray cans were still around, but he was now incorporating his skills as a graffiti artist into more mainstream art, and opening doors are for himself professionally.

As I conclude this integrated portrait of Intelligent Hoodlum, Chubs, and Nahui Xinachtli, it provides me great satisfaction that they have developed strong critical lens of their own oppressive conditions as well as how it relates to their larger communities. Knowing all three of these young men before the research seminar class and where they were in their life at the beginning of this journey toward being a more reflective and critically minded human being, had the privilege to witness all of them grow into agents of change. Their passion, dedication, and commitment toward improving their lives are commendable and illustrate the power of critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership tool. Their desire to create social change beyond themselves and the selfless acts that they deliver on a regular basis are the fruits of this labor that we as social justice minded

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[19] For many graffiti artists the integrity of their art is lost if they are no longer completing their masterpieces outside of its originally intended context, public walls and spaces. It is sometimes seen as "selling out" if a graffiti artist wishes to engage in her/his art outside of this context and as a consequence keeps many away from expanding their work beyond this medium.

educators hope will occur with every student as we create critical spaces in our classrooms, schools, and school districts. As a principal of a high school, I had the honor and privilege of working side by side with my students in a way that most administrators rarely seize the opportunity to do. It is a journey for me that has created a deeper commitment to social justice education and has provided me a greater sense of what it means to be a school leader who leads instructional initiatives that touch the souls of our students and not simply prepare them for standardized state exams. In some respects, the research seminar and the findings of this study have also liberated me from my own oppressive state as a school administrator in the midst of a hyper-intensive accountability culture from which most of us as principals have difficulty removing ourselves. Therefore, it is at this time that I turn to my own portrait and begin to answer the sub-questions of this study of how my own leadership initiative of critical pedagogy impacted me in the process.

Portrait 5: Through the Eyes of the Principal

My own journey of creating the research seminar class that would be the vehicle for my critical pedagogical instructional leadership goes back to my 1st year as a principal. Fresh from the halls of my administrative credential and masters program and not far removed from the day-to-day challenges of a full-time high school teacher, I was excited about the possibilities of expanding my success that I had with students in my own classrooms to cast a wider net of social justice from a principal's perspective. However, these same sentiments were not shared with the first school site I was tasked to lead and I often faced a hostile group of teachers that wanted nothing to do with a young Man of Color and his ideas of implementing change around issues of social justice. I

realized early on at this school site that providing libratory opportunities for students was not going to be accepted with open arms. Many of these teachers were heavily invested in the reproduction of social inequality (Anyon, 1981; McDonough, 1997). Deficit ideologies similarly found in Anyon, in which teachers often described their students as "tough" and feeling a sense of nervousness when having to teach in working class schools were often expressed at my first school site. Teachers were quick to place the blame on students' lack of assertiveness, command of the English language, and a poor upbringing by dysfunctional homes rather than examining how they were complicit in creating classrooms that were oppressive by not acknowledging their funds of knowledge. Additionally, if we take McDonough's idea of "entitlement" and examine it through a deficit theory lens (Valencia, 1997) and apply it to some of these teachers I first encountered during my 1st year as a principal, they socially reproduced class based opportunities that were best "fit" for our impoverished students. Thus, these teachers only expected our students to gain access to schools that are within reach of their social class. Consequently, these teachers would rarely encourage our students to pursue college after completing their high school diploma. If they ever encouraged college, they would only suggest junior college and completing an associate degree. Teachers perceived our students as incapable of surviving in competitive educational environments. I often heard teachers express how they had low expectations for this student population.

This culture of low expectations produced by teachers would then filter down to the students, who internalized their inability to compete for space at the top universities in the state. This was apparent when I took some of our students to UCLA where they

shared their research findings on school inequality issues with education doctoral students. As the students walked down the sidewalk of Bruin Plaza, they noticed very few Black or Latina/o people on campus. This confirmed in their minds that the state did not want their community at this university.

Instead of enabling students in the process of liberation, the teachers at my previous school site felt it was their place to "save" our students because these youth do not have the resources to be successful on their own. As a result of the challenges I faced during my 1st year as principal, I developed a professional development plan for all my staff that required them to read articles that emphasized structural inequities and the importance of incorporating students lived experiences. It was my hope that exposure to varying ideas in these articles would help my teachers realize that our students were highly capable of excellence, but are limited because of societal structures that limit their growth. It was also my hope that our school could begin to move our charter school organization forward in thinking beyond our current career technical education focus and also institute a culture of college readiness to create a balanced student who will be prepared for the world of work and access to high education. I was faced with staunch resistance in this initiative, and it was at this point that I knew I had to try something different. I had to provide a venue within the school site that would allow the students to lead this charge of changing the school culture.

It was within this context that I developed the research seminar class. It was my attempt to bring change lead by student voice and research. I learned quickly that the more I filtered social justice oriented initiatives through student voice, the more successful it became over time. Therefore, in this portrait I will describe my own

experiences with the critical pedagogical leadership initiative and in the process answer the three sub-questions of this study:

1. How does a school site leader implement an instructional leadership initiative rooted in critical pedagogy?

2. What is the role of the school leader during a critical pedagogical instructional reform initiative?

3. What kind of effects does a critical pedagogical instructional leadership reform have on a school leader?

I now turn to these sub-questions and begin to answer them, hopefully providing some guidance for current and future leaders thinking of implementing a schoolwide initiative rooted in critical pedagogy. In this process I am not attempting or claim to produce an exhaustive road map on how to implement a critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative, rather this is just my experience and my own unique journey that I traveled and will share with those interested in traveling the road alongside me as I reflect on this experience in my portrait.

Implementation of Critical Pedagogy as an Instructional Leadership Initiative

As described in the previous section of my portrait, I learned early on that I would need the support of the instructional staff if the critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative were to have any chance of a sustained life after my tenure as principal at my first school site. The intention of implementing the initiative was that the research seminar class would eventually become a part of the school culture led by teachers. Therefore teacher support was important to its sustainability. To ensure that the critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative would have long-term support, I

identified two veteran instructional staff member that planned to stay at the school for many years. After identifying these staff members, I needed to quickly develop trust with them if they were going be my allies in building support for this initiative. In my reflective journal that I kept for the purpose of this study, I commented on this process of building trust with the teachers when I first transitioned to the school site:

> It's the first couple of weeks at this school site and I already have two teachers that I think can be great supporters of the research seminar. Malcolm and Cesar are both in the English department and both have a commitment to social justice orientated education. Just by looking at their classroom walls when I first went in I could tell immediately that they would be the teachers to best support at least ideologically what the research seminar would entail. Pictures of Malcolm X, Biggie Smalls[20], and Sub Commander Marcos clearly indicated that Malcolm and Cesar had an understanding of social justice and also were in touch with youth culture. Students often congregated in their classroom during breaks and listened to their music reciting lyrics out loud with Malcolm and Cesar in the classroom. There was a mutual respect that the students had with their teachers illustrated by their level of comfort they displayed with Malcolm and Cesar. The students, Malcolm, and Cesar are all beginning to feel comfortable with me as well with my frequent visits to their classroom during morning and afternoon break. They know that I'm not there on any business related items, rather just to hang out with them and spend time with them on a personal level. The trust is starting to develop with Malcolm and Cesar. (Personal Journal Entry, March 9, 2012)

The trust that I built with Malcolm and Cesar helped me more quickly implement the research seminar class at this second school site that I would lead in late 2010. Toward the end of the second semester that I was at the school site, we already implemented two student cohort groups and presented at UCLA and California State

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[20] Biggie Smalls is a popular hip-hop artist that many of the students at our school site listen to during their breaks and lunches. He was an artist that was popular during the early 1990s, and his popularity among our students today is still high since many of the topics that he discusses in his songs relate to their current lives. Biggie Smalls often raps about growing up poor and the disenfranchised communities of New York City. Therefore, our students had many things in common with Biggie Smalls' stories.

University, Long Beach. Malcolm and Cesar were instrumental in providing me input on which students they thought would be willing to take a class that was based on critical pedagogy. It was in their classroom and in the informal talks that I had with students during morning and afternoon breaks where I also gained insight into the challenges students faced in their diverse neighborhoods throughout the county that our school served.

Taking Time to Listen to Student Voice and Student Concerns

Another important step in implementing the critical pedagogical leadership initiative was incorporating the voice of our students. This was accomplished through the continuing informal conversations I initiated with students during classroom visits and their morning and afternoon breaks, also through formal counseling sessions when requested by their teacher or the student. In my reflective journal, I discussed some of the more memorable discussions that helped me develop the first research seminar at my current school site:

> I find it encouraging and discouraging at the same time when I am having many good conversations with students on campus. I am discouraged because I hear the same problems that were rampant in my community when I was their age that still continue to be a problem. The horrible experiences that they have had with non-caring teachers throughout their educational careers, the lack of positive outlets in the community to keep them engaged in positive activities, the constant harassment of the police. None of the things that I was dealing with as a kid seemed to have gone away. But I do find it encouraging that the students are taking the time to share with me what they would like to see in their classes in the upcoming research class that I will be developing. There is not a shortage of student interest. So far I already have ten students interested in the first cohort that we are developing and they keep coming by my office asking when the class is going to start. I appreciate their excitement to engage in this new class we will offer and the fact that they want to participate and do something about the problems in their community is promising and I feel

> lucky be part of this process and helping them lead their communities to self empowerment. (Personal Journal Entry, March 12, 2012)

From these informal and formal discussions I was able to gain insight into some of the most pressing challenges that our students were experiencing on a regular basis in their communities. What I was providing for these students during these discussions without having my own classroom space was an opportunity to engage in critical dialogue that was often missing from their academics during instructional time. Paulo Freire (1970) discussed the importance of critical dialogue:

> Critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle for liberation. The content of that dialogue can and should vary in accordance with historical conditions and the level at which the oppressed perceive reality. But to substitute monologue, slogans, and communiqués for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication. Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated. (p. 65)

The critical dialogue that we were engaging in during these short breaks between their academic classes offered students a glimpse into my educational philosophy and also an opportunity for me to understand them outside of the context of their lives as students. But it is precisely this area (understanding the lived experiences of students outside of their school context) that most educators miss in the process. This is particularly important in engaging disenfranchised youth as the literature of this study previously mentioned (Camangian, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2007). The critical dialogue that I was having with students was informally creating a community of practice (Fine, 2003) where they were already beginning to gain a sense of trust with me as their principal, and more importantly, as a human being that

they could connect with on a level beyond the school site. The genuine process of my listening to the students as people first and not as students provided me the trust among the student body and created a school culture that supported them in engaging in critical dialogue. Not only did I support this process, I was actively promoting it through the discussions I would have during their morning and afternoon breaks.

Developing Student Based Curriculum and Becoming a Student Advocate in Power Negotiations

Once there was support from the instructional staff and students, the curriculum for the research seminar class could be developed. The topics that students would research in the seminar class were directly integrated from the formal and informal conversations that I had with students over the past couple of months preceding the implementation of the research seminar class. Developing courses with students' lived experiences placed at the center of the class is something that other teachers who utilized critical pedagogy often consider in their planning process (Fine, 2003; Rogers, 2007). However, only in Cammarota and Romero (2009) was there an example of this occurring beyond an individual classroom level at a high school. In this example, Tucson Unified School District's central office was developing courses with students' lived experiences in mind. Indeed this was a great model for other districts to follow for students that are still choosing to stay in a traditional high school environment. However, there is nothing in the research literature where a school that is serving a majority push-out population engaged in such curricular design. The contributions of this study add depth to this research literature by including the experiences of schools serving majority push-out student populations.

Once the curriculum was developed in collaboration with the students, I needed to find opportunities for them to share their research findings. I was able to utilize my positional power as a principal to advocate for our students to have meetings with our central office curriculum team. Additionally, I was able to utilize my larger educational network at local universities with professors that would open their classrooms to our students to present their research findings. In my reflective journal, I documented the positional power and leverage a principal has in advocating for student voice at the central office level:

> It's interesting that the voice of students is often ignored when teachers bring up their issues in core content meetings at the central office. The discussions may occur and the time and space is often allocated to discuss these issues of how to incorporate more student centered curriculum as it relates to ideas of social justice, but that is all that it amounts to; just empty talks. Rarely have I seen a teacher led social justice curriculum initiative successfully implemented in our charter organization. But when I made a couple of calls and emails to people at our central office as the principal everyone was more than willing to listen to what our students had to say. Not only were they willing to listen, but they even established some formal meetings where our students could present their findings at principal meetings. Our students even participated in a curriculum meeting for the social studies team. It was at this point that I knew more than ever that my job as a principal is to provide voice to our student body and be a relentless advocate in the pursuit of allocating them time and space to share what they feel can improve our schools and its practices. (Personal Journal Entry, March 11, 2012)

Although it should not take the positional power of the principal to move forward social justice initiatives, this has been the case with items that teachers have attempted to move forward in our charter school organization. When a lead teacher in the social studies department attempted to create space in a central office curriculum meeting for the possibilities of incorporating ethnic studies he was denied. He was told that it would be too controversial of a topic to discuss from an organizational standpoint. The

curriculum administrators from our central office were concerned that teachers would begin to critique the organization as too progressive if they were to allow a discussion about the possibilities of ethnic studies.

This teacher's experience further supported the idea that my positional power as the school site principal needed to be utilized in power negotiations for students. Although the research literature documents teachers often being advocates for student voice at the central office level and beyond (Camangian, 2009; Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2006), there are no examples of school site principals engaged in similar work. Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing literature--literature that examines critical pedagogy as an instructional strategy in high schools--regarding how school leaders can advocate for student voice within the context of a critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative.

The Role of the Leader in a Critical Pedagogy Instructional Leadership Initiative

The second sub-question relating to my portrait as a leader of this critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative is what my role was during the duration of the research seminar classes. In this section, I will explore my role with the teachers that co-developed the research seminar classes with me. I will also explore the role I assumed with our students. With an analysis of my role in the process of this leadership initiative I hope to share what lessons were learned and what can be improved for subsequent critical pedagogy projects for our school site.

Instructional Leader for Teachers Who Have a Desire to Teach a Seminar

My instructional leadership role for teachers that had a desire to teach a research seminar class was one of the roles I played throughout the duration of this study. The

two teachers that were interested in co-developing the course with me, Malcolm and Cesar, were both in the English department. Their desire stemmed from a strong commitment to social justice oriented education long before I arrived at their school site. However, they did not have administrative support from previous principals to explore the possibilities of utilizing critical pedagogy as an instructional strategy to engage their students. Without the administrative support they did not feel comfortable integrating controversial topics in their classroom. This all changed when I arrived at the campus and I willingly engaged in the role of instructional leader within a critical pedagogical leadership perspective.

During the course of developing one of the research seminar classes, one major areas with which Malcolm and Cesar had challenges was understanding the ideological framework of critical pedagogy. The actual topics that students would research were easier for Malcolm and Cesar to understand since we collaborated with our students to generate possible research topics. However, every research seminar class would incorporate sociological theory for students to utilize as a framework to analyze their data. Learning sociological theory for Malcolm and Cesar was the challenging part of designing the course. I commented in my reflective journal on one of the discussions I had with them early on in the designing of the first research seminar class they would assist with:

> This first meeting with Malcolm and Cesar went really well. They were very excited about the possibilities of helping me teach a research seminar class. Previous administrators have never shown this must interest in instructional leadership and they still could not believe that I would be willing to co-teach a class with them. All they knew previously were administrators that would visit classrooms once a week and give them hardly any feedback on their teaching practice. So not only were they

> getting an instructional leader with me, they would also have a co-teacher with them in the classroom every day learning right along side with them in this new class we would develop together. In this conversation they did express their concern about not knowing too much about theory and having never implemented it into their teaching practice. I let them know that I would help them with this and it would become easier as we practiced it together. (Personal Journal Entry, March 10, 2012)

What is key in this passage as I reflect on it now is their willingness to participate and learn sociological theory. One of the major obstacles that educators experience is their lack of desire to incorporate new theoretical frameworks to add to their teaching practice. Previous literature illustrates this point, especially when the new theory incorporates notions of critical pedagogy that the teacher has to learn (Kincheloe, 2008; Rodriguez, 2008; Tan, 2009; Yang, 2009). Malcolm and Cesar had both been in the field of education more than 5 years. Malcolm had been a classroom teacher for 10 years. It was impressive and also encouraging that despite what the literature suggests about educators not wanting to engage in new teaching practices that are rooted in critical pedagogy, they were both the most intense proponents of this instructional initiative on our campus. It further suggests that the role of the principal as instructional leader with a critical pedagogical perspective should make time to co-develop the curriculum with the teachers who are considered allies in the process of implementing the change.

My role with students who participated in the research seminar was more than just their teacher. I had no idea when I first started teaching the research seminar class what type of role I would play other than instructing them during class time. However, what did occur during the research seminar class was that I became their teacher, mentor, counselor, and advocate. The support and the role that I would play depended on what part of the research seminar class we were currently engaged in. My level of

commitment to my students went beyond the 1 hour of class time that we had each day. Their needs came unannounced and they often asked their teachers if they could be released from their content classes to have more in-depth conversations with me about their research project. In one of my reflective journals, I wrote about how one of the students came to my office panicked about his project:

> Nahui Xinachtli came to my office during the first week of his research seminar class. He was very concerned about the readings of Paulo Freire and some of the language that was in this book. I sat down with him and we began to read pages out of the Freire's book together. When he did not understand a word that Freire was using in the chapter, we looked up the word together in the dictionary. We continued reading together and after every word he didn't understand we would just look it up. It got to the point where he was coming back to my office with his dictionary in hand and would just ask for confirmation on whether he had the correct meaning of the word in the context that it was being utilized in Freire's writing. Nahui Xinachtli became really fluent in reading Freire's text. He understood it so well that he began internalizing some of the language and memorizing lines from the chapter and texting it to me at all points of the day. Nahui Xinachtli became obsessed with Freire's ideas and even thanked me formally for always being there to help clarify the readings by giving me a "Super Principal" certificate. It was the first award I ever received from a student and it made me feel really honored to be their principal. (Personal Journal Entry, March 11, 2012)

This journal entry illustrates how my various roles with my students would take many shapes and forms depending on their needs. Here, this student came to my office initially needing help understanding vocabulary from his readings. However, after subsequent visits to my office for additional assistance, we went beyond defining words. We would have long conversations about the meaning of certain passages that resonated within Nahui Xinachtli's life. The initial vocabulary tutoring sessions became a springboard for deeper analysis of the text. Nahui Xinachtli would sometimes stop by my office to simply talk about his life and the positive and negative things that were

occurring. I became his mentor in certain situations and he would ask for advice regarding decisions he should make when street life would attempt to reengage him in gang life. I would never directly tell him what to do. Rather, I would answer his question with a question and then incorporate Freire's (1970) concept that he was learning. I would often say to him, "What would Freire say if he was alive today and how can this impact your decision process?" I intentionally utilized this critical thinking process with Nahui Xinachtli so that he could develop his understanding both for the text and of his life decisions.

In sum, my role with students varied based on the needs that each one had at a particular moment in the process of the research seminar class. As we continue to offer the research seminar--we currently have six students completing their research and preparing for a presentation of their findings--some of the students have needed counseling with personal challenges they are having in their life which go beyond the topic of the research seminar. As they share more freely and spend more time talking with me during class, the trust that I am able to build with students would not be possible if I was not their teacher. It is a privilege for me to allocate time to teach a research seminar course considering the daily responsibilities that come with being a high school principal.

The Personal and Professional Impact of My Critical Pedagogical Leadership Initiative

The impact that this leadership initiative had on me can be found in my journal in which I constantly reflected on the humanistic side of education that is often lost in the midst of the day-to-day struggles to strike a balance as a school site principal. The demands from numerous stakeholders are enormous for a school site principal in today's

age of hyperaccountability. It is a position that has often made me question why I still continue within the context of the current times in education. In a journal entry, I reflected on my questioning process after having a very powerful discussion with a group of my research seminar students about Freire's (1970) idea of humanization and dehumanization:

> The conversation that we had today in class was so powerful! The students were highly engaged in the topic of education and whether it is a humanizing or dehumanizing process. When we all had a complete understanding of what dehumanization and humanization meant, most of the students pointed to many interactions that they had over the course of their schooling which were dehumanizing. They said they often just felt like a number in the bigger system of high schools. They said that the vibe of no one cared for their wellbeing, let alone their education, was a typical feeling they held from their past schooling experience. On a personal level it had me reflect on whether schools and society are just spending too much time testing and worrying about the numbers and losing the bigger picture of treating our students like human beings. I feel at times that I am trapped in the middle as a principal and my demands that I focus on the very system of numbers that often makes students feel dehumanized in their educational process. I am so happy that I am teaching this class, because it is reaffirming why I went into education. It has solidified why I am here; to make schools a better place for students where they feel like a human being. A human being who is provided a true sense of power to liberate themselves from oppressive conditions that they are subjected to on a daily basis. (Personal Journal Entry, March 12, 2012)

This process of examining the humanization and dehumanization would not have been possible if I did not actively co-teach the research seminar class. I could have elected to be a casual observer and coached the teachers who helped me with leading the seminar class. Yet, I would not have had any of these personal reflections about the process of education. This reflection on education and the humanity or inhumanity about systems that we operate is a rare activity that I would never have time to do if I did not teach this class. Teaching the research seminar class has kept me grounded in my own

reasons for entering the profession. It is a priceless gift that I have provided myself with on a personal level, which keeps me passionate about the other parts of my job that are not as connected to the student body. Leading and teaching the research seminar class has provided me the day-to-day passion that I need to continue to move forward as a social justice minded principal. Leading a critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative ensures that I am always examining whether my generosity toward students is genuine or just a false sense of charity (Freire, 1970) where handouts are given but no real skills are taught to them so they can liberate themselves.

On a professional level, the impact that leading the critical pedagogical leadership initiative has resulted in me becoming our charter school organization's expert on social justice oriented curriculum and leadership. The following is a list of the meetings and conferences that I was invited to facilitate:

1. Co-facilitator of a presentation, "Critical Pedagogy in Educational Leadership", at a national conference for at-risk students.

2. Co-facilitator of a webinar training, "How to Create More Culturally Responsive Social Studies Classrooms" with our charter organization's teachers.

3. Facilitator of a presentation, "Critical Pedagogy as a Tool for Instructional Leadership", for an out-of-state public university in the mid-west.

4. Informally mentoring other principals and teachers within our charter organization on how to implement and sustain social justice orientated initiatives at their school sites.

5. Co-facilitating a presentation, "Critical Pedagogy in Practice", for our educational leadership doctoral program.

Based on all of the professional opportunities that have emerged from implementing the critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative on my campus, it is apparent that the sphere of influence has gone beyond the walls of our school site. The amount of e-mails and calls that I have received from teachers and principals in our organization illustrates that there is a desire amongst others for implementing social justice orientated curriculum and instruction. I had reflected on this in my personal journal:

> The amount of requests within our organization on how our research seminar class has been developed is a promising thing to hear from others. It shows that all it took was a vocal leader from one of our school sites to constantly move an initiative like this forward. There are teachers and principals who have been waiting for this type of work to be publicly discussed in larger forums outside of our informal circles of like-minded individuals. Our central office has invited me and my students to discuss some of our best practices from our school site as they relate to critical pedagogy. The students have been instrumental in many of these discussions and I applaud them for their efforts. They have been more than willing to participate in the many discussions both in person and online to share the experiences that they have participated with during the research seminar class. As much as this has been a personal journey for me as their principal, it is truly the students and their courage and their voice that has moved our initiative forward. It has also been a journey with our central office, which has honored and respected our students' voice in their educational journey. (Personal Journal Entry, March 13, 2012)

These professional opportunities have provided me access to venues within our organization to incorporate student voice where it has often been absent in the past. Our students' voices and their research findings from the various research seminars they participated in have provided professional development growth opportunities for their teachers and administrators that they have had critical dialogue with. Although I can claim these professional opportunities as solely mine, it would not be correct to identify

them as just my own. Without the students willingly participating in many of these meetings, the power of the findings from the research seminar classes would have been diminished. Since our charter organization has a tremendous amount of respect for student voice and genuinely listens and attempts to implement some of their suggestions where applicable, this work could not have been accomplished without them. Our students' tireless efforts to perfect their presentations was the only reason why I was able to have any positive outcomes for me professionally. I have been a staunch supporter of their efforts in the process of assisting them for their presentations but it was them who endured the long hours of collaborating with each other and preparing their work that was presented to multiple stakeholders in our charter organization. They are the true leaders in this study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The key findings in this study align with the current literature on critical pedagogy as an instructional strategy to reengage students in urban schools. Current critical pedagogy literature as it relates to instructional practices has documented at length the importance of knowing who your students are and providing them an opportunity to have a dialogic experience in the classroom based on relevant issues to their lives (Camangian, 2009; Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Freire, 1970; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2006). Freire's seminal study of the oppressed peasantry in Brazil established early on that only through discussion and dialogue would students have an opportunity to name their oppression and think of ways of liberating themselves from it. Critical praxis is built on the idea of constant dialoguing between teacher and student and only through this process can the oppressed make meaning of larger systemic problems in society to work to dismantle them for positive change in their community. Thus, the findings here in this study further solidify the need for educational leaders to know their students, which can only occur through a dialogic classroom space where they are on an equal playing field with them. Ideally the leader should be actively engaged in the teaching process or at a minimum co-developing the curriculum and instruction with their teachers. At this time there is nothing in the literature that examines a school principal's

role in the process of implementing a critical pedagogical initiative. Thus, this study provides an example of how one school principal lead such an initiative.

The student findings in this study revealed data that supports the existing literature in critical pedagogy as it relates to student learning. The literature details how students involved in classrooms that utilize critical pedagogy are intrinsically motivated to learn about their world within the context of a larger society (Akom et al., 2008; Camangian, 2009; Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006a; Rogers et al., 2006). Additionally the findings in this study further developed the literature that discusses how critical pedagogy as an instructional practice motivates students to have a desire to engage in their community to make positive change (Akom et al., 2008; Camangian, 2009; Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers et al., 2006). Finally, the student findings illustrated varying levels of transformative resistance (Sorlorzano, 2001) as each one of these young men began a journey of becoming more critically conscious of their own oppression at an individual and community level. Their participation in the research seminar class provided them an opportunity to explore the process of critical praxis (Freire, 1970) and develop a plan of action to reduce oppressive conditions.

Finally, the findings relating to my role as the principal of a critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative revealed that when students are provided the opportunity to engage in academic work related to notions of critical pedagogy they thrive and excel. Moreover, it provided me an opportunity to examine my own leadership and whether we as a school site are engaged in humanizing or dehumanizing (Freire, 1970) teaching practices for classroom instruction. Leading this initiative also provided me an opportunity to develop and implement a curriculum that is based in true

generosity (Freire, 1970) by empowering our students with the tools to liberate themselves from oppressive conditions on their terms.

The critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative provided me the time to reflect as a leader that normally does not occur when I am not involved in teaching a class. Teaching the research seminar class helped me reexamine the reasons why I became an educator and assess whether my leadership practices are still in alignment with a libratory educational model. The reflective journal that I kept throughout the process of teaching the research seminar class provided me the opportunity to assess my level of commitment to a libratory educational model. It not only helped me make adjustments when I was teaching the class, but it also helped me plan action steps to have meetings with central office administrators where our students were included in the meetings. This was evident in a passage in one of my reflective journal entries:

> I am so proud of our students who just completed a successful power point presentation to these graduate students on their educational experiences. Our students answered the questions so well at the end. The graduate students asked them to elaborate on their school experiences and they did an excellent job answering all of them completely. The discussion after the presentation on the way back to our campus was inspiring. All of our students could not wait to present to the next group of people. I did not have any other group in mind for them to present to but they kept asking which group of people we would speak to next. I think the next group they speak to will be school site principals at an upcoming meeting that will take place on our campus. Since we will be hosting this principal meeting I am going to meet with our Director of principals to request that our students be included on the agenda since they are very excited to present to another group. It will also be a great place for them to share their research findings with individuals within our organization that have positional power to incorporate some of their suggestions. I am looking forward to hearing the responses from some of my colleagues when our students present their findings. (Personal Journal Entry, March 12, 2012)

When the students presented to the other school principals in our organization many of them approached with me with questions after the meeting was over. This was

the beginning of many others in my organization asking for advice on incorporating a critical pedagogical research seminar at their school site. Thus, one of the conclusions from this study was the professional expertise that many in our organization began to seek out since I have had success in implementing the first course that was rooted in critical pedagogy. Currently, there was a growing number of teachers in our organization who had the desire to teach more social justice oriented lessons in their classrooms but did not have anyone to discuss it with. This changed when many of our teachers heard about the students' recent successes in our research seminar class. This has been a very exciting process both for me professionally and for the growth of our organization. The professional growth for me individually is a great feeling that others in our organization have been very open to these new possibilities with implementing similar initiatives at their school site. I am also excited for our other students throughout our charter organization that will have the opportunity to engage in a libratory education.

Transformational learning and leadership as described by Freire (1970) also informs some of my current leadership practices as a high school principal. Transformational leaders are always encouraging others to think beyond their own personal interests to reach a larger organizational or societal goal (Freire, 1970). Transformational leaders are constantly identifying the needs of each individual on the team and aligning their passions and interests to the larger organizational goals that is attempting to be accomplished within the context of a liberating instructional approach for students. Therefore at our school, the key question that I am always asking myself is: "What is each staff member's passion and interest and how can it align with a critical pedagogical approach that interrogates systems of oppression?" This is one of my largest

challenges as it requires that I foster enough trust with each of my teachers and that a vision of social justice is one that is worth investing in, and then identifying what key skill sets and qualities each of them has within them to begin to build their individual capacity for teaching for social justice in their content area. Thus, in describing the difficult process of transformation in educational systems, Paulo Freire (1970) notes the following to illustrate the pain and struggle that results from change. He writes: "[l]iberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one. The man or woman who emerges is a new person, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanization of all people" (p. 49). Indeed, the struggle for liberation is not an easy one. But it is my hope that through constant reflection and practice of leadership based in critical pedagogy that all of our teachers will eventually realize the potential of such an instructional approach. As we have seen with this study, it has the potential to ignite a passion in our students not just to improve their own lives, but also to improve entire communities. Through a libratory education, both student and teacher are empowered because they each believe that they have the capacity to change oppressed communities by fighting and struggling with the people as collaborative partners in liberation.

Conclusions

Based on the research questions initially asked at the beginning of this study, what follows are overall conclusions of the findings that emerged. For the purposes of reviewing the research questions they are stated here:

Central Research Question--How does critical pedagogy as an instructional leadership model impact student academic and personal development in a small urban charter high school?

Sub-Questions—1. How does a school site leader implement an instructional leadership initiative rooted in critical pedagogy?

2. What is the role of the school leader during a critical pedagogical instructional reform initiative?

3. What kind of effects does a critical pedagogical instructional leadership reform have on a school leader?

In regards to the essential research question we have found that critical pedagogy has positively impacted students on a personal and academic level. Considering that all of our students at our school are poor and predominately Students of Color, the findings suggest that critical pedagogy is an effective instructional approach to meet their needs as oppressed people. Our students have experienced oppression on many levels--racial, gender, economic, sexual orientation, immigrant status--but have never been provided a framework to understand their collective experience before the implementation of the research seminar class. These talks about oppression would permeate through our school halls on breaks, lunches, after school, and during instructional time. They would also impact the students' ability to focus on their academics during instructional time since there was no formal venue for them to dialogue about these challenges with oppression. Thus, many of our students blamed themselves and their lack of "aptitude" for school to explain their past failure in education. Nahui Xinachtli commented on this in one of his interviews:

> Before I took the research seminar class, a lot of our talk amongst ourselves as students was blaming ourselves for doing bad in school. This is true and we are all responsible for our individual actions of when we choose to participate or not participate in school assignments. It was my choice not to pay attention in class. And it was my choice to not go to school anymore and just run the streets with my

> gang associates. But when it happens all the time to the same types of people, like us Brown and Black communities, you have to start looking at it differently. I knew we weren't all stupid and it wasn't in our culture to not like school. Both our communities come from a long history of building pyramids and having great civilizations before colonization. Like Immortal Technique says we have only known poverty for the last five hundred years and 1492 was the beginning of our end as we knew our lives as kings and queens. I began to understand through the research seminar class that it was bigger than just us as individuals failing in school even though the system is set up for us to think it's our fault. And it works because most of us still think it's all of our fault when we don't have a class like the research seminar to look at the bigger picture of oppression. (Nahui Xinachtli Interview 3, March 11, 2012)

What we are beginning to see in our early stages of our reform efforts is that students are beginning to ask poignant questions about the institutional culture of schools. They are becoming critical social beings who are not afraid to dream a different way of living. Additionally, they are questioning the quality of the previous schools they attended. Therefore, through constant critical dialogue about these structural conditions, they understand that it is the institution of schools that have refused to change and meet their needs as learners. We are also finding that through a critical pedagogical approach in the classroom, students are gaining more academic confidence in their other course offerings. Through the public speaking, reading professional journal articles and books that are usually only found in college graduate classes, and opportunities to suggest new policy changes to people in power, the research seminar class has provided students academic confidence. The academic confidence the students from this study exhibited were at their highest levels in their entire academic careers. Intelligent Hoodlum reflected on the academic confidence that he gained from the research seminar class:

> I now know that I can do anything if I just set my mind to it. I was challenged to do some of the toughest things in my life during the research seminar class. I read things that would have normally intimidated me into not reading them at all. I had to participate in a group of people and share things that were normally

> uncomfortable for me to share like my failures in school and other negative experiences from my early years in school. But what I began to see are patterns with all of us and that I was not alone in the ways that I was treated in school. It was eye opening, sad, and painful all at the same time. We were angry together that these things happened to all of us but also had a sense of community that we could change things for the better because you were giving us a chance to speak to people that could change the way things are run in schools. The confidence that I gained in this class just began to go to other classes, especially in math. I knew I was smart, and I knew that I could do anything now that I completed your class. (Intelligent Hoodlum Interview 3, March 14, 2012).

The academic confidence that Intelligent Hoodlum exhibited through his participation in the research seminar class was something that his peers also experienced as well. The findings suggest that that the academic confidence that all three students experienced was something that would carry over to all aspects of their academic lives. Critical pedagogy instructional practices provided each of them a taste of academic success and empowerment not previously experienced in past courses. It was a window into their soul through topics that genuinely interested them and the empowerment in speaking with others that could assist in creating policy change to improve their oppressive conditions.

In regards to the sub-questions that are addressed for this study, the critical pedagogical instructional leadership initiative also had a positive impact on me as the school site leader. Personally, this leadership initiative made me more aware of the overall educational process and the power as leaders to shape it as a humanizing or dehumanizing experience for our students and teachers. It is easy as a school site principal to allow the age of hyperaccountability that we currently live with to dictate a more dehumanizing experience for our students and teachers at our school site. The directives from our central office, which are in turn due to the larger accountability

system we are facing at the state and federal level, can make the work of the school principal overwhelming. The principal can then begin to dehumanize the process of education because of all the mandates that are coming from stakeholders beyond the school site. Teaching the research seminar provided me a rare opportunity during my day as an administrator to reflect on how we are currently servicing our students at our school site. It began an internal dialogue for me where I was constantly assessing whether our instructional practices were more aligned with humanizing processes or dehumanizing ones.

This constant critical reflection that I was participating with on a daily basis when teaching the research seminar class provided me insight in other parts of my job as a school principal. It provided me context about larger curricular changes that needed to occur, particularly in our senior project assignments where elements of critical pedagogy would improve the overall experience with these projects to make them more meaningful for students. The constant critical reflection also made me an asset to our larger organization for other school site principals and teachers that wanted to implement similar critical pedagogical practices within their classrooms. I was able to answer their questions about our successes at our school thoroughly and precisely since I was journaling about the entire experience for this study. The journal memos became my reference guide for questions that others would ask when they were attempting to initiate a similar project in their classroom. The act of documenting my experiences provided me a living framework that could be utilized at any time to answer questions that others had, or to reflect for myself for future research seminar ideas I wanted to incorporate for the next class I would teach.

Implications

The implications that emerged from this study can assist in developing future leadership practice with respect to reengaging youth in their academic studies within small urban school environments. The findings suggest that there may be a need to further expand critical pedagogy as an instructional practice in more school settings, particularly schools that are serving predominately poor Students of Color. The students have exhibited both personal and academic growth as a result of the critical pedagogical instructional leadership goal. The initiative also had a positive impact on me as the school leader and the teachers who collaborated with me in designing the research seminar course. It provided me a hands-on experience that could only be gained through teaching a class and interacting with students on a daily basis within this classroom context.

At the central office level, school districts with large lower socioeconomically disadvantaged student populations could benefit if they began to invest monies in professional development that is aligned with critical pedagogical instructional practices. Teachers and school site principals need to be developed in this area, particularly in large urban centers where student disengagement continues to be a problem. Once a commitment has been made by school districts to develop their teachers and principals to utilize critical pedagogical instructional practices, more data can be analyzed to further extend the current literature. This would further assist the central office in their work to improve instructional practices at the school site level with more data to analyze and the themes that would emerge from more student interviews. The implications for the relationship between the school sites and the central office would also provide an

opportunity for the school site to foster possibly a more effective working relationship since the central office would be actively engaged in policy change based on feedback from student findings. It could provide the central office a higher level of trust and respect for the school sites similar to how my participation in the research seminar class as the students' teachers gave me more respect. I was no longer just an administrator but also a practicing teacher. The central office has a similar opportunity here if they were to incorporate a longitudinal study of how critical pedagogy could positively impact more students if this instructional leadership initiative were dispersed organizationally.

Another implication of this study is that school principals benefit greatly from keeping a reflective journal on their instructional practices as a school site leader. My reflective journal provided me documentation and a formal way to assess how I was impacting student learning in the research seminar class. The reflective journal became a body of work that would provide me ideas for my immediate group of students that I was teaching but also provided me ideas for the next research seminar class that I would teach at a later time. I was constantly writing down ideas that would come from students and teachers both in and out of class in my reflective journal. It was challenging to keep all the information that is disseminated on a daily basis. The reflective journal was something that assisted me in keeping all the information for my instructional leadership practices in one place.

Before the research seminar, I would attempt to write items down once a week from classroom observations. However, a lot of ideas would be lost, particularly the information that I was gathering at the beginning of the week. When it was time to reflect on these items on a Friday afternoon when the week was ending, I found it

difficult to recollect the ideas that students and teachers provided me earlier that week due to the high volume of daily information being disseminated.

An implication from this study is that school site principals can improve their instructional leadership through keeping a daily journal of thoughts even if the ideas are not complete. It helped me teach my research seminar class more effectively, especially if students were providing feedback along the way, and it allowed me to make adjustments to my teaching and developing of the class along the way. It provided the students immediate feedback if something was missing from our classroom discussions, and I could respond to it more quickly with the initial thought written down in my reflective journal.

Recommendations for Policy or Practice

One of the first recommendations based on the findings of this study is all school site principals are encouraged to teach a research seminar class rooted in critical pedagogy. School site principals can improve their instructional leadership, if they practiced their craft in the classroom and thus lead by example for their teachers. I have found through this study that my teachers respect my instructional leadership more because I currently make time in my schedule to teach. Indeed our duties and responsibilities as school site principals are overflowing with other items that deserve our attention and time. School site principals may argue that there is no time to teach a class and other parts of their job would suffer as a result. However, based on the findings of this study, I would respond that instructional leadership can be improved through teaching a research seminar class. A school site principal can gain more respect with her or his teachers and increase the probability of effective dialogue with their teachers about

student learning if they are teaching themselves. Having past teaching experience is often not enough to gain the respect of an instructional leader of teachers. Every school site principal can benefit from having classroom experience with the students their current teachers are serving, which can improve instructional practices.

In addition to school site principals teaching a class, I also suggest they utilize critical pedagogy in their instructional practices. The school site principal is in the most powerful position on a school campus and has a unique opportunity to interrogate power structures in ways that classroom teachers do not. A principal has the power to create school culture from her or his office and if teachers see the principal teaching a class rooted in critical pedagogy, it may symbolize to them that she or he values student voice. It is suggested that principals acknowledge the voice and concerns of their students and one of the most effective ways that I have found is through the research seminar class.

For example, in one of the research seminar classes I taught that acknowledged students' voice, I created a music curriculum that provided them an opportunity to express their ideas and stories through lyrical development and expression. Our students were able to write their musical lyrics and record themselves using industry standard recording computer programs. This process allowed students to see the importance of developing lyrical content to express their emotions and ultimately share with their teachers and peers as well as hands on experience with music production preparing them for future employment in recording studios. Therefore, this music curriculum is culturally relevant because it acknowledges youth culture. The research seminar class was also critical in nature, where we examined mainstream hip hop music and the negative stereotypes and themes that they would often be depicted of the Black

community. Students gained skills in interrogating systemic oppression in hip hop music and developed more honest and genuine stories based on their lived experiences that would counter the stereotypes found in mainstream songs. The research seminar class where we incorporated hip hop music is also an example of utilizing Freire's (1970) concept of libratory education since we were empowering students to articulate ideas on their terms and utilizing it as a scaffolding tool into teaching the academic content required by the state standards. Not only were the students writing and recording their own songs, but they were engaged in critical praxis since the culminating project was to share their songs of freedom and justice with a larger audience in developing and promoting a show for the entire campus.

A second recommendation that I would encourage all principals to engage in is collaborating with their teachers to foster critical pedagogy instructional approaches in their content areas. Currently our teachers are collaborating to create lesson plans that focus on issues that impact the lives of students and their communities. This type of instructional approach is in line with my social justice leadership development because the students' experiences are at the center of curricular and instructional design. For example, in about 6 months students will engage in activities that focus on police brutality to honor victims that have experienced harassment and brutality as a result of police misconduct. This curriculum is a result of students voicing the need to discuss how their communities are affected by police misconduct. Initial discussions of the problem of police brutality occurred through my continuing informal dialogue with students during classroom observations, lunchtime duties, and one-on-one talks during counseling sessions when students are having academic or social challenges that impede

their academic progress. Teachers across all subject areas are beginning to use critical pedagogy as their instructional approach to incorporate police brutality in their lessons for that day. Therefore, this lesson, which was initiated by a student concern, is a clear example of critical pedagogy in practice at our school site.

A third recommendation based on the findings of this study is for school site principals to create opportunities for their students to engage in positive forms of resistance. Critical pedagogy teaching strategies are often successful in reengaging high school urban youth due to their power to harness positive forms of resistance (Solorzano, 2001) in students.

This transformative resistance is illustrated in several previous studies. In Yang's (2009) implementation of a social justice charter school in Oakland, he engaged his students in the fight for educational equity in their own school district. Akom, Ginwright, and Cammarota (2008) utilized critical pedagogy to create an urban youth group called Youth as Public Intellectuals, a collaboration with Oakland and Berkeley Unified School Districts to document the challenges of urban life in their communities and to develop voices of resistance to transform city policy that addressed their oppressed lived conditions. Cammarota and Romero (2009) implemented a district wide initiative to empower Latina/o youth to challenge and resist oppressive lived conditions in Arizona, meeting with policy makers to propose changes in educational reform of their schools. Finally, at the UCLA Summer Research Seminars, (Duncan-Andrade, 2006, 2007; Morrell, 2006; Rogers, 2006) students researched school inequity in their Los Angeles Unified School District and described their findings to district administrators and the educational research community at the American Educational Research Association

(AERA) conference, discussing how they resist the current reform structures in their district and seek to transform policy based on their findings.

In this study I have found that the critical pedagogy utilized through the research seminar has created opportunities for students to positively resist forms of oppression in their lives. Nahui Xinachtli, Intelligent Hoodlum, and Chubs all exhibited forms of transformative resistance through their participation in the research seminar. They were able to articulate the oppressive conditions that existed in their lives previously in ways that were liberating. Similar to the students in the other studies mentioned, Nahui Xinachtli, Intelligent Hoodulum, and Chubs were now in a better position academically to articulate their needs for freedom. The action plans that they created and the opportunity to discuss their policy suggestions with people in positions of power to change policy provided them an opportunity to be transformative in their resistance against oppression in their lives.

A final suggestion that I am proposing is to our curriculum leadership team within my charter school organization. Specifically, I will address suggestions that would enhance our current senior project assignments by incorporating more aspects of critical pedagogy within these projects. A description of each senior project that can be revised based on the findings of this study follows:

Senior Project 1: Designing a House in AutoCAD that is Environmentally Conscious--The current house design for senior project number one requires students to learn engineering software AutoCad to create their own dream home. It is a way to apply mathematical concepts that they have learned throughout the course of their studies and apply them to a real life skill of architectural design within a technology platform.

Currently there is no opportunity for the student to incorporate ideas of environmentalism within the project, which could further promote a critical pedagogical approach to the project. It would provide opportunities for students to interrogate systems of oppression as they relate to how the current process of homes are designed and built. One way to incorporate an environmental analysis into this project would be for students to write an essay describing how their home will be eco-friendly in the products that are used to construct the home. Students would be required to conduct research on companies that provide eco-friendly products to design homes.

Senior Project 2: Writing a Historical Newsletter that is Social Justice Minded--Senior Project 2 is the historical newsletter. Currently, students are required to choose either a decade in history or a theme in history and write five individual research essays that are aligned to the decade of their choice or the historical theme. Many students consider this project a waste of their time because it is often irrelevant to their lives.

A redesign of the historical newsletter would require students to focus on a problem in their community that is relevant to their lives. Some examples of this might be (a) the Spook Hunters Gang and how they contributed to the development of Black gangs in South Central Los Angeles, (b) racially restrictive covenants and their impact on the segregation of Los Angeles neighborhoods, and (c) the CIA's involvement in smuggling cocaine into Los Angeles during the 1980s. All of these topics have been suggested by students who have participated in my research seminar class, and they are all topics that they deemed worthy to study in depth.

Applying this model of action research to our school could be a good alternative senior project for students who are more interested in researching a current problem in

their neighborhood schools rather than a historical newsletter. This could be an enlightening process for our students to begin to understand the systemic oppression that occurs in their local schools, which contribute to their academic failure. It could further develop their understanding of how the schooling process is inequitable for Students of Color such as themselves and possibly inspire them to want to make positive changes in their communities for a more just educational system.

Senior Project 3: Social Responsibility Play & Movie or Performance Poetry--Senior Project 3, the social responsibility play, is the only senior project that is currently aligned with critical pedagogical learning outcomes. Students write their own movie script relating to a larger social responsibility theme. However, most of the themes that students currently choose are usually developed from a deficit framework (Valenzuela, 1999) where students discuss their own tragic experiences of gang activity, drug addition, and broken homes. Although these are real experiences and challenges that often prevent our students from moving forward in their education, the current curriculum does not provide a framework to interrogate the larger systemic social processes that are in place that help contribute to problems such as gang violence, drug addiction, and broken homes.

Applying the ideas of Solorzano's transformative resistance (Solorzano, 2001) to our current senior project play could assist our students and teachers to re-frame the student stories that students describe in a more empowered fashion. Thus, a student who develops a script about the socially irresponsible activity of gangs can look at the problem in a broader social context and incorporate what are the causes of gang conflict in their local neighborhood. Additionally, the student can take the concept of gangs and

apply it more broadly to examine how our government and larger corporations act in similar ways to gangs in their neighborhoods to implement and sustain oppressive conditions on a much broader scale. Within the context of drug addiction, a student can analyze the larger social conditions that people in their neighborhoods experience that push people to use drugs. Thus, the student is looking both at individual accountability for choosing to participate in these socially irresponsible activities but also analyzing the larger social systems in place that produce lived conditions that allow for these types of activities to exist.

As an alternative to writing a movie script, students can also develop poetry and perform it for their peers and teachers. Camangian (2008) utilized performance poetry to reengage disconnected youth in a relevant and meaningful way in high school English class. Students would develop critical literacy skills through the examination of their oppressed lived experiences and describe their lives in spoken word performance pieces. This similar type of critical pedagogical approach was utilized by Duncan-Andrade (2004) who also taught high school English in Oakland. With this as an option for the social responsibility play, it would provide students who are skilled at delivering performance pieces an opportunity to further develop these skills in a meaningful way within the context of a senior project.

Student disengagement, which is often high in our current senior projects, will continue to be a problem if no changes are made to these learning outcomes. Designing a curriculum that utilizes critical pedagogy as a best practice is one way to assist the professional development of our teachers to reengage more of our students in meaningful academic assignments. By changing our curriculum to incorporate critical pedagogy

teaching strategies, our school can also contribute to the growing body of literature of urban schools that are utilizing as a best practice to reengage their students with learning opportunities that matter.

Recommendations for Further Study

Future research could be developed to further explore any of the themes that emerged from this study. Although there is a growing body of literature that is focused on critical pedagogy as an instructional practice, it is still underdeveloped. This is particularly true with leadership analysis. Currently, other than this study, there are no empirical research projects that have analyzed what the role of a school leader is in developing critical pedagogy as an instructional best practice in an urban school setting. This would be an excellent area of research for the future as it could inform current educational leaders in the field on how to develop, design, and implement a critical pedagogical instructional model to reengage urban students.

Since I have a strong interest in continuing the collection of data for a study of this nature, it may be in my interest to suggest to my charter school organization that I would like to extend this research. We are always in the process of looking for ways to improve our curriculum and instruction for our students, and if I were to create a longitudinal study based on the initial questions from this study, it would help in documenting the stories of more students who have participated in the research seminar. The research seminar class is an ongoing one that I will continue to teach. I am currently teaching a seminar class as I write this chapter and anticipate leading another cohort of students within the next 3 months. If I continued to interview these current students that are completing the research seminar class it would add depth to the already detailed

portraits of the first three students that have eloquently described their experiences in the class.

Another research topic that still needs to be addressed is how effective would critical pedagogy be as an instructional strategy beyond school settings that serve predominately socio-economically disadvantaged Students of Color? All of the research focused on how critical pedagogy is an instructional strategy for teachers engaged with this population. But how useful would this strategy be in suburban districts that are predominately White? Or how effective would a critical pedagogical approach be in a predominately White neighborhood that is economically disadvantaged? Would the students and their families welcome the interrogation of their power structures in an upper middle class White neighborhood? Would poor White students have the same response to that their Black and Brown counterparts have had with a critical pedagogical instructional approach? If not, how would it be different, particularly around issues of race and ethnicity?

Epilogue

At the close of this research portrait, the 3 research participants, Xinachtli, Intellegent Hoodlum, and Chubs are at various stages of their educational and personal journeys. Xinachtli successfully graduated from UACH and is currently working full time for a cleaning company in the Los Angeles area. His mother needs him to help pay for their household bills at the moment thus Xinachtli is foregoing junior college until his mother is more financially stable. Additionally, Xinachtli's brother was released from jail after serving a 1-year sentence for a crime that he did not commit. Xinachtli's mother is happy that her son has been released from jail but she is still trying to adjust to having

both of them in her daily physical presence. For this reason, Xinachtli is also placing junior college on hold temporarily to ensure that his mother is also emotionally stable with having his brother home from jail. Xinachtli continues to learn Nahuatl and studies it regularly at home and occasionally on his breaks when he is working. He is enjoying his current job of cleaning parking lots since it is bringing in additional income for his mother and their household. Xinachtli will make occasional visits to our high school to visit with his teachers and provide me updates with his personal and academic life. He is very excited that college is approaching in the near future and will ensure that he is successful by continuing to visit our school for emotional and academic support as he makes his transition. One of our teachers has already assisted him in completing all of the financial aid paperwork that was overwhelming at times for Xinacthli. Additionally, Xinachtli has made a connection, with the help from one of our teachers, with a guidance counselor at the junior college that he plans to attend. Xinachtli plans on enrolling at Santa Monica College in January 2013. Xinachtli also still has plans on opening a community center in his neighborhood to assist other youth that are attempting to change their lives by leaving the gang lifestyle. He is excited about this possibility so that more youth in his community can start a new life without gang violence in their lives and find their indigenous roots in the process similar to how he has in leaving his gang life.

The Intelligent Hoodlum is working full time and living in the San Fernando Valley with his mother. He is still attempting to pass the California High School Exit Exam and works diligently on his math skills to ensure that he will pass it the next time he sits for the test. This is one of the unfortunate downfalls of standardized testing, as students like the Intelligent Hoodlum are held back in their academics because they do

not perform well on standardized tests. Although his mathematical abilities have increased dramatically, he cannot show these skills to the California Department of Education through their High School Exit Exam.

The mathematic tests that are given at our school have shown an increase in five grade levels in mathematics in the time that he has spent in our classrooms. The assessment is more authentic and the work that he shows on the his mathematic problems can be checked by his teacher and provided partial credit if the work that he has shown is correct in the formulas that need to be utilized for the particular problem. This however, cannot be shown to the California Department of Education on their Exit Exam. Rather, there is only one correct answer that can be bubbled in on the test. Despite these continual challenges Intelligent Hoodlum has faced with the California High School Exit Exam, he has not allowed it to prevent him from attempting to pass the test. The perseverance, courage, and persistence that he learned through the research seminar class will not allow him to quit at this point. He has gone too far in his academic journey in his quest for a high school diploma and has told me that he will not stop taking the test until he passes. He will not allow the California Department of Education to deny him a high school diploma that he has worked for and deserves.

In regard to Chubs, he is still working for a downtown Los Angeles graphic design company while attending junior college. His career as a graphic designer is beginning to blossom as he takes on more responsibilities for the company. The company owner has seen the artistic and marketing potential that Chubs brings to his team and has promoted him to lead several of the corporate accounts, particularly as it relates to the artistic oversight of how each marketing program is implemented for the

accounts. Chubs has been provided a full-time salary with the possibility of junior college being paid for by the company. Chubs' company has been very supportive of his taking classes at junior college and works around his school schedule to ensure that he can fit both into his life.

Chubs is also moving into his first apartment, a loft in downtown Los Angeles. Along with his girlfriend, he has been shopping for the last couple of months in the historic artist quarters near Chubs' graphic art company. His girlfriend works for Amtrack and is also enrolled in junior college with Chubs. They are both excited about living in downtown Los Angeles as it will provide a network of other graphic design artists for Chubs in their neighborhood and will also be able to save money since they will be closer to his job, which will only be a 5-minute bicycle ride from their loft. Currently he is living with his brother in a suburb 30 minutes out of Los Angeles and commutes to his graphic design company. Once they move into downtown he will no longer need a car saving additional money on gas as well. Chubs newest project at work has him designing a line of T-shirts for his company that will be released to the public in the next 6 months.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY

INTERIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY

Title of Study: Critical Pedagogy as an Instructional Leadership Initiative in a small Urban High School Setting.

Institution: Drop Out Recovery Charter High School

Participants: High School students who have participated in research seminar

Researcher: Jake Gordon

Introduction: This research study that I am conducting is interested in how students that participated in the "research seminar" class have been impacted on a personal and academic level. You have been chosen to participate in this study because you have successfully completed the research seminar class. There have been a total of five research seminar cohorts at our school site. The questions that you will be asked are going to be conducted in one-on-one interviews with me the researcher. Additionally, the purpose of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of the research seminar so that it can be continually improved for future students.

Introductory Protocol: All the interviews conducted will be audio taped and archived to be used as data for this study. Interviews will be recorded so that the researcher can listen to the interviews at a later date when it is time to analyze the data for themes. Another reason for recording the interview is for the researcher to have complete focus on the interviewee. All of the interviews will remain confidential. A document that will be signed by you the participant and the researcher to ensure that confidentiality remains in place. Each interview will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. This will depend on how the conversation with each interviewee is conducted as each experience will be unique. If the interviewee has any concerns with participating in the study they may discuss with the research facilitator at any time.

Questions:

1. Can you please describe yourself and the reason why you wanted to enroll at this Charter High School?

2. How do you feel about (like) the research class that you are taking? Explain.

3. In comparison to your other classes that you are taking at our school how is the research seminar class different? Explain.

4. What aspects of the research seminar class did you enjoy and why?

5. What aspects of the research seminar class did you find challenging and why?

6. Do you see the research seminar class that you participated in connect to you on a personal level? Explain

7. How has the research seminar class informed your ideas about social justice? Explain

8. Do you view yourself differently now that you have completed the research seminar? If so, in what way?

9. How has the research seminar class changed you? What is now different about you?

10. Please describe your overall experience of being in the research seminar class.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

California State University Long Beach

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Critical Pedagogy as an Instructional Leadership Initiative in a Small Urban High School Setting.

PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW NUMBER 1

11. Can you please share some background information with me? Where you grew up and some background information about your family

12. Can you describe what it was like growing up in your neighborhood?

13. What were some experiences when you were growing up that shaped who you are today? Can you give some examples and describe them?

14. What was most enjoyable about growing up in your neighborhood?

15. What were some of the challenges growing up in your neighborhood?

16. How did your ethnicity or race impact your experiences growing up?

17. Did you ever experience injustice in your neighborhood growing up? If so, can you please describe?

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW NUMBER 2

18. Can you please share what your elementary school experience was like? Where did you attend and what was it like being a student there?

19. What were some of the most memorable experiences during elementary school that impacted you as a student? In what way did these experiences shape you as a student?

20. When you entered middle school and high school, what changes did you experience as a student? Can you please explain how the changes impacted you as a student? How did the changes impact you on a personal level?

21. Can you please describe what your experiences were like with your teachers? How about with counselors, administrators, or any other school personnel?

22. What experiences in high school impacted you the most? In what way? Can you please describe?

23. How did your ethnicity or race impact your experiences growing up?

RESEARCH SEMINAR QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW NUMBER 3

24. Can you please describe yourself and the reason why you wanted to enroll at our school?

25. How do you feel about (like) the research class that you are taking? Explain.

26. In comparison to your other classes that you are taking at our school how is the research seminar class different? Explain.

27. What aspects of the research seminar class did you enjoy and why?

28. What aspects of the research seminar class did you find challenging and why?

29. Do you see the research seminar class that you participated in connect to you on a personal level? Explain

30. How has the research seminar class informed your ideas about social justice? Explain

31. Do you view yourself differently now that you have completed the research seminar? If so, in what way?

32. How has the research seminar class changed you? What is now different about you?

33. Please describe your general experience of being in the research seminar.

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