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I Matter, As Does the World: Critical Consciousness in Higher Education

Myra Dutko
National Louis University

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I MATTER, AS DOES THE WORLD: CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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MYRA DUTKO

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Brad D. Olson, PhD

Brad Olson, Ph.D. Dissertation Chair

PhD 4/8/16

Tiffeny Jimenez, Ph.D. Dissertation Committee Member

PhD

Judah Viola, Ph.D. Dissertation Committee Member

4/8/16

Date

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Dedication

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." This is dedicated to all the people who work tirelessly on issues of social justice—shining a light for everyone to see. Also, I would like to dedicate this to my family—my husband. Orest, my daughters Tanya and Aleksa and my grandchildren Michael and James, who are all the light of my life.

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Abstract

This dissertation describes how graduate students in a community organizing class move along the critical consciousness pathway. Critical consciousness in the academic arena is critical to the development of democratic participation and agency in students.Critical consciousness is the ability to see, judge and act on issues of injustice in order to create social change. In addition, this research examines what barriers arise in that process. Research participants from an urban, private university in the Midwest narrate the creation of a learning environment and the process of moving towards critical consciousness awakening through journaling and focus group discussions. The data, along with researcher observations, suggests that some participants, when given the opportunity, will negotiate safe space, look for ways to allow each other a voice in the arena and move along the critical consciousness pathway. The research also suggests that a number of obstacles can occur, even with the use of liberatory learning methods, this includes the fault lines of race, a sense of "otherness" and an emotional intensity—fear, anger, that moves people away from critical conscious.

I MATTER, AS DOES THE WORLD: CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Critical consciousness is central to civic engagement, social justice movement participation and political action. Direct citizen participation through civic engagement, volunteering and activism has yielded improvements in environmental, social and economic circumstances, and has contributed to improving participants' lives (Mannarini, et al., 2009). Social justice movement participation has important beneficial outcomes to the participants, including a sense of well-being, stress reduction and sense of control—personally, and collectively—on issues of political outcome. Participation can help individuals develop feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment, a critical concept in the field of community psychology (Mannarini, Fedi & Trippetti, 2009; Ohmer, 2007). Empowerment has been described in a number of ways in the community psychology arena. Speer (1995) believes that empowerment is one of the "defining concepts" in community psychology (p 57). Rappaport (1981) defines empowerment as a means by which people can "control their own lives" (p 15). Rappapport (1987) further states "We [community psychology] will, should we take empowerment seriously, no longer be able to see people as simply children in need or as only citizens with rights, but rather as full human beings who have both rights and needs" (p 15).

In communities with little access to resources or inclusion in political decision-making, citizen participation allows those who might not be heard—a voice. In such communities, citizen participation in volunteerism creates a stronger sense of community (Ohmer, 2007). Before taking action against oppression through citizen participation, community members must first critically interpret their world (Freire, 2010, 1998, 1982). Critical consciousness refers to "…awareness of the widespread, embedded presence of

inequities in educational, social and economic systems" (Simon, 2010, p. 26). People must take action against identified inequalities and injustices they have identified through these new understandings (Freire, 2010). Academics, ones dedicated to empowering students, often understand these capacities as the basis for their work in the classroom (Hooks, 2001; Shor, 1992; Watts, Abdul-Adil & Pratt, 2002).

There is little dissent among educators around the importance of critical consciousness. The ongoing question for academics, psychologists and researchers remains—how do we foster the development of critical consciousness in the higher education student? Some scholars address this question in the empirical literature, yet gaps remain in the understanding of critical consciousness and education. Shor (1992), along with Freire (2010), argue that the traditional, authoritarian, non-participatory style of education in the United States has led to the demise of adults who participate in governance and policy-making. Passive participation in which the teacher deposits information into the student without offering student-centered curricula can lead to student alienation. This alienation leaves students disengaged, bored, passive, and often feeling helpless in controlling the factors that shape their lives, often creating civically disengaged adults (Shor, 1992).

Alienation: A historical perspective

Karl Marx, in discussing powerlessness and alienation, identified a disconnect between the product of one's labor and the ownership of that product. In a capitalist society, the laborer does not possess the right to self-determination, and is therefore disconnected from the work and rendered powerless. The product of one's labor is viewed as an independent, alien object which holds power over the laborer. Marx argued

alienation is an unavoidable result of the loss of control over one's actions and the loss of one's ability to shape their own future (McPhee & McEntee, 2014). The result of this alienation and disconnect between the laborer and the product of their work creates a disillusionment, a process by which the laborer no longer sees his work as being voluntary, but instead forced; "he himself becomes a commodity" (Dam, 1976, p. 6). Marx likened this process to being degraded and made to feel like an animal. Weber suggested that the laborer producing a product was only one piece of the larger picture. "For in the industrial society, the scientist, the civil servant, the professor is likewise 'separated' from control over his work" (Dean, 1961, p. 754). Alienation and helplessness can be understood in a context other than merely economic.

Alienation and Critical Disengagement--Needing Critical Pedagogy

Student alienation is at its highest in the United States. Alienation is a fundamental challenge to Freirian pedagogy. Alienation is an "intense educational estrangement that 'obstructs all teaching and learning'" (Martin, 2008, p. 32). Freire identified the potential tension between critical consciousness and alienation. He acknowledged the particularly potent student alienation in the U.S., calling the resistance to education a result of a "culture of silence and a culture of sabotage" (p. 32). The avoidance of critical consciousness can significantly impact the development of critical consciousness. Shor (1992) indicates that students in the United States are more resistant to critical consciousness than the Brazilian peasants with whom Freire had worked. He blames this resistance on the years of embedded authoritarian teaching. Martin (2008) indicates that students in both high school and college have little interest in learning beyond meeting acceptable grades.

Dean (1961) developed a three-dimension theory on alienation based on Marxist philosophy. The three dimensions offer insight into the factors that contribute to student alienation and subsequently to the growing dropout rates in education. These three dimensions include: social alienation, powerlessness and normlessness. Social alienation is the disconnection or lack of relationships with family, peers and community even though individuals may be surrounded by these significant people. Powerlessness comes from feelings of disempowerment in which individual's feel they have no control over their lives and lack choices in their lives as a result of external controls over them. Normlessness refers to the rejection of the dominant culture. In an educational setting this may mean students find it difficult to accept assessment standards and evaluations. Their disconnection to the dominant culture and their feelings of powerlessness are often at the core of their lack of interest in school and can lead to program dropping and lowered retention rates for university and community colleges (McPhee & McEntee, 2014).

Empirical studies have confirmed that the problem of alienation continues to grow in the U.S. (Martin, 2008). Between 1950 and 1980, student attitudes regarding school grew more negative. Students reported being bored in class and had very little interest in what was happening in class. These attitudes spanned from grade school up to college undergraduates. Studies of college students showed that they had "a marked escalation of student disengagement over the past generations" (p. 34). Martin (2008) indicates that undergraduates rarely talk about class material outside of the classroom. "Qualitative studies, journalistic investigations, and faculty observations of college life depict many, if not most, American undergraduates as intellectually disengaged,

instrumentally oriented toward their studies, and preoccupied with peer culture, materialism and hedonism" (Martin, 2008, p.4).

This sense of alienation often leaves students less interested in the process of learning and more interested in the product of learning (McPhee & McEntee, 2014). Nathan (2006) explains in her book that there is little difference between "pleasing" and "playing" the professor. This has shown up in academic advising and student orientation materials. "An entire section of the orientation talk was devoted to figuring out your professor—give them what they want and you'll get what you want too. There is little mention, officially or unofficial of learning or discovery in any of this rhetoric about students and professors" (p. 117). Nathan (2006), a professor who went back to school as an undergraduate to explore what it means to be a college student today in a typical American university, indicates that students are instructed to offer up whatever is necessary to get the desired grades, in a sort of academic exchange that mimics a consumer exchange. Willimon and Naylor (1995) conclude that there is a rampant "careerism" in higher education in which universities are guided, and students are driven, by educational policies that lead to a high paying job.

The goals of students have now shifted to becoming "money making machines" and these goals, in terms of a changing and staggering economy has left students with college degrees that did not meet their expectations. In addition, this careerism focus has shifted universities from the more meaningful purpose of a higher education, which includes critical thinking, search for meaning, the capacity to live in a democratic society, self confidence, and caring for others (Willimon & Naylor, 1995).

There are two main barriers to implementing a critical pedagogical education—"massification, which is aimed at producing technically exploitable knowledge and creating a trained labour force; and performativity, which categorizes universities according to published league tables in terms of research and teaching outputs" (Waghid, 2007 p. 361). Universities have become a type of business, and their programs and courses, a commodity to be bought and sold. The focus on a Marxist production of goods (employable graduates) has left less space for critical thinking and critical consciousness.

The Zero Paradigm

The Zero Paradigm is a deficit model of education in which students are seen as deficits waiting to be filled with knowledge in the form of lectures, textbooks, worksheets and tests. In the zero paradigm used in many classrooms from grade school to higher education, students are exposed to the "dullest" form of education in which students function in the classroom as passive participants (Shor, 1992). This style of education sends a message to the students that "knowledge and power is fixed from above and not negotiated or discovered from below" (p. 200). Developing an empowered curriculum requires the teacher to acknowledge that students are not a deficit and that they bring with them powerful and rich experiences, cultures and languages to the classroom. Replacing the deficit model of education with an empowering model of education engages students rather than alienating them. Prepackaged knowledge that is memorized and repeated leaves little room for students to interact with the teacher, the other students and with the material (Shor, 1992).

The Effects of Alienation and Critical Disengagement

In a study of over 2,300 undergraduate students in 24 American universities, researchers found that 43% of the students showed no significant improvement in complex reasoning skills, critical thinking, and writing skills from the time they came into college to the end of their sophomore year (Ivers, 2012, p. 50). The data came from the Collegiate Learning Assessment, a standardized test. This disengagement, the lack of transformative classrooms in which students and professors alike could self-actualize and grow has left not only a void in the learning process but it has dramatically affected the psychological well-being of students. On U.S. college campuses, one in five students has contemplated suicide. Almost half of female college students and almost 40% of male students experience depression and/or anxiety so severe that they cannot participate in normal day to day activities (Ivers, 2012). In addition, Ivers (2012) indicates that students in American universities are disengaged, unmotivated, bored by their classes and generally apathetic about their future. Shor (1992) suggests that there is a "silence" in the college classroom which has been built on years of authoritarian, passive and banking deposit-forms of education. Often, students are passive and even resist the introduction of participatory education.

Empowering pedagogy and critical consciousness

Empowering pedagogy begins with participatory values organized around students' cultural backgrounds interests and personal transformations. To this end, this dissertation is grounded in community psychology, liberation/empowering education. The research focuses on understanding the development of civically evolved students with the capacity to understand themselves in a changing world. Much of the literature on empowering education focuses on primary and secondary school learning practices. Less

literature exists on higher education and critical consciousness. For traditional students, from primary school to higher education, some are still navigating through identity formation Erikson (1968) and moving towards Kohlberg's (2008) stage of moral development. In addition, for both traditional and non-traditional students in higher education, this may the first and the last place in which old ways of thinking about issues like race, sex, gender and other personally held assumptions might be challenged (Wallin-Rushchman, 2014). University classrooms are "…one of the few relatively uncensored public spaces where members of the academic community can engage in intellectual dialogue about the applicability of the universal themes promulgated by social justice discourses" (DeVriese, 2008, p. 3). Although the university classroom should be a place for intellectual dialogue and social justice discourse, this is not always the case as years of non-liberating, banking education has left students unable to navigate these kinds of intellectual arenas.

Critical pedagogy

As stated earlier, critical consciousness represents a person's awakening to and awareness of inequities in social, economic and educational systems (Freire, 2010; Simon, 2010). At the core of critical consciousness is reflection. Reflection involves the continual negotiation of the self in relation to what is happening in the environment. Reflection is a process in which the individual deconstructs the social and political environment and the relationship of the self to the environment, particularly in an attempt to understand oppression and injustice (Freire, 2010). The second part of critical consciousness is taking action against oppressive elements in one's life, illuminated by the understanding of the self, the self in society. Critical consciousness is integral to

social justice movement participation and collective action (Freire, 2010). Critical consciousness creates transformation through the construction of reality—this work is done alongside others, using engagement and meaning making to create positive change in one's social world.

The attainment of critical consciousness comes through engaged, dialogue driven education—known as critical pedagogy (Freire, 1977). Freire indicates oppression is as damaging to the human nature of both the oppressed and the oppressors. Those oppressed are likely to participate in the false consciousness of their oppressors. This identification with actions of the oppressor, combined with dehumanization, leads to internalized oppression. Freire (2010) argues that the "banking" system of education in which a static form of knowledge is transferred to the student through "deposits made by the teacher" leaves students disconnected from the struggles of their communities. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed (2010), he created a manifesto on education liberation practices and introduced an educational theory that focused on discussion and a mutual dialogue that resulted in self directed learning based on personal discovery. He discouraged knowledge that was passed from one person (the teacher) to another (the student) and focused on the teacher as a facilitator.

Praxis or action-informed and value-driven is pivotal in Freirian philosophy. Education should lead to the betterment of society and the improvement in the lives of those who are oppressed. Education is robust when based in the lived experience of those seeking knowledge. Only then can education be the catalyst for transforming lives.

Critical theorists approach education with the idea that too often institutions such as schools serve to perpetuate the status quo in which there are those in power, as purveyors of continued oppression, and those who are powerless. Schools, teachers, policies are designed to protect the inequality and the ingrained social order (Vassalo, 2012). Like Freire, critical theorists believe that schools have the potential to be places where students can explore their own worlds, realities, and readings of the world--ways to transform their world (Vassalo, 2012). Existential psychologist's view of education is congruent with critical pedagogical theory. Being a child, for instance, is being in a "pre-existential" phase of human life that lasts until the moment of realization that "I am", "I am a person", "I am a person in the world". This realization may be "profoundly turbulent" at first but may be soon replace with feeling of empowerment after the existential moment that the individual realizes that their life is their own, they can take charge of their life and they can change the world. The education process from an existential point of view must allow for an awakening in the learner (Morris, 1996, p. 110).

Critical consciousness in higher education

Educators and researchers dedicated to the development of students who are lifelong critical thinkers, civic leaders and social justice leaders, continue to develop teaching methods and curricula that encourage these positive elements. Psychologist and educational reformer John Dewey (1944) argues, from a societal perspective, that education must be a growth process which allows students to prepare for the future. Education should be based on development. As he states, "Development is conceived not as continuous growing, but as the unfolding of latent powers toward a definitive goal"

(Dewey, 1944, p. 56). Critical pedagogy emphasizes student engagement—encouraging students to think critically, use reason, and provide moral reasoning to justify their actions all the while creating a dialogue with their university professors. Critical pedagogy stresses the importance of disagreeing, challenging ideas, and understanding the viewpoints of others to better confront societal issues.

Since Freire's work, other researchers and theorists across a variety of fields have explored critical consciousness, developing a variety of empirical studies. Interest in critical consciousness crosses a variety of psychology fields, including liberation, development and community and existential psychology (Moane, 2003; Mustakova-Possardt, 2004; Prilleltensky, 2004).

Critical consciousness and developmental psychology

Critical consciousness is integral to adolescent understandings of a moral imperative, a sense of identity, and the responsibility and agency that ultimately leads to a fulfillment of the human potential (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004). Young people who negotiate their identity through interaction with community and dialogue are likely to reach the "cognitive threshold" for "transitional critical consciousness". The result is a fully developed human being able to consistently interpret their world, understand causality, name injustice and be committed to the larger community rather than only to their immediate social circles (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004, p. 257). According to the Mustakova-Possardt model, there are eight steps to critical consciousness. The ascendance of tasks includes moral interest, moral authority, moral responsibility, expanded moral and social responsibility, sociopolitical consciousness, principled vision, philosophical expansion and historical/global vision. At each level, adolescents learn to

examine, using critical consciousness, the self and the world from a starting point of principled moral reasoning (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004).

Critical consciousness and liberation psychology

Liberation psychology challenges psychologists to reframe psychological theories that dehumanize people. It instead encourages the use of psychological theory that emancipates people from problematic environments. Salvadoran priest and social psychologist Ignacio Martin-Baro, like Freire, developed models that reframed education using critical consciousness theory (Steinits & Mishler, 2009). Martin-Baro challenged the psychology community, asserting that psychology was almost entirely from a North American and European perspective, and that it perpetuated the oppression of others around the world. Martin-Baro believed in the 'de-ideologizing' of consciousness, in which people trust in their own experience rather than participating in the false consciousness of their oppressors.

Critical consciousness and Community Psychology

As stated earlier, the study of critical consciousness fits particularly well in the community psychology arena. Community psychologists are concerned with social change, and promoting social justice. In addition, community psychologists focus on empowerment, participant centered research and a move away from blaming the victim policies. Prilleltensky (2014) suggests that the principles of community psychology involves meaning making, mattering and thriving. At the heart of these tenants is the idea that "I matter" and that "I can make a difference". This idea falls along a continuum in which individuals understand that their being matters and that their understanding of

themselves in the world turns to agency that can change the world. These are key components of critical consciousness awakening and in critical pedagogy.

Rappaport (1987) defines empowerment as "a process, a mechanism by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their affairs (Rappaport, 1987, p. 122). Empowerment happens on a number of levels, individual, community and societal. An individual who begins to recognize injustice and becomes involved in citizen participation as a means to rectify injustice is moving towards empowerment. Empowerment therefore, is recognition of injustice and action through citizen participation (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2007).

Oppression

In order to fully understand the formation of critical consciousness in higher education, a multi-dimensional definition of oppression must first be established. Previous research aimed at combating oppression often fails to address the intricacies of oppression instead seeing the construct as involving the oppressed and the oppressor. For the purpose of this study, oppression should be viewed as a more existential concept being shaped by external factors.

By its conventional definition, oppression is viewed as being an injustice intentionally imposed upon one group by another in order to subjugate that particular sect of the population into subservience. Oppression, though, can also be the result of internalized socio-political factors ingrained in society, regardless of intent. Oppression is, nonetheless, a culmination of the internalization of negative socio-political constraints that impede a person's ability to flourish. Young (1990) asserts that oppression must be

understood as being multifaceted with five faces: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence.

Exploitation is a capitalistic form of oppression by which a person profits on the labor of another without justly compensating the laborer. Young (1990) draws on Marxist thought to explain that historically, exploitation is a consequence of capitalism by which market competition leads to class differentiation—effectively creating a system of haves who exploit the have-nots. Marginalization refers to the act of limiting a person or group's ability to succeed and edging them out of the labor market. This exclusionary form of oppression can leave the marginalized group economically distressed and often reliant on welfare, which can have dehumanizing psychological implications (Young, 1990). Powerlessness is arguably one of the most destructive forms of oppression because one can render others powerless just as easily as they can render themselves powerless. Again, drawing on Marx's socialist theory, the laborers are positioned to follow orders but are not given the opportunity to participate in creating direction. Powerlessness can be rooted in one's lack of the right to self-determination, a person's reticence to realize their full potential, or their inability to be treated with respect given their status. This can often lead to what Freire refers to as a culture of silence by which the oppressed do not speak of their lowered status because speaking of such a thing is taboo. This leaves the oppressed group voiceless and unable to escape their plight (Young, 1990).

Further, powerlessness can also be happen through indoctrination. Indoctrination creates the belief that one is inherently a second-class citizen, assuming they are and will remain voiceless and beneath the ruling class. Indoctrination can often occur through the

use of negative imagery where a person or group begins to internalize those oppressive images. The only way to combat powerlessness, arguably, is to be able to envision an alternative world. This can be accomplished through education, self-reflection and regaining the right to self-determination, ultimately finding one's voice. Additionally, the oppressed group must recognize the injustices in order to escape the indoctrination—attaining critical consciousness (Young, 1990).

Cultural Imperialism is the process of imposing the cultural norms, values and goals of the ruling class upon the greater society. This gives the ruling class the power to establish societal norms. Cultural imperialism establishes destructive stereotypes, leaving the oppressed groups, in turn, feeling that they cannot go beyond the boundaries of those stereotypes, suppressing their ability to grow (Young, 1990). Violence is one the most conspicuous manifestations of oppression. Persons or groups who experience violent oppression live in constant fear of physical attacks or destruction of their property due to their membership in a specific group. By inciting fear in these individuals, often with no real impetus, the end goal is to devastate and demean the individual. Violent oppression includes sexual violence and hate crimes (Young, 1990).

Critical Pedogogy/ Liberatory Learning Teaching Models

Critical Pedagogy is an educational philosophy based in critical theory in which students are encouraged to dialogue, reflect, and act in order to shed systems of oppression. Liberatory learning or participatory education prepares students to become participatory adults who are active citizens in governance, policy making and framing their lives in society. Students who are told they live in a democratic society but who have no opportunity to create their own educational experience grow in a dichotomous

environment where they are told one thing but live another (Shor, 1992). Non-participatory education produces adults who are less likely to participate as citizens—less likely to feel empowered to make change. Activist learning is oriented to change-agency. "Change agency in pedagogy means learning and acting for the democratic transformation of self and society" (p. 190). Students can be introduced to the idea of change in any field, as knowledge is fluid and not fixed and is always evolving. To achieve the goals of liberatory learning, models or theories of teaching which encourage student participation and reflection as well as meaning making have been developed to facilitate critical consciousness as well as critical thinking skills. Some of the most notable of these models are explained in the following section.

Problem-Posing Dialogue Method

Shor (1992) suggests a model for teaching for empowerment in which problem posing becomes the major goal of teachers. Students participate in the building of their own ideas, create spaces for dialogue, and shape the class and curriculum through group work.

1. Dialogue starts with problem-posing. Teachers ask questions: How do you use psychology in everyday life? What is good writing? What factors contribute to personal growth? Students can also be asked to pose their own questions.

2. Reflecting on the problem—After a problem has been posed, students are asked to reflect on the problem by writing in journals. Then they are asked to share in small groups to talk about what they have written. This allows students to build community with their classmates and the teacher. Teachers

can also share their own journaling or thoughts. This places emphasis on dialogue and move away from "teacher talk" or lectures (p.239).

3. Skills Development—Students can compose rough drafts on the questions posed, after which they work with other students in peer editing and group discussion, where students work together in revising their rough drafts. Students read their work aloud and are also asked to pose a question for discussion based on their essays. After listening to each other's essays, they are asked to choose one essay or a synthesis of positions or a summary of conflicting positions to report to the whole class. Small group work is particularly effective in drawing in quiet, shy students who do not often participate in large group activity.

4. Group reports/class dialogue-By selecting essays or synthesis that will be shared with the whole class, and creating their own questions for discussions, students participate in co-development of the curriculum, in which they choose the essays and questions to be shared by the whole class.

Democratic Teaching Method

In a democratic society, schools are obligated to advocate democratic principles in order to foster critical thinking and civic participation (Apple & Beane, 2007). However, the focus is often misdirected, instead focusing on competing in the international educational arena and improving standardized test scores, whereby the only remaining democratic principles still being taught, are taught through student governments. Apple and Beane (2007), in visiting schools with strong demonstrated democratic principles,

detail the following characteristics that best facilitate a democratic school—schools that become places for transformation.

Thematic Inquiry. By incorporating applicable events and issues in the curricula, and encouraging discussion and debate with the teachers and students, students are better able to take theory and apply it to real world examples.

Participatory Actions. Involving students, teachers, staff and administration in important decision making meetings offers students a more tailored educational experience and a more comprehensive and integrated curriculum design that meets the needs and strengths of the team as a whole.

Intellectual Peer Engagement. Curricula and classroom structure highlights peer to peer and student-teacher engagement, stressing the importance of critical thinking, intellectual debate and group interaction. Additionally, all students are expected to actively participate in the intellectual discussions.

Equity. All students are treated the same, with equitable access to needed resources and aid, without being divided into a separate group. Students are expected to follow the same core curriculum as all other students.

Peer Engagement Model

Excitement in the classroom is necessary for transformative growth that leads to empowerment. Excitement can only happen when students are allowed to "recognize one another's presence," (hooks, 1994, p.6). This means that students can transform through listening to one another and understanding that all students contribute to the dynamics in the classroom. Student's relationships must not be directed at the professor, but rather

with one another. This creates an open learning community in which the direction of the class and even the class material is influenced by everyone in the classroom. In her book, Teaching to Transgress, hooks reflects on strategies for teaching in higher education using the tenants of Friere's critical pedagogy with which students are encouraged to explore, challenge and relate classroom material in context with their life experience. She promotes education as a practice of freedom. Education is a practice not of information deposits but rather a process of spiritual growth. hooks (1994) suggests that students must be active and not passive in their education.

The classroom should be a space where students connect ideas that were discussed in class with the things that happened in their own lives--the personal experience. hooks (1994) calls this kind of teaching a "holistic" approach to teaching in which information is not compartmentalized in "bits of information" but rather students are encouraged to understand and seek knowledge as a way to grow in wholeness (p.5). In addition, liberation pedagogy requires professors who are self-actualized, and not afraid of creating the space that will encourage their students to become self actualized. hooks suggests that professors are not as open to exploring new pedagogical strategies that are liberating for their students and for them as well.

In a liberatory teaching model, the professor is called upon to engage in a personally meaningful way. The student is not the only one who should grow in the classroom, the professor should as well. "When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to understanding of academic material" (hooks, 1994, p5).

Student Engagement Models Via the Use of Media (Films, Documentaries and Music Videos)

The use of documentaries and film in the classroom has increased over the last twenty years by teachers across all subjects. Just how these documentaries are used and to what end is still not well known (Marcus & Stoddard, 2009). Researchers agree that film/documentary viewing in the classroom has a potential to build critical thinking skills and help students understand difficult concepts. They can expose students to variety of issues and events that they may not see in their textbooks and they can show real world events that can be connected to classroom material—all important in the development of critical consciousness (Watts & Abdul-Adil,1998; Marcus & Stoddard, 2009; Berk, 2009).

Watts & Abdul-Adil (1998) connect critical consciousness to critical thinking skills arguing that critical thinking is the sociopolitical version of critical consciousness. The use of films, and popular music videos—particularly hip-hop, when used with facilitated questions can lead to positive outcomes and more critical thinking skills. Watts, Abdul-Adil & Pratt (2002) used video stimulus—hip-hop videos, rap videos and films, then asked groups of young African American men in a "young warriors" intervention program, a series of five questions regarding the videos. The purpose of the program is to help men rethink concepts of masculinity.

What did you see (hear)? Say what you saw first?

What does it mean? What is the person trying to say? What is he or she trying to do.

Why do you think that? Why do you think that is what it means? Support what you think with evidence.

How do you think feel about what you saw and heard? How does it fit with the Warrior Creed? How does it fit with your values or past actions? Is what you saw good, bad or neither?

What would you do to make it better? What steps can you and others take to improve the situation?

Early on, eliciting responses was difficult and responses were short, but later, as trust between the group leaders and participants grew and safe space was established, the answers grew in complexity (Watts, Abdul-Adil & Pratt, 2002). Standing at a podium and sermonizing or advocating a set of values leads to students offering what they believe the teacher wants and leaves students in the position of pleasing the teacher, rather than reaching for answers and using critical thinking skills that produce holistic thinkers (Watts, Abdul-Adil & Pratt, 2002). Practice in these exercises offer students an opportunity to grow in terms of their critical thinking skills. "Program staff also show restraint with their own values because the purpose is not to indoctrinate students into the trainer's personal politics. "Indoctrination is antithetical to critical consciousness" (p.45). hooks (2001) suggests that media is the "pedagogy of our times" since much of what people learn about gender and race, comes from media portrayals. "If they watch a film and I begin to break down with them to deconstruct with them what's happening in the film, they see things completely different, which is why film is one of the best tools for critical pedagogy" (hooks & Sealy, 2001, p. 148). Entertainment and critical consciousness is not a dichotomous concept. People can be entertained by a movie and at

the same time be critically conscious of the issues of race, gender and power structure. Films and popular music may be a way to introduce critical pedagogy into the college classroom.

The use of documentaries for teaching science and history in secondary education has proven to be successful primarily because they provide both entertainment and teaching. In addition, they appeal to new generations of students who are accustomed to the regular use of media in their everyday lives (Kapucu & Aydogu, 2014). In a study that followed a control group and an experimental group of a total of 22 8th grade science classes. A total of 113 students, attending a grade school in Eskisehir, Turkey were studied. Using a pre and post test, the findings showed that the students who were offered documentaries to supplement their in-class work faired better than the students who did not watch documentaries (Kapucu & Aydogu, 2014). Documentary films are engaging because the audio and visual format is a powerful medium which brings the world into the classroom through a very sensory experience. Because students will undoubtedly watch many films and documentaries through their lifetime, use of film in the classroom is important, particularly in helping students to identify multiple perspectives that are presented in film and documentaries. "Preparing citizens for life in a democracy is an important goal for history education as it relates to promoting reasoned judgement, an expanded view of humanity, and promoting deliberation over the common good" (Marcus & Stoddard, 2009, p. 284).

It is critical however, that students understand the different perspectives in a documentary and that documentaries can have a subjective underpinning that may or may not be accurate. Secondary education, history students indicated that they believed

documentaries as a trustworthy and accurate source of knowledge about history. The mean of student responses was a 4.07/5 using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree to 5 (strongly agree). Students rated documentaries as more trustworthy and accurate than textbooks and other classroom readings. As a result of these findings researchers stress the importance of allowing students to question claims made by a movie and to research further using online resources, newspapers books and article (Marcus & Stoddard, 2009).

Socratic Method

The Socratic method can be implemented in any academic discipline given that the tenants of the method are so broadly applicable. Facilitators in the classroom, by asking direct and pointed questions about the material, force the classroom participants to use logic and creative thought to agree, disagree, refute or otherwise grapple with the materials. It is important to note that students are engaging in the Socratic method not just as active participants in the discussions or debates, they are also observers who are listening to the arguments presented and working through the logic of the conversations in the classroom—a passive, but equally effective way of garnering critical thinking skills (Boghossian, 2003). This is especially effective for the students who would otherwise be entirely disengaged from the classroom and the materials. Boghossian (2003) presents a five step introduction to implementing the Socratic Method in the classroom.

Start by examining a claim or asking a question. Differentiate the argument from the person making the argument. Promote classroom participation because as more the students add to the discourse, a greater breadth of viewpoints can be brought to the table.

Understand first Ensure that the facilitator fully understands the student's inquiry, statement or question. This ensures that the facilitator is adequately addressing the

student's contribution while also encouraging the student to state their thought clearly and coherently. If a student presents a question or a thought that you cannot address, it is okay to say you don't know how to respond. Open the question up for further discovery.

Offer a counterexample Employ the use of a counterexample to further the discussion of the subject, but be sure to present a thoughtful argument that progresses the conversation further. Back up the claims by illustrating the logical pathway that led to that conclusion. Relate these counterexamples to the audience. Ensure the counterexample remains on topic and is connected to the original inquiry. If a facilitator discovers a logical error in their argument, it is okay to identify the error and use it as an example of the effectiveness of the discourse.

Repeat and relate to the initial claim Continue to connect the fluid discussions back to the original topic. Utilize the counterarguments and examples to refute or reinforce the original claim. Direct the questions back to previous counterarguments as the conversation progresses to assess whether or not their current arguments have been influenced by the intermittent alternate examples.

It ends when it ends If the conversation or debate continues and students are active, engaged and participating, the facilitator should not feel obligated to move on to another topic until the inquiries have begun waning. The facilitator should not feel pressured to revert back to the originally scheduled class materials just to follow the original structure. By cutting off the debate, the facilitator is doing a disservice to the class to not allow the discourse to come to a natural end.

Though the definition of critical thinking is a highly discussed topic in the literature, the overarching need to implement curricula that foster the development of

critical thinking is still greatly needed (Boghossian, 2003). There is a clear understanding that critical thinking is a necessary skill for students, however, it is important to also identify the link between the Socratic method and the resulting development of critical thinking skills in education. To bridge this gap, it is vital to understand Socratic pedagogy, the methods with which Socratic pedagogy teaches critical thinking which is an important step in critical consciousness, and the ways in which teachers can implement this teaching method in the classroom (Boghossian, 2003).

Effectively teaching critical thinking in the classroom is a formidable task. It requires more tact than simply encouraging students to evaluate the argument—it requires a professor or facilitator leading the students to comprehend *how* to synthesize the materials. These learned critical thinking skills also offer students the ability to synthesize concepts, questions and problems outside of the academic arena. "It is a system that clarifies expectations for what constitutes valid justification of a belief, while also giving students an intellectual road map for making clear and coherent arguments and arriving at justified conclusions" (Boghossian, 2003, p. 17). Instead of teaching students how to think, Socratic pedagogy challenges the student to question the materials and construct new logical pathways with which to understand and engage with the material.

Problem Statement

The current literature confirms the importance of critical consciousness development in education. Though there are still many gaps in the literature as a whole, there is a particularly wide gap in the literature on critical consciousness and reflective participatory learning as a means to critical consciousness in higher education. More

study is needed to understand what critical consciousness looks like in higher education and how to facilitate critical consciousness growth in higher education students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand and describe critical consciousness awakening in graduate students. Critical consciousness is generally defined as the ability to see, judge and act in order to create a more equitable and just society.

Research Questions:

- Given the opportunity to create and negotiate their own educational environment, how do higher education students move along the critical consciousness pathway?
- What are the barriers to critical consciousness development?

Researcher Positionality

Moen (2006) argues that one "creates" and "hears" a narrative in relation to their own life experiences and background. Since this research is in part narrative in nature, understanding the researcher's background, the background and scope of the experience or concern which led to the inquiry is important for the research.

It was particularly poignant to read this note scribbled in the margins of Ira Shor's book, *Empowering Education* by a college student who had owned the book before me. "I can even relate now in college because sometimes I go into a class and I just want to sit and take notes and am disappointed when the teacher says to get into the circle to discuss. (Laziness)". Shor (1992) contends the passivity cultivated in grade school and high school leaves students unable to fully participate in higher education classes that

challenge them to engage. The argument is that students resist critical and democratic learning because they have been indoctrinated by the banking method of teaching.

In my own experience as a college professor over the last five years, I am often confronted by resistance to participatory education. Students who have been confined to authoritarian teaching look uncomfortable and even angry when they are asked to interact with other students or offer their own insights or understanding of class material. My experience teaching seems deeply aligned with Shor's (1992) own experience in teaching of which he describes many students as "uninspired, expecting the teacher to tell them what to do and to lecture them on what things mean" (p. 1). In my own classroom, I have used film and writing that is related to student' personal experience—journaling or posts and discussion as methods for engaging students. I try to establish a safe space in which students can feel comfortable to share their thoughts with each other and with myself. The informal feedback I have received from students regarding the impact of these teaching methods indicate that these methods did have impact on their day to day lives. They indicated they were more aware of inequalities and injustices around them, and, some students admitted that they made changes in their own lives to counteract these injustices. In addition, some students reported that these classroom experiences changed their understanding of their social world. This informal feedback is the impetus for this dissertation. I hope to gain a formalized evaluation and understanding of these kinds of teaching methods and the impact on students.

Methods

At the core of community psychology research is the emphasis on context—understanding people in an environmental and historical context, the social justice and participatory research that leads to action. From this social constructivist view the goal of the research then is to understand the world in which individuals live, work and study. In this context, the researcher must look for the complexity of views rather than "narrow meaning or categories" (p 11), and to rely on participants for their views and understandings by using broad and general questions and abstractions that allow participants to construct their own meanings (Cresswell, 2007; Fox, Prilleltensky & Austin, 2009).

Qualitative research methods are critical for research that is focused on context. Qualitative research methods are particularly needed to empower people to share their stories. This research is rooted in qualitative research methodology: "The final report provides for the voices of participants, a reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and a study that adds to the literature or provides a call to action" (Creswell, 2007, p. 51).

Community psychologists work to promote social justice, eliminate oppression, promote liberation and well-being, as will this research. This study will encompass these tenants through a qualitative methodology that focuses on the participants' stories and epiphanies (Fox, Prilleltensky & Austin, 2009). Rather than starting with a theory as in post positivistic research, the researcher will inductively uncover a pattern of meaning from the individuals' responses. Narratives offer the complexity of the whole and they take place in the environment and context of the whole. Listening to the voices of the participants will allow for in-depth understandings of critical consciousness, a complex

psychological phenomenon. Qualitative research acknowledges the research participants as equal collaborators in the research process and they recognize the subjective space between the researcher and the participant (Moen, 2006). Human beings assign meanings to the stories they tell and the research narrative attempts to make sense of these meanings. The Phenomenological approach is a holistic strategy, in which the researcher attempts to understand the lived experiences of a group of people as they relate to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Participatory research seeks to bring about change and action in the lives of the participants. Participatory research should bring about an action plan that can contribute to change in practices that are rooted in a significant societal issue or problem.

The Setting

The setting for this research will be a PhD level, community organizing class. This is an ideal setting for the phenomenon of interest, i.e., critical consciousness, addressed in this dissertation, as this environment offers a setting that engages students using aspects of critical pedagogy as defined in the literature review (Waghid, 2007; Shor 1992). The community organizing class is a five-week long, three-credit class in which the instructor uses a variety of teaching methods: dialogue, discussion and the Socratic method—all which contribute to critical thinking skills, and from a sociopolitical perspective, contributes to critical consciousness (Boghossian, 2003). In addition, the class offers students a participatory, problem posing and problem solving format which allows students to create their own educational experience and it encourages students to find ways to fight injustice (hooks, 2001; Shor, 1992; Waghid, 2007). Class time is used for building community through group work in that a final group project that often

includes a presentation to a larger university audience connects not only students in the class but also students with the larger university audience and participants from outside the university. Documentaries are used as a stimulus to encourage students to engage in dialogue and reflection as well as problem posing and solving.

The instructor is committed to critical pedagogy and encourages students to negotiate their own learning experience by allowing them to pursue their own areas of interest. For example, when this researcher was enrolled in this class, the themes of social injustice focused on incarceration. Though the general theme was introduced by the instructor, students were encouraged to find their own areas of interest under this umbrella that they could research. Students chose a wide variety of subjects including; voter disenfranchisement, mental health care for incarcerated individuals, the inability to get student loans and other important issues.

Community organizing is a key component of the community psychology PhD at this urban university. The Doctorate of Philosophy in Community Psychology, according to the university is "to develop skills necessary for advanced work at the interface of individuals, organizations, communities and public policy. Students who enter this program gain essential psychological, research and collaborative skills to address an array of social problems including, but not limited to, poverty, affordable housing, urban education, child abuse, substance abuse, violence, health and the environment" (National Louis University, 2015). The community organizing class is offered almost half way through the doctoral program which includes 69-72 semester hours for completion.

Data Collection

Qualitative researchers often gather multiple forms of data including interviews, observations, artifacts etc., so that the researcher can look at all the forms of data in order to organize them into categories or themes to create a holistic understanding of the subject or issue (Creswell, 2007). In qualitative research, the phases of the research are fluid and may change as the researcher enters the research arena. Qualitative research allows for participant action and interaction with the researcher—an important tenant of community psychology research. This interaction leads to co-constructed knowledge between the researcher and the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). As Lincoln and Guba state, "The key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from the participants and address the research to obtain information" (p. 39). Data for this research was gathered through participant observation by the researcher, journaling and focus group discussion.

Engagement through Reflective Journaling in the Classroom

Reflective journaling in the classroom is beneficial for students in a number of ways and results in a variety of positive outcomes. It helps develop critical thinking skills and self-understanding. It foster thinking in action and it can challenge students' old ways of thinking (Hubbs & Brand, 2010; Schuessler, Wilder & Byrd, 2012). A reflective journal does more than record events; it explores feelings, thoughts and values. When reflective thinking is combined with journaling, students develop stronger self analysis skills and an increased awareness of their environment (Schuessler, Wilder & Byrd, 2012).

Reflective journals are personal records of students learning experiences. Participants were asked to journal weekly as a part of this research. Journaling often falls into two categories, learning logs—which are less personal than journaling and often use more instructor prompting and reflective journaling, which is student driven. Student logs are mostly records of the student's work process, ideas and questions while reflections focus on students' perceptions and understanding. There are several types of reflection: *Observations*-the student writes about what they actually saw; *Questions*-students ask questions about the subject matter; *Self-awareness*-students, after thinking about a situation may place themselves into the situation and reflect on the ramifications; *Integration of theory and ideas*- Students reflect on the theory or ideas about cultural norms by connecting the theory with personal experience; *Critique*-students critique the situation through writing (RMIT, 2006).

Reflection journals have been used to improve student's attitudes about math. Researchers used journaling to provide insights into student's beliefs and attitudes regarding math education. Students were asked to reflect on their feeling about learning math and the answers were used as to create teacher brainstorming sessions to help turn negative feelings into positive attitudes (Page & Clarke, 2012). Reflective journaling is used in a variety of classes in the nursing field. A qualitative, descriptive study that reviewed the journals of 50 nursing students found that journaling helped students develop cultural humility (understanding that one's own culture is not the best and the only culture), and the commitment to address power imbalances in the patient-clinician dynamic. Journaling is pervasive throughout counseling psychology and other programs that focus on experiential learning.

In counseling, the journaling process has proven to be an effective tool for clients to create their own narrative, to express emotions and to track their thoughts about their recovery (Dwyer, Piquette, Buckle & McCaslin, 2013). In the counseling field it is becoming increasingly important as a tool for online counseling, especially for people who live in remote areas, who may not have access to face-to-face traditional counseling methods. Journaling also helps clients to disclose emotionally challenging issues because it is less intimate than the traditional setting.

Participants in this study were asked to journal weekly using prompts provided by the researcher. These prompts were structured so as to help understand participants' experiences in the course, their personal transformations and how their feelings and or behaviors have changed by end of the class. Journal questions were directed at the weekly video stimulus presented in class in the form of documentaries. Using a video stimulus has a number of important factors that make it useful for research regarding critical consciousness—first, it is something that students are familiar with given that they are used to a media driven environment where they are constantly inundated with movies, television, internet videos and YouTube vignettes. This may make them more receptive to learning from visual stimuli (Morton, 2007). In addition, "seeing" injustice is the first of the see-judge-act components of critical consciousness (Friere, 2010).

Photovoice, a research methodology that uses "presentational knowing" in the form of pictures has proven successful in "facilitating individual and social change" (p. 1). Participants use cameras to record and describe their communities, and then talk about them using critical discussion as a means to implement change. As some theorists argue, "Some participants developed a critical consciousness about their community, attending

to what was wrong and what could and should be changed" (Foster-Fishman, Nowell, Deacon, Nievar & McCann, 2005). Critical consciousness requires deep reflection. In order to attain this reflection Foster-Fishman et al., (2005) suggest the following framework in reviewing visual stimuli: Focus on the same set of framing questions. This helps contribute to insights that are ongoing, deeply reflective and connected. Using multiple methods for thinking and communicating helps participants to find the communication methods that are most helpful for the individual to find ways to express themselves. This research focuses on reflective journals as well as the researcher's notes on classroom discussion. In addition, the framing question will be posed and reposed every week so participants have the opportunity to connect material and reflection from week to week. This will also help the researcher to look for progress in student's critical consciousness awareness through the course of the class.

The prompts were short and open-ended. The emphasis on less structure allowed participants to feel less constricted, allowing for fuller and more reflective communications that focus on the participant's construction of personal knowledge (Schuessler, Wilder, & Byrd, 2012). In addition, participants were asked not to include their names on these weekly reflections so they would feel comfortable in sharing their personal thoughts. Participants were asked to reflect using such prompts as:

1. What from class tonight connected with something you have experienced in your own life? Talk about that experience.

2. Tell a story about an injustice you have seen in and around your own life or talk about what your perception is of the injustices posed in class tonight.

Focus Group

Focus groups offer rich data enhanced by the group format to provide more in-depth data than traditional individual interviews (Rabiee, 2004). Focus groups, in drawing from individual experience, provide unique insights into each individual's thoughts and feelings, while also taking advantage of the insight that can come from meaningful group dialogue. Focus groups also provide large quantities of data in a short period of time. What makes the use of focus groups unique and useful is their ability to collect individual experiences that are being simultaneously shaped by the group dynamic and group engagement (Rabiee, 2004). By creating focus groups comprised of individuals with pre-existing relationships or ties, the researcher is able to gather more candid dialogue because the participants have a familiarity with the group and may be more willing to question or dispute issues given their familiarity with each other, adding to the richness of the data (Rabiee, 2004).

During the last class, the instructor acted as the facilitator for a one-hour focus group discussion. The question guide included a "think back question," an "imagine question", a "rating question" and time for a group discussion in which each participant can share what they wrote and drew (Balan, 2005; Krueger, 2002). Participants will be asked to discuss their answers together. These questions were intended to give some understanding regarding the research questions. Krueger (2002) suggests using a variety

of questions including look back, drawing and ratings help to yield more powerful answers and meaningful data.

Focus group questions.

Example focus group questions:

1. Think back to an important learning point during this five-week course. Relive this moment—what were you thinking, what were you feeling, what made it stand out? When you are ready, write everything that comes to mind on the paper in front of you.

2. Draw a stick figure of yourself and write descriptive words around it that reflect on who you were before you came into this class, and then draw another stick figure of yourself and write descriptive words of you are after this class. If there is no change please indicate this.

3. Imagine that you are asked to teach this community organizing class and you are required to write a brief curriculum outline detailing subjects that you would cover, and methods of teaching you would use. Put it on paper and be ready to share with the class.

The facilitator asked students to reflect on each of these questions out loud, in a discussion period which was voice recorded and transcribed. Each participant was given the opportunity to share each answer with the group, and the facilitator encouraged discussion. All artifacts from this session were used in the research process.

Analyzing the focus group discussions included the following process: Discussion

was taped and transcribed. The facilitator used probes to facilitate deeper discussions and understandings by asking participants to explain further, give more examples or to offer a better understanding of participant's contributions. The researcher acted as co-facilitator to tape record and take notes on the session. Using Krueger & Casey (2000), the following protocol will be used to analyze the focus group transcriptions:

1. Transcribe focus group dialogue.
2. Researcher listens to tape, reviews field notes and reviews transcripts.
3. Prepare reports in a question-by-question format with amplifying quotes.
4. Look for emerging themes by question, and then overall.

Observation

Observation allows the researcher to gather information by observing the culture-sharing group, in this case, the classroom setting and to become a participant in the cultural setting (Creswell, 2007). The researcher is embedded in the culture sharing group in order to observe shared patterns of behavior, beliefs and language and to make meaning of those observations. This researcher took field notes that were divided into descriptive (what is happening at the moment) and reflective (my own observations and reactions) notes. The researcher informed participants that at no time will their identity be revealed. As a participatory study, the researcher offered participants the opportunity to contribute to how they would feel most comfortable discussing any issues that arise with the research and what protections they would want to make them feel that they are in a creative and safe environment. As a participant observer, the researcher wrote field

notes during the observations of class time. The field notes focused on discussion during class time—recorded verbal reactions, along with notes on physical reactions like standing up to speak or shifting uncomfortably. The notes on physical reactions were recorded to offer context on what was happening.

Analysis of the I-Poems

Weekly journals were analyzed using Gilligan's feminist, psychological approach—the listening guide, a voice-centered relational model: "The listening guide is method of psychological analysis that draws on voice, resonance, and relationship as ports of entry into the human psyche" (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertsch, 2003, p. 254). The listening guide method involves a series of steps that allow the researcher to "tune" into the many voices or the "layered nature of the psyche" that constitute the person (p. 254):

1. Listening for the plot
2. I-poems
3. Listening for contrapuntal voices, and
4. Composing an analysis

The first time through the journal readings, the researcher listened to the story the person told (the plot). The purpose of this first listening is to pay attention to the unfolding story and the who, what, where and when of the story being told. "Like a literary critic or a psychotherapist, we attend to recurring words and images, central metaphors, emotional resonances, contradictions, or inconsistencies in styles, revisions

and absences in the story, as well as shifts in the sound, voice" (Gilligan, et. al., 2003, p. 93). The researcher responds to her or his own intellectual and emotional responses, social location, how the participant touches us or doesn't touch us, so that the researcher can reflect on how these feeling may affect his or her understanding and interpretation of the participant's story (Gilligan et al., 2003). In listening to the plot, the researcher pays attention to the main themes, absences, contexts and landscape (Balan, 2005). During the second reading, the researcher tracks how the participant talks about themselves and uses this as the basis for constructing the I-poem. Creating the I-poem involves moving through the text and underlining each "I" and verb and/or associated text in black to construct a poem. Statements that include me or you when the participant is referring to themselves will be used if it adds to the context. In the second and third readings, the researcher listens for contrapuntal voices. "…listening is for contrapuntal voices, and this is the creative step in the analysis, because the researcher has to distinguish different voices within the conversation, discover which voices speak to the research question, and identify their characteristic features (passive or active voice, first or third person, distinctive images or metaphors, emotional tone)" (Kiegelmann, 2009, p. 10). *I* statements will be underlined in green, then red, to identify different voices, ie: awakened voice, silenced voice, voice of dissonance, and colors will be added for every additional voice if those emerge. These voices provide information for the overall interpretations and findings. Participants were supplied with spiral-bound notebooks to record their thoughts.

Creating the I-poem For This Research

The I-poems were created by sorting out all statements in the journals that began with "I", followed by any key statements for each participant. Each "I" statement is placed on its own line which creates the visual appearance of stanzas in a poem. Each week is denoted by an additional space between the stanzas. These short statements can be studied as a progression of voices detailing changes in voice that may not have been detected otherwise (Balan, 2005). The journal entries were read and all statements with I and the accompanying words were cut and pasted into a separate document. The process of eliminating additional words was a subjective elimination process in an attempt to keep the passages concise and to more clearly show the progression of voices within the entries.

Additionally, sentences that included the words *me, my, myself* and *we,* were included. The journals with the most complete and detailed entries were selected to be made into I-poems (those that responded every week for the entire duration of the class). The lines of the poems were left a bit longer than is the standard for I-poems, however, the phrases were left more in tact to fully illustrate the tone of the passage. This researcher then began identifying the prevalent voices in the passages, ultimately identifying three categories—silenced, empowered and dissonant. Silenced voices in the passaged were underlined in red, empowered in green and dissonant in blue. Unlike poems which are constructed using literary form such rhyme and rhythm, I-poems are constructed using a strategy developed by Gilligan as described in the literature review (Gilligan, 1982). Of the fourteen students who participated in this research, six completed all five weeks of journaling—those were all used to construct I-poems. The I-poems selected for analyzing are representative sample of the collected I-poems.

Silenced Voice - Red

The silenced voice is a disempowered voice—not being seen or heard, being ignored, not having a voice at all. The silenced voice also expresses the feeling of being a victim, not having the ability to fight back. This voice may see injustice but feels unable to do something about it. For example, "I was a victim to many injustices, I try to weather the abuse, I am a little frustrated, I was vilified, I've tried to talk out my feelings on this, I felt so powerless, I understand injustice, I understand rage, I did not say anything".

Empowered Voice - Green

This voice focuses on recognizing injustice, feelings of efficacy and the desire to act on the recognized injustices. This voice expresses the ability to recognize injustice and also to act upon that injustice. Some examples in the text include: "I can think about all who are involved and several possible solutions, I volunteer at my church to give back, I should have not tolerated or ignored the racist comment".

Dissonant Voice - Blue

The dissonant voice is the voice of tension that arises between their own values and the values of the dominant culture.

Though Gilligan used this method primarily for interview transcriptions, the method has been used by other researchers to analyze artifacts. Zambo and Zambo (2013) used the listening guide and I-poems to analyze the dissertation proposals of six doctoral students in the Arizona State University EdD program written in first person format. The poems were constructed to explain the challenges each student was facing and the actions they took in response to those challenges. The method was originally developed to track

changes and continuities in young women's subjectivity longitudinally. This method should be helpful to track changes in critical consciousness awakening and the changes that occur from week to week participation in this course as well as give insight into critical consciousness awakening.

Analyzing the focus group discussions will include the following process: Discussion was taped and transcribed. The facilitator used probes to facilitate deeper discussions and understanding by asking participants to explain further, give more examples or to offer a better understanding of participant's contributions. The researcher will act as co-facilitator to tape record and take notes on the session. Using Krueger & Casey (2000), the following protocol will be used to analyze the focus group transcriptions:

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4. Look for emerging themes by question, and then overall.

Results and Discussion

Participants in this research moved towards critical consciousness using a variety of tools that were negotiated within the classroom and between the students. When given the opportunity through the liberatory teaching methods described earlier—methods that allowed them to create their own learning environment as well as direct their classroom experience, participants appeared to first, negotiate those things that would allow them to

dialogue about issues that relate to injustice and social/economic disparity. The journey or transformation towards critical consciousness involves the individual learning to reflect on experience and to understand how much of what we know and do is shaped by oppressive elements somewhere. In the classroom it means the coming together of such individuals to reflect and share meanings, experience, and the praxis of liberation. In this classroom students expressed a variety of concerns and solutions about how this could be accomplished. Through difficult dialogue, participants sought new understandings and appeared to be moving towards critical consciousness. Discussion often centered around deconstructing history and finding new ways to understand how history was written by those in power and the events were often seen differently when understood through a critical lens. Participants worked together to create meaning regarding these events and to create new understandings of what these narratives meant, and how they, as individuals and groups, can "be" in the world. For some participants the move towards transcendence moved seamlessly—for others this was a more difficult task.

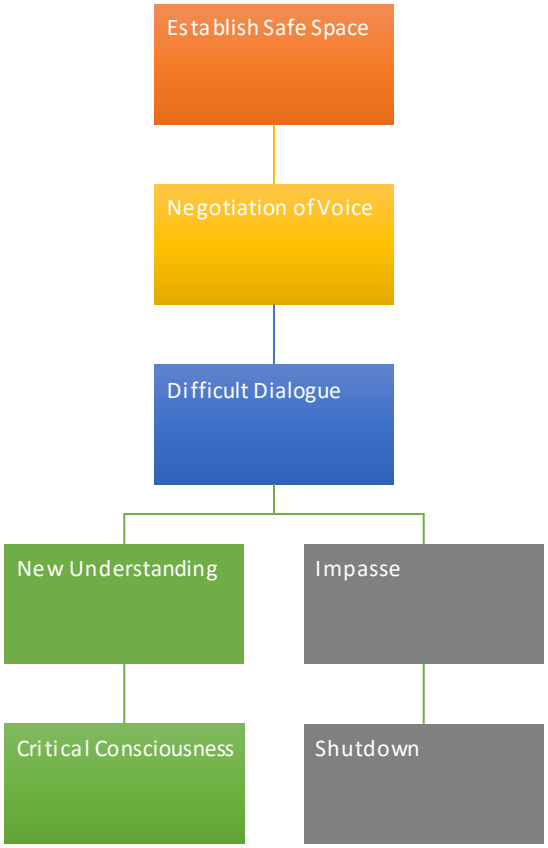

Figure 1.1 - Model of Critical Consciousness Development

The main purpose of this dissertation is to understand how graduate students move through this critical consciousness transformation. Within this classroom space students/participants were able to organically address ways in which to create egalitarian relationships in the classroom. Students felt comfortable and safe in expressing ideas and determining ways in which everyone had a voice. In their personal journals some participants wrote about feelings of powerlessness in their own lives. They wrote about having felt silenced and invisible at a number of levels through out their lives. The classroom then became a place where they could feel comfortable to express ideas that may not be widely encouraged by the outside world. For many participants the comfort of this classroom experience was the place in which they could work towards critical consciousness. The classroom became an arena for ideas and views to be shared,

sometimes debated. In classroom discussion, for example, a student explains that experience is often understood through a lens that is connected to race. One of the participants used the metaphor of an apple saying that he may bite in to an apple and tell another person about the taste, but unless they have eaten an apple, it cannot be as vivid or clear. The symbolic apple he explains, is like race. He can tell someone about his black experience, but they cannot fully understand it unless they have been followed by the police based on skin color.

It should be noted that while many students moved along a continuum toward critical consciousness, other participants felt they couldn't participate. Whether their reluctance or silence was attributable to discussions of race—feeling like an other or an outsider or because people could not break through the stereotypes that keep them apart, students (i.e., participants) moved away from critical consciousness, shutting down and disconnecting from the dialogue. "I have dealt with the judgment of black women before, and I won't do it again" said a participant in her journal. She says she wants to break through stereotypes but she can't because she feels stifled and unable to express what she thinks. The following sections offer a more detailed review of the setting, the data and the analysis that led to the chart above.

Community Organizing Coursework

The community organizing class is offered as a part of a community psychology doctoral program. Community psychology focuses on enhancing the quality of life for individuals and communities by integrating research with action. Community psychologists represent a shift from focusing on the individual alone and look instead to understand how the individual coexists within the context of social connections (Dalton,

Elias & Wandersman, 2007). One of the goals of community psychology is to, as the psychologist, be part of an empowerment process with individuals and communities. They work as equal partners of those who have been marginalized by society and they work against unjust power structures.

Social justice is an important component of the community psychology values. The community organizing class addresses many of these goals and is intended to be a hands-on exploration into issues of race and concerns for social justice and public policy. According to the course description, the course "will explore how citizens organize for social change, specifically how people build, and or re-build, social capital within a community as well as physical infrastructure. There will be a strong emphasis placed on cultural issues." (National-Louis University, 2015).

This course precedes Advanced Community Development and Policy—which focuses on the ways in which community psychologists can contribute to city planning initiatives and resident planning approaches in the wake of displacement factors caused by gentrification. Though these classes have typically only been offered to the students in the PhD program, within their consistent set of cohort members in community psychology, during this session, students from the masters in public policy were invited to participate.

Seventeen students in total registered for the class and fourteen students agreed to participate in this research. The majority of the students were African American. Four were European-American, two were Latina and six of the participants were male. Since this was a hybrid PhD/masters level course, most of the students were late twenties, early thirties to early sixties. When the instructor informed students that the course would be

merged with students from the university's masters in public policy students, the first week started overshadowed by the students' mutual feelings of discomfort regarding coming together with others who they did not know for the class. These expressions of discomfort laid the groundwork for some of the more salient themes that will be discussed later in this section. Students expressed their opposition to the blending of two cohorts to the instructor and journaled about their apprehension.

The instructor provided evocative readings each week as well as presented a documentary each week as a starting point for discussion. During week one students watched Bully, a 2011 documentary on the effects of bullying in U.S schools. The movie follows the live of five students who faced bullying on a daily basis. The movie also looked as some of the policy problems associated with the problem.

The second week, students watched The House I Live In, which chronicles the failing war on drugs and the mass incarceration of African American men. The documentary looks at the drug war from a variety of perspectives from the narcotics officers, federal judge and Senator to the dealers and grieving mothers. In week three, the instructor showed Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom a movie about the life of president Nelson Mandela who was imprisoned on Robbin Island in South Africa from 1964 to 1990 and founded the African National Congress and became the first president of democratic South Africa. In week four students shared short pieces of documentaries (from YouTube and other sources) that enhanced the dialogue for the week. There was no video for the final week of class.

The readings included excerpts from Friere's Pedogogy of the Oppressed, Martin Luther King's Letter from a Birmingham Jail, works from Gandhi and the writings of

Saul Alinsky, an Chicago-American community organizer and writer. Students also read early on in the course, apparently in an attempt to make the students think about persuading people in positive ways, Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People. It was not clear whether every member of the class read all of the material, but a substantial number of students appeared to be well aquatinted with the material and offered insights into the readings as well a contributed to the dialogue regarding the readings.

The instructor used the documentaries and the readings to begin problem posing questions that encouraged deep and thoughtful dialogue in which students were able to talk about their own experience as well as the readings and movies. This teaching method of problem-posing involves listening, dialogue and action and puts students in the position of becoming fellow dialoguers (Shor, 1992). The instructor spent very little of the class time for lectures and used most of the class time for discussion.

During the first week of class the idea of "being heard" became a recurring theme. The PhD cohort was accustomed to an informal method of contribution to the class dialogue, speaking out when they had something to say. The public policy students on the other hand often were used to raising their hand and waiting to speak until they were called upon by the instructor. At times, particularly when the subject matter was heated, and when many students were speaking out, the masters students went unnoticed as PhD students chimed in without raising their hands. This issue was raised by several of the public policy students during class time. After class an email was sent out by a student to fellow classmates, the instructor, and this researcher, highlighting this concern.

> First of all, I want to state that the April 9th class session was spirited, thoughtful, an illuminating. I did a great deal of thinking about the ideas and issues that were

> expressed. The discussion and participation of all, reaffirmed my belief that everyone has something important and original to contribute to the dialogue of what it means to be human and to be in a community. Because of my belief that everyone has something that the community needs to hear, I became concerned that that the community could not hear the voices of some of its members. This was in large part because of the structure of the tables and the classroom. I think we need to address that. I think we need to change the table arrangement so that everyone is assured a seat at our community table. Perhaps a diamond shape, if that is possible. Or, if that is not possible could we get a large circle without tables? The question becomes do we need tables so that we may write or type our notes?

Other members of the class wrote back on the thread.

> With regards to voices being heard, I have been the hand raising type but I appreciate the format of our cohort speak when waiting to be heard. While I have felt uncomfortable in the beginning, I have grown so much from learning to be assertive when relevant points should be made. With the nature of organizing communities for a greater cause, I am glad that the skill of asserting myself has emerged.

Another student responded to the thread—

> I would go with the consensus of the class but I also feel strongly about being inclusive of all the members of our community by having a circle like a circle of trust. Just my thoughts.

One possible external precipitator of incident and the suggestion of a circle of trust was that the The Peace Circle or Circles of Trust brings people together to better understand one another and to solve community problems. These events are set up to work through conflict or to solve community problems in a variety of venues. In a circle of trust everyone is placed in a circle without any furniture or desks between them. Everyone takes a turn talking without interruption.

When students returned for the second week, the instructor began the class by addressing the issue, allowing the students to determine how the physical classroom setting should be designed and what the process for being heard would be. Students chose a circle formation for discussion but opted to keep tables in the circle for note taking.

They also decided that they would continue to speak out and not raise their hands for the instructor to call on them before speaking. The issue appeared to be resolved until the last week of class, when discussion turned into heated debate. During that time two students who wanted to be heard in the discussion, stood to speak to the class, after they tried to speak but were drowned out by a multitude of other student voices.

Also during the second week of class, news of the death of Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old African American man, arrested by the Baltimore police had spread. The students and instructor agreed that this was an important issue that would should become a part of the dialogue in this course. Gray was allegedly apprehended for carrying a switchblade, a charge that later proved to be false. On the way to the police station he was injured and subsequently died of injuries to his spinal cord. Six Baltimore police officers were suspended and later charged for his death. The public response to the incident included demonstrations which turned to looting. During the second week of class, and subsequently the other classes as well, this was a recurring discussion. This incident, the media coverage of the story, and the local government's reaction became an ongoing discussion. These discussions led to other discussions, including the Black Lives Matter campaign. Black Lives Matters was created in 2012 in response to the killing of Trayvon Martin. Black Lives Matter is a movement which focuses on the state sponsored violence against African Americans and includes the systematic disempowerment of black lives, according to the website.

The instructor also asked students to choose areas of interest regarding social justice issues that they could write weekly blogs about. There were a variety of subjects chosen including: affordable housing, budget cuts for non-for-profits, budget cuts for

foster care minors aging out of the foster care system and moving into independent living, charter schools vs public schools, Black Lives Matter and dealing with discrimination and violence, homeless issues and mental health budget cuts.

Many of the teaching methods the instructor used through this class were indicative of the liberatory, democratic, non-banking form of education introduced by Freire (2007). Students appeared deeply engaged in offering their own stories and experiences and they participated in dialogue about the problems they face in their everyday lives. Students were encouraged to make connections with broader social issues. Students questioned the nature of these inequities by digging into the historical roots of some of these problems. The instructor avoided teacher monologues about topics and instead worked to facilitate learning and often took notes himself indicating that he was joined with students learning from them as well. Freire (2010) insisted that critical pedagogy could facilitate critical political conscious. This setting seemed ideal to observe and understand how critical consciousness developed in higher education students.

Creating Safe Space

An environment that encourages participation and an honest sharing of ideas in the academic arena, particularly in discussions around difficult or challenging subjects like race, diversity and oppression, is key to critical consciousness (Holley & Steiner, 2005). Critical pedagogy is rooted in dialogue about difficult issues. Safe space is an environment which allows students to feel empowered to talk about issues that are difficult, emotionally intense and even painful (Tomoka, 2009; Holly & Steiner, 2005). The literature on safe spaces indicates that having a safe environment doesn't necessarily mean that participants feel full comfort and safety—in fact difficult dialogue often makes

participants feel uncomfortable. Safe spaces should allow students to feel that they can disclose ideas that will not be judged and they will be heard. What makes these environments safe goes beyond styles and content that can be communicated and can actually involve the physical environment. For example seating that is not conducive to classroom discussion can be an obstacle to safe space and critical consciousness related dialogue (Holly & Steiner, 2005). Students in the classroom negotiated safe space for themselves during the first and second week, but more recently activists have discussed the need for dialogue around racial justice to go beyond "safe spaces" and involve "brave spaces", meaning that for transformative change to occur, difficult conversations need to be had.

While much of the literature focuses on how safe (or brave) space is created from above by an instructor for example, far less is known about how such spaces are negotiated from below through shared responsibility (Holly & Steiner, 2005). This class emailed and discussed the physical layout of the class and this became an important issue that students worked to resolve together. They chose to arrange tables into a circle and asked that everyone sit in the formation and not move behind the circle so that everyone was able to see each other and had the opportunity to speak and be seen.

While this new arrangement appeared to satisfy students' expressed desire to be heard (voice) and have a safe space in which to engage in dialogue—this new found arrangement and sense of cohesion was fragile.

Difficult dialogue or courageous conversations

A difficult dialogue involves the sharing of written or verbal ideas regarding issues of social justice such as race, sexism, homophobia, diversity and privilege that

arouses an awakening of conflicting views among participants (Watt, 2007). This sharing of views has also been renamed and reframed into a more positive way and called courageous conversation to highlight both students and instructor's courage in engaging in these kinds of conversations. The purpose of courageous conversations is to "reach a common understanding about diverse experiences of privilege and oppression" (Singh & Salazar, 2011, p. 214). Freire insisted that critical consciousness could not be achieved unless meaningful dialogue takes place regarding equity and power relations. Discussions which address issues of oppression and social structure in a group of multiple ethnic identities can become heated. Students in this class were no exception and as the discussion became heated some students engaged with the discussion and others retreated. Perhaps due to all the emphasis on race, and people of color, particularly African Americans, and less emphasis on class differences, a different voice arose in the last class. Certainly the openness that was engendered led one student to share:

> James: All I wanted to share, and I'll cut to it, is the fact that I felt and feel somewhat disenfranchised from the whole Black Lives Matter issues and movement because, hey man, I'm just a white dude. You don't count. I didn't feel welcomed to participate, I didn't feel invited to have an opinion because I'm a white guy. And what does my vote count, I'm one of the oppressors! You bastard! …We all have some kind of privilege, all of us. You are PhD students that give you some privilege.
>
> *Another student who self identified as a African American American/Latina added this—*
>
> Michael: You know, I think to a certain extent that's true but some truth is just truth. So for a caucasian man to say he has no privilege, that's just not true. So I can't change my opinion on that. It's just not the truth. I think that's something that we didn't talk about enough. And it's that self awareness for a white man, like the world was built for you. The United States of America was built for a white man. It was not built for a woman, it was not built for any person of color, it wasn't even built for people who didn't own property. That had to be established later on. Right? So, and

> we're still living under some of those policies that were set up for white men.
>
> Monica: Harold has a right to his opinion. And I understood that, because I can remember first starting in school where I was the only black student and there weren't nothing but....my white classmates around me and I could see the colleagues would end up being really close friends, I had a different opinion and I sounded like way in outer space sometimes when I'd open my mouth. But they never vilified me, I never felt judged, it was this opportunity to understand that there are different experiences in this world.

Though these voices, sometimes in seeming opposition, can help provide the means to critique structures of domination and move towards truth, informed by commitments to social justice (Weis & Fine, 2005, p. 225). In this discussion, an individual who had experienced marginalization, as both a woman and an African American/Latina, was able to challenge white privilege by pointing out the advantages that white men have, a form of privilege so ingrained it is not even recognized. The classroom discussion seemed to validate the experience of non-dominant communities and allowed them to challenge oppressive practices and to negotiate change agency. Discussions like these are not easy and often teachers choose not to have them because they create discomfort and dissent. Many of the discussions during this class were challenging yet productive in that the discussions introduced students to a variety of differing ideas, experiences and world views. Participants reflected on their own experiences and sometimes challenged each other but these encounters often ended in participants experiencing new ways of thinking. There were however, also times when these dialogical encounters ended in resistance. When differing perspectives are introduced, contrary to fundamental beliefs and values held by one or a few students, can produce cognitive dissonance. When exposed to new, seemingly contradictory ideas,

select students may feel confused or even frustrated before they fully synthesize the new ideas—Piaget referred to this cognitive process as scaffolding. By listening to a variety of competing voices, some students may develop a better ability to understand the subtleties of class, race and social inequalities (King, 2005). If dialogue leads to the integration, rather than suppression, the academic setting can become a place where students are able better able to engage productively, acknowledge differences, accept disagreement and, sometimes, develop new ways of thinking and knowing. Monica, in listening to two very different experiences, was able to become a bridge by saying that she has experienced being an outsider and that she still believes all people should be heard and not vilified.

In another dialogue, students engaged in a discussion of black men being pulled over, while driving, in proportionately larger numbers, compared to their white counterparts. The dialogue turned to the question of whether these unwarranted traffic stops are conducted by a handful of bad cops or whether this is a pervasive problem in police departments overall. As in the last dialogue, students of color challenge white privilege and also institutional racism.

> Andrew: Let me ask you a question—has anyone here ever been hassled by a cop?
>
> *Students all answer at once. Some acknowledge in the affirmative and one says 'I've been arrested'*
>
> Andrew: If Mr. Whitebread here [pointing to himself] has been hassled by cops don't you think I have some understanding of how much worse it would be if [he is cut off]
>
> Daniel: You may have been hassled Mr. Whitebread, but driving while Black is a completely different thing. If I tell you this apple tastes good but you don't know what this apple tastes like you may understand that food tastes good in general but you don't know what it really tastes like.

> Andrew: I get it, I get it, but but if we don't have sympathy for one another…

Students in this class engaged in many discussions around race and privilege. Students and instructors alike must be willing to leave safe harbors and move into troubled waters to move through the "messiness of multiple and contradictory truths that do not come together in some unifying syntheses" in order to grow (Weis & Fine, 2007). These conflicts can either lead to no resolution or to move participants to new levels of self awareness, areas where individuals better appreciate different viewpoints, or, at least live with disagreements. In this discussion, Andrew really wanted to empathize, and even insisted that he could understand what it feels like to be hassled by authorities. But as Daniel indicated, through the apple metaphor, people of color have endured oppression in ways that cannot be experienced by those who have not endured intergenerational trauma. At some level Daniel was asking that Andrew acknowledge that it would take significantly more to have the same understandings, or range of experiences, as so many people of color.

In another set of conversations, students reacted to the Baltimore riots, challenging the heavy police and national guard response:

> Harold: No, and for the crime of breaking curfew they got 5,000 national guard and then 2,000 police with guns and helicopters and someone could [lose] their life for breaking curfew. It's a darn shame.
>
> David: Well, there is a little more than breaking curfew that was going on. You have to at least admit that.
>
> Harold: Oh really? What?
>
> David: There was some rioting going on.
>
> Harold: I mean, but that was over, I mean but you know, at that moment, you have 5,000 National Guard and 2,000 policemen and you have

helicopters and guns and armored vehicles ready to kill somebody for violating curfew.

Sarah: Right, but we're not just talking about a curfew, we're talking about a curfew that was put into effect because of rioting. This is something different than just an event that occurred but at the same time, they showed some other communities of African Americans where people were out an milling around even though curfew…

Harold: I hear everyone. I think that we've started somewhere when we were looking at Freire and we were talking about how people have been socialized to accept oppression. So we can have oppression thrown at us and for some reason we have a tendency to justify it. I agree, but I don't agree because we live in a society where somebody can get killed for breaking curfew so we start talking about…how can you justify that? Yes, there was rioting, so somebody gets killed for breaking into a store and grabbing a handful of...I mean in the Dollar Store...

Sarah: I'm not saying anyone should be killed but I am saying that you know, what we've seen in well let's just call it a donkey show, where all of the publicity mongers show up and they're there for reasons other than what the initial problem was and they want to perpetuate property damage and more attacks on people

David: Right

Harold: Should somebody die?

Sarah: Well, but did you watch the video of some of the protesters who were throwing bricks?

Harold: Should somebody die for throwing bricks?

Sarah: Hold on, did you see in front of the ballpark [Harold: should somebody die?] No, but there was a woman in a wheelchair where there's bricks flying over her head. They didn't care who was getting hit, they didn't care who they were attacking, they were just attacking people and there was a police presence and no one was moving in to do anything and I got really angry cause I was just sitting there like, you know there's children, people are there for a ballgame and they were acting a fool and you know, for what? Because, they weren't the police.

David: No one should die for stealing stuff but a business owner shouldn't be held liable for all this property damage because of people just, [someone interjects: they've got insurance] well insurance doesn't cover a lot of those things and some people may not have that, you know so law

> enforcement is there to protect life and property so we have to walk that fine line.

During these dialogues, participants were all deeply engaged. The dialogue challenged them to reconsider their worldviews and rethink preconceived ideas. This an important step in critical consciousness development. The conversation organically moved between students with no authority that directed the movement of the conversation. Students were not "docile listeners" but rather critical "co-investigators in dialogue" (Friere, 2010 p. 81). In this vignette, some students see the police and national guard through one lens—that of protectors of the community and the peacekeepers acting in a defensive mode, while others view police as offensive—striking out at an oppressed, marginalized community with a overtly threatening presence in the face of poverty and police brutality.

These discussions moved from one point of view to another as students and instructor taught and were taught—co-constructing knowledge. Individuals of color challenged each other as well, to share and understand their own vastly different experiences.

> As an African-American male who was raised by my mom because my father was off fighting our nation's wars, I have a different perspective on what it means to be black. I don't subscribe to a hyphenated American. We can't use cultural differences as a reason to not move forward. I would not look at a person's ancestry and ask them to own it. I can ask them to acknowledge it and then move forward.

Deconstructing history

Participants deconstructed history by revisiting important events and times in history, some of which they remembered from their personal experiences,

others that were general historical events. History is a narrative, a structure that explains culture to itself. It is also a tool for making meaning from past events. This narrative is often written to serve those in power (Cutrara, 2003). These participant observations and newly formed understandings of historical events often helped in reframing the cause and effect of the past events and helped to shape their ideas of current events—particularly how to go about addressing the current societal power arrangement.

Participants, made meaning of the historical events discussed in class and, as a result, found new ways to think about themselves and their communities in relation to society. Participants were able to reflect on the injustices perpetrated by the dominant class. One of the participants who self identified as one of the 'oldest members' of the class reflected on the the Willis Wagons, a term used to identify the portable classrooms used for African American students in Chicago over fifty years ago. They were named after the then Superintendent of Schools Benjamin Willis. Even though white schools had better, permanent facilities with empty seats, African American students were not allowed access. Instead they were moved into aluminum trailers that were generally overcrowded. A boycott in 1963 finally led to the removal of many of the trailers, though some were still being used as late as the 1990's.

> I remember the time of the Willis Wagons. Large numbers of African Americans came into Chicago suddenly. They wouldn't build schools for us so they put trailers in the parking lot. I remember going to school in those trailers. My class was assigned but I was waiting on a teacher. There were no teachers so you had a place to sit but no teachers. I can say that academically I still struggle with things. So you see economic violence kills people slowly and softly.

The participant connected these historical events—events that he was a part of, and connected them to the current social injustices taking place in the African American community in Baltimore. He explained that these historical injustices had long term consequences that have driven the modern day African American community into economic disparity and a loss of self esteem and self value.

> It becomes generational when we look at people in Baltimore, those people didn't just get off the boat and neither did their parents so I mean if I don't know how to read and write how can I support my child, right? Our people have been disenfranchised for years, so we are talking hundreds of years—generations of people who have not had access and who were told they were less than by every system they have ever come in contact with, that you are less than and then you are told pull yourself up by your bootstraps.

Deconstructing history was a theme that occurred not only during class discussion, but also in journals. The participant above focused on this event to explain how the white ruling class of oppressors cut African Americans out of the educational system which has greatly compromised the educational and economic opportunities for today's African American youth and contributed to the events in Baltimore.

Participants redressed these historical events in ways that could help them understand current events. They often talked about poverty, the lack of education and the systematic denial of resources in the context of continual decades of oppression that have led to the current inequities. Students, through critical dialogue and journaling about historical events, learned about power systems, how they are made and how they can be disrupted. Discussing historical events related to the civil rights movement became an opening for critical dialogue and a time to question existing knowledge. The connection of historical events to

modern day events seemed to help students understand how history and social power can be changed through organizing action, and how society is always unfinished with many possible changes and transformations. This was one of the ways that students critical dialogue and journaling led to 'seeing'.

> What was happening to folks back then is still happening now. I went to work and argued with my colleagues about why black lives matter. And one of my colleagues asked why do black lives matter? She was like well, why? Well all lives matter. But after seeing this movie and the historical portrayal of this movie, it just made me think Martin Luther King weren't no punk, lets just get that straight. He stood by his beliefs and if that meant that he would be hurt or killed in the process, he was willing to accept that. He was just not willing to return fire with fire. And that's what I got from that. He was willing to go through the fire if that's what it took. And I think the solution today is something similar.

Looking at historical perspectives may be helpful in moving students along the critical consciousness continuum. In this class, revisiting history was a regular occurrence and it appeared the participants were able to gain insight into current challenges through those reflections and to recognize or see oppression as well as think about ways to go about changing things.

Recognizing Systems of Oppression (Judging)

Participants in the class often reflected on the systems of oppression that perpetuate stereotypes and, ways to confront systems of oppression as well as address issues of power and privilege. During a class discussion, one participant reflected on the media coverage during the Baltimore riots.

> During the Baltimore riots, the media called a black sorority—a gang. This sorority has been around for around a hundred years. But the reporters didn't think it was important enough to google. And, there was a young man being interviewed and all the reporter did was to bring up the liquor store looting. So the agenda is to

> make sure that we make them look like militants, and brutes and thugs. The media has a mission. They do this so the rest of the people watching can say that's a darn shame how they are tearing that city up and not about how they need economic, academic, mental health resources.

In Freire's non-banking form of education, the teacher is charged with drawing information from the students rather than depositing information (Freire, 2010). In this class, the instructor allowed students the space to do this as well as to integrate their own lived experiences based in part, on their economic and cultural backgrounds, into the classroom experience. Marginalized students often subjugate their own experience in order to fit into the dominant culture's way of thinking (Williams, 2009). In this class, a participant reflected on how she and her friends had been "fooled" into believing that the gentrification of her neighborhood would lead to better housing and better schools for the community.

> I saw it first hand, I had friends that kept on leaving the projects. They called it gentrification and they were making it sound like it was a celebratory thing. You were gonna live in a nice house. My friends in the project told me 'we are gonna live in nice houses'. But in reality it was the worst thing that could have happened because those people, people like me, couldn't afford to live there.

During another discussion, one participant shared her insight into the Chicago school system and their move towards the privatization of the public school system. "They [city government] blurred the line between charter and public to convince people that they are not in privatized system."

Students organically used methods that helped them move through the seeing, judging, acting phases of critical consciousness—seeking safe space, difficult dialogue, deconstructing history and connecting it to today's issues and

what can be done to fight oppression and deconstruction systems of oppression—media—all leading to critical consciousness awareness.

During the focus group discussion, participants confirmed this by explaining that they felt a sense of awakening an "explosion" of ideas all coming at once. Students said they understood and even experienced the many forms of oppression addressed in the class but didn't always have an outlet for addressing some of these issues until this program. However, being in an academic arena, where all voices were heard, even if there was dissent, created a kind of synergy that was not only empowering but it helped them to think about ways to change what was happening in society. "Man, it felt like my head was exploding—to be able to look at all these things that I grew up seeing, but never really saw—you know what I mean?," said one participant during the focus group discussion.

Participants agreed that while sharing experiences with those who shared the same background was very helpful, others said sharing ideas and difficult discourse with other who do not share the same background or agree on the same issues was particularly important in their journey to critical consciousness. "I've been naive to what's been going on till I got here" said one female participant who explained that coming to this class made her see things in a very different way. Another participant explained that being able to talk about tough subjects in a way that was respectful to all of the students allowed some students to feel free to share their perspectives.

> I think for me talking about the need for an intellectual community, a community that comes together to handle some of these issues is important. I've been a part of other communities that are more arguments and wrestling match rather than something organized.

> Talking about how to get people in a community to come together to deal with some of these issues. I definitely have come to see the need to move and facilitate the issues and problems along. I think we have been able to do that here.

The process of seeing, judging and acting is the basis for moving towards critical consciousness and in this classroom situation, that seemed to be abundantly apparent as students shared important revelations about 'seeing' oppression and taking action, during the focus group session. In the following excerpt from the focus group, Harold talks about being a part of a system in which people accept oppression and then he ends his statement by insisting that there has to be another way or model for living.

> A big thing for me is the idea that there are systems of oppression and how many people think that these systems which are in place are ok—It's ok to be a part of a what I call a police state. Its dangerous to speak up in some arenas and in some places you can even get killed. I mean someone says go home and you don't and they bring in all these troops. And many of use think this is ok. Many of us have accepted oppression as the way of life. Maybe there is no other model of humanity than that of the oppressor. [Long pause] We have to create other models.

Other participants also talked about how this classroom experience changed how they see things and how they plan to find ways to change social injustice: "I haven't had an opportunity to affect real change but I look forward to joining the fight against injustice everywhere because of this academic experience."

The action of reflection combined with praxis or action to change current systems of oppression and to create transformation became evident as students began to talk about ways in which they could actively "work on" or "fix" some of the issues that were discussed in class. Participants were encouraged by talking

about the problems that oppressed individuals and communities face and that they were ready to move to the next step. "There's been a lot of talk, but I think we need to move to solutions." "It's easy to talk about a problem but we need to create a simple plan that we can do right now". During the focus group participants focused on the action of praxis, by brainstorming on ways in which the class could create tangible ways to overcome the oppressive factors discussed in class. The critical consciousness process involves a process which moves in a circular motion in which individuals identify issues of oppression in their everyday lives and then through dialogue with their "cultural circle" they would either clarify situations or seek action outside the group (Williams, 2009).

At the center of liberator education is the action-reflection-action. Focus group interaction indicated that students were moving through this process. One participant shared their new found willingness to get out and do something with other participants: "We all need to have a field day where we are charged to go into the community and taking part in some type of community action or as a group, as a collective group we go to a community meeting somewhere."

Self Reporting Progress

Questions from the focus question allowed participants to self reflect and access their experiences with the course in terms of how it changed them. Participants drew stick figures and used descriptive words to identify any changes or transformation in themselves after the course came to an end. The self reporting documents allowed participants to reflect on how they saw themselves before and after the class in terms of critical consciousness awareness. From these

drawings, participants indicated that a change had taken place as a result of taking the course. While the kinds of changes were different for each, all participants who created the stick figures indicated that there was a new or renewed commitment to making change (acting) on social justice issues.

In Figure 2.1, this participant indicates that there is no real change in how she feels about social justice issues or that there were any personal transformations that she experienced. Yet, in looking at how she describes herself before taking the class and then after taking the class, there does appear to be some change. In the first stick figure, she really focuses on her personality traits—happy, outgoing and intuitive. In the second stick figure, she indicates that she is angry—a result of seeing and dialoguing about a variety of injustices.

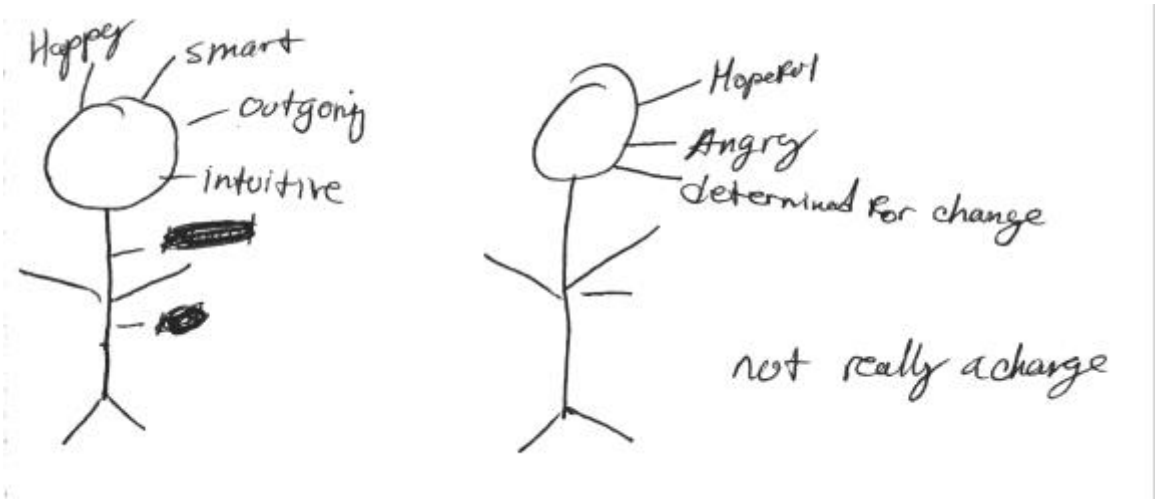

Figure 2.1

And, she writes "angry" and "determined for change" which may mean that she is ready to act on issues of social injustice, all a part of the movement to critical consciousness.

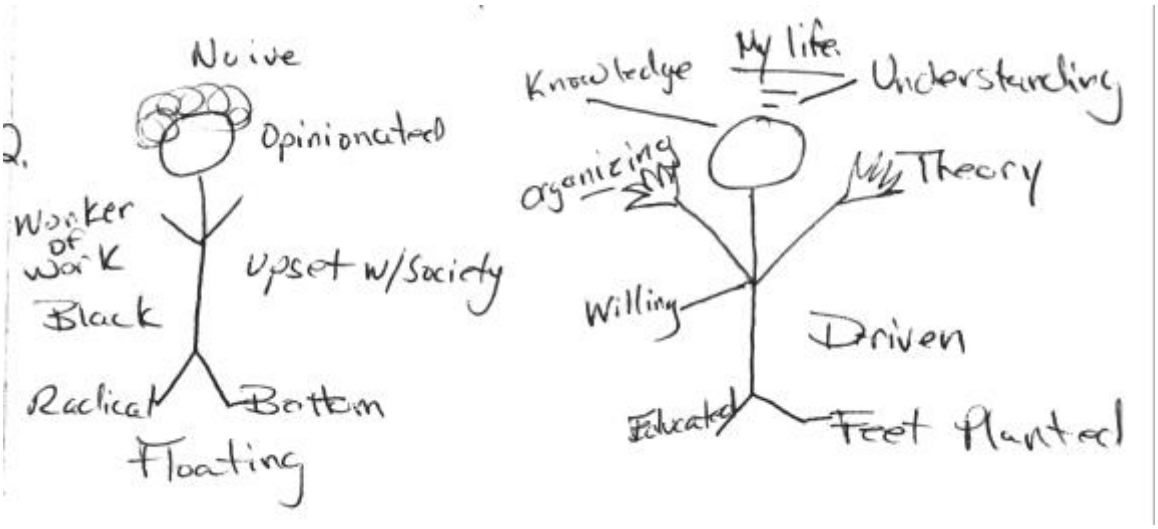

Figure 2.2

In figure 2.2, the participant offers insight into many personal transformations that have occurred over the life of the course. At the top of the first stick figure, the

participant writes "naive" and at the top of the second stick figure, the word "knowledge" appears indicating that the course helped her to gain some important information that has made her more knowledgeable about social justice issues. She also writes that she was "floating" but after the class her feet are "planted". She also indicates that she is "organizing" or moving towards acting on issues of social injustice. Words like "willing" "driven" and "organizing" are action words that may indicate a movement towards the action part of critical consciousness.

Figure 2.3

While Figure 2.3 is much more brief than most of the others, the participant indicates a realization that there are some individuals in society to which more attention must be paid in regards to their 'rights'. The drawing shows a transition or transformation in thought. All people matter, but there are people whose rights need to be addressed.

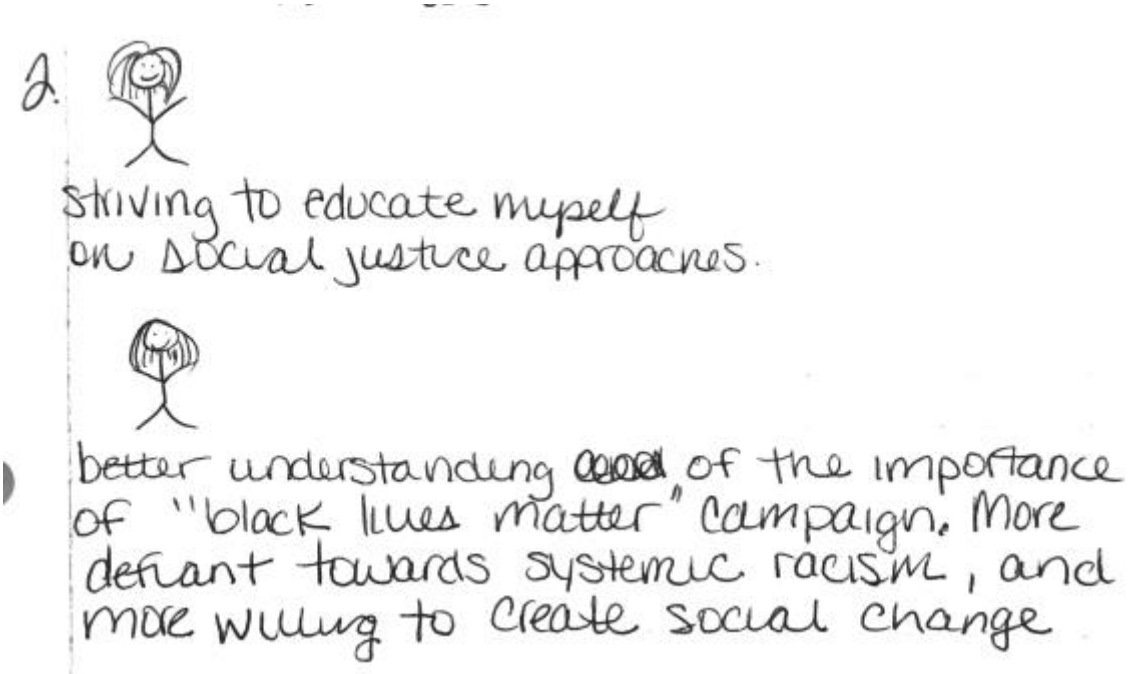

Figure 2.4

Figure 2.4 shows the same kind of transformation. The participant moves from wanting to learn about social justice to being 'defiant' and 'willing to create social change'.

I-Poems Confirm Growth

Anne, a woman in her 20's writes in her journal that she is a white woman with African American friends and family, who has experiences both privilege as a white woman, but has seen first hand the the discrimination and oppression experienced by people of color in her life. She reflects on her feelings about not acting—not doing something to change what was happening. She expresses some level of cognitive dissonance as a result of feeling privileged while watching the injustices taking place around her.

Much of her I-poem focuses on seeing and recognizing injustice around her. "It appears to me that there is an intentional lack of education in the U.S. I think that intention is to keep citizens blinded." She also writes " I am starting to find out about many disheartening policies and practices taking place". Her I-poem moves across the critical consciousness continuum of seeing and judging "I think that if education policy were a true value of the elite then many societal problems would be eliminated". And, finally in the later stanza's of her I-poem she begins to talk about and even urge the instructor to act on the things that have been discussed in class. Unlike the next I-poem which focuses on the participant's inability to speak out—to do something about perceived injustices, Anne's I-poem is action oriented. "I recently started realizing that there were many clients at work that not receiving SNAP, even thought they met the financial requirements. I was able to get then signed up that day." In her journal she

indicates that the liberator learning methods, the discussion, the topics and the discourse has helped her to not only see injustice but it has helped her to find tangible ways to go about changing things.

Description of Voices	Color Code
Silenced Voice	Red
Empowered Voice	Green
Dissonant Voice	Blue

Figure 3.1 - I-poem color coding legend

Anne's I-poem

I experienced being bullied
I made a conscious decision to become the bully
I have become aware of how bullying has affected me
I think that bullying needs to be addressed by all involved institutions
I recently noticed that my work was not allowing clients to use their Metrical (Mexican ID) for proof of address/identity.
I realized something unethical about this.
I took it upon myself to call the Greater Chicago Food Depository to find out the actual policy.
I brought the info to my managers, and now we accept Metriculas!
It was emotional, given my experience.

I am starting to find out about many disheartening policies and practices taking place.
I have seen many injustices experienced by my black peers and family members.
I called the girl out and made sure the teacher held her accountable.
I feel angered by the poor treatment of drug addicts in society.
I believe a bottom up approach is necessary.

I can draw connections from both. [Gandhi and Alinksy]
I understand the possible need of an aggressive approach to oppression.
I appreciate the humility and resilience in passive resistance.
I would like to be more like Gandhi.
I am at a cognitive dissonance with what I know is right (Gandhi) and what may be easier (Alinsky).
I once has friends over and one of the guests used the 'n' word in a very negative context.

My cousin and I were highly offended, as we have black family and is a sensitive subject (to say the least)
I did not say anything.
I felt uncomfortable.
I should have not tolerated/ignored the racist comment.
I should have spoke up.
I am going to go home and watch the rest of Mandela.
I understand passive resistance and civil disobedience.
I need to understand Alinsky in more complexity.
I think we need a collaborative approach.

It appears to me that there is an intentional lack of education in the U.S.
I think that intention is to keep citizens blinded.
I think that if education policy were a true value of the elite then many societal problems would be eliminated.
I experienced an extreme culture shock when I became an adult.
I think that if I was taught to think critically about the world that wouldn't have been an issue.
I experienced (and still experience at times) a great deal of cognitive dissonance.
I still experience at times a great deal of cognitive dissonance.
I began to realize social problems that I wasn't exposed to because of my privilege.
I recently started realizing that there were many clients at work that not receiving SNAP, even thought they met the financial requirements.
I was able to get him signed up that day.
I enjoyed the documentary and the topic of discussion.
I think it's clear that we understand the problems
I would have liked to get deeper into our options
I don't see that much hope for drastic change for the near future.
I continue to learn the importance of the term "black lives matter"
I continue to see a rival discourse term "ALL lives matter".

Reaching an Impasse

Though many of the participants appeared to move along the critical consciousness continuum, there were some participants struggled. Often, this struggle was related to sources of dissonance both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Some students talked about the frustration and conflict they had with the course and with other students in the class. Jessie, a Latina PhD student, did not speak in class. On the rare occasion that she did speak, unlike many of

her classmates who were easily heard, she was so quiet it was often hard to make out what she said. In her journals she often writes about feeling silenced throughout her life. She was raised by a single mother. She writes "We were largely ignored by others, teachers, neighbors. We were never really accepted by people outside of our family, and there was always some sort of disapproval".

As an adult, Jessie is in an interracial marriage, which she writes has drawn much criticism and judgment from her husband's family and friends. Though she liked the content of the class, movies, readings, she writes about feeling silenced by the others in class. And, the conflict in the class made it difficult for her to move forward. She writes about there being more control from above—meaning the professor. This issue is not uncommon for students who come from a traditional style of education, though she did not share her past educational experiences. A key component of critical pedagogy is to offer students power in decision making in the classroom and often this includes offering the students the power to control the direction of an emerging discussion in class. For some students like Jessie, this became an obstacle because she felt that she could not contribute and that the discussion did not offer all viewpoints.

> I think the conversation around Black Lives Matter have been upsetting me in class mostly because there are a few black female students who are very domineering and disrespectful while voicing opinions. It strikes a nerve with me as I've dealt with disapproval from black women before in regards to my interracial relationships. I've taken the brunt of a lot of anger and frustration as I date and married a black man. It's hard to take this form of attack, and it's even harder when it happens in an academic setting.

Studies suggest that an open classroom climate fostering open discussion about controversial issues is positively associated with perspective, tolerance and

trust (Holley & Steiner, 2005). Yet, the "fault lines" of race, class and gender are easily opened and the risks that go along with the emotionally charged issues and discussions could emerge (Tomoka, 2005). As written about earlier in this dissertation, one of the white students in this class shared his feelings of not being heard because he was "just the white dude" in the class, which erupted into a lengthy discussion regarding class and privilege.

In most classrooms, heated exchanges are often looked at as negative, yet discussion that generates a deep, emotional and sometimes heated response are needed to embrace the diversities of experience (hooks, 1994). Some educators and researchers suggest that safe space in the classroom can also lead to a nonacademic environment in that no ideas are challenged or that discussion which make people uncomfortable are not pursued (Holley & Steiner, 2005). Balance in the critically conscious classroom, in the expression of difficult issues, appears to be an important factor in moving people along the critical consciousness continuum. Allowing people the space to share often controversial and difficult ideas, while still making everyone feel a part of the conversation, even when there is disagreement occurs, is important. For Jessie, her dissonance with the course process, and the people in the course made it difficult for her to move forward in the critical consciousness process.

> I liked the video about "Black Lives Matter"…I didn't care for some of the other videos that were suggested by other students. I'm pretty knowledgeable about black history as most students in the class are. I don't feel we should focus on ethnocentric ides. We should be looking at collaborative theories to obtain workable solutions. We can't elevate to higher solutions of prejudice and discrimination when we try to label and exclude people black, white, or brown, from the process.

In her journal writing Jesse said that she will always try to "break through" stereotyping and prejudice, yet in class, she did not contribute on these issues. Jessie did offer her critique in her journal writing, which was an outlet for her feelings. She talks about a pervasive culture of silence in her journal that started for her as a child. This lack of voice is a reoccurring theme in her writing. And, though not in the classroom, in her journal writing she was able to find some space for expressing herself and her thoughts about the issues discussed in class as well as issues she had with the people in class.

Jessie shares in her journal that she is married to an African American man. Her marriage has been an issue for her as she feels shunned by the African American community, particularly by the women. Much of her journals reveal that she has spent a lifetime feeling invisible, unseen, unheard and silenced. "I think that I can mostly relate to the injustice of being poor and therefore, invisible," she writes in her journal. She explains that she was raised by a single mother who was also a victim to many injustices and who never chose to "fight back".

This is particularly interesting as she was one of the few people who rarely, if ever, spoke in class. She writes "I was a victim to many injustices" and she writes about feeling vilified in the academic arena because she still has not found a way to be heard. In her journals she indicates that she feels silenced by other members of the class. She says that she does not feel she can engage in discussions regarding race because other members of the cohort are not self reflecting and they are excluding her and others in the class. In many ways Jesse's learning was cut off by her own decision to avoid

discussion. Even though she says in her journal that she is the type of person who addresses issues "head on", she often retreats when things get heated up.

Jessie's I-poem shows some movement along the critical consciousness continuum—but often steps forward are met with steps backward into silence. She says "I will always try to fight injustice," but then adds "I can only do so much". In the last weeks of journal writing Jesse's I-poem voice shows some movement towards empowerment as she begins to write about how education is empowering. She says that understanding all sides of an issue is the only way for people to move forward. "I can think of all people involved and thing of possible solutions". In her I-poem, Jesse reflects on seeing injustice throughout most her life, but her ability to speak out against these perceived injustices has been and continues to be so in her life and in this course.

Jessie's I-poem

I was a victim to many injustices
I was bullied
I felt like adults didn't care
I was even blamed for being bullied.
I'll never forget
I decided to fight back.
I was very vocal
I felt I was being mistreated
I stated exactly what I was going to do.
I'd like to take a closer look at violence generated by social media
I'm a little frustrated
I feel there should have been some prep discussions about the dynamic of the class.

I think that the conversations around Black Lives Matter have been upsetting
I've dealt with disapproval from black women in regards to my interracial relationships.
I've taken the brunt of a lot of anger and frustration

I think the injustice that I feel has happened in and outside of the class
I'm the type of person that tries to resolve issues head on.
I've tried to talk out my feelings on these interactions but it usually just becomes an argument.

I think more conversations, and structured activities need to happen to the issues of race no matter the age or expertise of the people involved.
I've come across more than a few blacks who feel justified in expressing and displaying discriminatory ideals.
I feel that there is too much fear around confronting overbearing and prejudicial statements from blacks because no one wants to be called a racist.

I was offended intellectually by some of the video choices that were displayed at the suggestion of a student.
I feel vilified by the very academic culture that is supposed to be deviating beliefs and attitudes about issues of black and white.
I will always try to break through stereotypes as prejudices
I can only do so much.
I volunteer in churches in my community to give back and hopefully change perceptions.

I think that I can mostly relate to the injustice of being poor and therefore, invisible.
We were largely ignored by others
We were never really accepted by people outside of our family
I noticed that we weren't invited over
I was picked on and bullied as a kid
I was shy, overweight, and wore hand-me-down clothes.
I had no one to stick up for me.
I tried to weather the abuse.
I decided to stand up and fight, which brought even more ridicule and mistreatment.
I just remember seeing my mother so powerless to do anything to protect us or herself.
I understand injustice.
I understand underrepresentation.
I understand rage.
I just lost it…and attacked all of them.
I hit one girl upside the head with my "Munsters" lunch box
I pushed the other girls to the ground.
I had had enough
I walked home.
I then had to defend myself to my mother who seemed to not be able to stand up for me.
I felt powerful and able to stop people from hurting me.
I believe that educating yourself about an issue is the most powerful thing that you can do about any social justice issue.
I try to review all sides of the issue
I can think about all who are involved, and several possible solutions.

I liked the video about "Black Lives Matter"

I did not care for some of the other videos that were suggested by other students.
I'm pretty knowledgable about black history, as most students in the class are.
I don't feel that we should focus on ethnocentric ideals.
I don't believe that the conversation of racism can be had with individuals who are not willing to do some self-analysis themselves.
We can't elevate to higher solutions of prejudice and discrimination.
We try to label and exclude people (black, white, or brown) from the process.

Conclusion

Many participants in this study appeared to move towards critical consciousness by first negotiating a safe space or arena with in which difficult dialogue could take place. This included insuring that everyone would be allowed the opportunity to a voice during the dialogue. Within that space, they challenged themselves and others to look at oppression through a new or different lens that leads to critical consciousness and transcendence. Most participants admitted that the challenges to old ways of thinking were difficult, but that they felt changed by the work that they had done. Themes emerged from the data in which participants indicated they felt different after taking the class—that they saw things, historical events and even events in their own lives in a different way. They had a fresh motivation for change. They were less frustrated and angry and more willing to find ways to work on changing things. They were able to see and understand oppressive elements at work in society and culture in a way that they had not been able to before the class. They were able to speak out against these issues of oppression in an arena that allowed them to disagree—albeit passionately yet peacefully. However, there were also those participants who admitted to struggling and feeling stifled—stopped by the fault lines of race, reverting to the use of stereotyping and feeling overwhelmed by their negative emotions. These participants shut down, chose not to

participate and relinquished the very thing that they spent the beginning of class negotiating for—voice.

Some scholars argue that the process of moving towards critical consciousness is in itself a difficult process that requires uncomfortable cognitive processing (Tomoka, 2009; Wallin-Ruschman, 2014). The critical consciousness journey requires the challenging of one's ideas and perspective about other people, cultures, and it also challenges a person's perspective about their own identity. These kinds of cognitive challenges often create significant emotions—anger and fear for example. These negative emotions can lead students away from the processing of new ideas and moving towards critical consciousness, and instead pushes them to look for more comfortable ways of processing new information. The cognitive overload that comes from the process of moving toward critical consciousness can sometimes have the opposite effect—moving individuals back toward old ways of thinking, including using stereotyping as a coping mechanism. This paradox in critical consciousness may one of the more difficult hurdles to overcome in the liberatory classroom environment. Some previous research indicates that high levels of emotion contribute to the critical consciousness transformation as the cognitive overload forces people to form new ways of thinking and scaffolding (Wallin-Ruschman, 2014). This research proposes the idea that those same levels of emotion generated by the difficult dialogue in the class can also be a barrier to critical consciousness and can contribute to a regression rather than a progression of ideas.

Further, the participants who struggled with difficult dialogue experienced a sense of otherness; a sense that they were the outsiders. This happened in every race category represented in the classroom. As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, one of the white

participants in class said he felt he could not contribute because he was "just the white guy in the class" and what could he possibly know about oppression. This same sense of otherness, or being an outsider, was expressed by a participant in her journal who said that as a Latina she had experienced racism by black women in her personal life. Now, experiencing it in the academic arena made her feel "vilified by the very academic culture that is supposed to be deviating beliefs and attitudes above issues of black and white." She adds in her journal, that she will no longer speak in the classroom. This shut down, or impasse breaks down the process of critical consciousness.

Limitations

Reliability and validity standards may be difficult to achieve in this study in that the external validity or the ability to generalize the findings are less likely when using a small, limited sample size. In this study (n=14). In addition, most of the students were in a unique class, not offered at most universities, and the student participants were graduate students in a doctoral and masters program, aver unique group, so the data may not be generalizable to other arenas in which critical consciousness is being studied, including other academic arenas. Using a constructivist framework, the analysis did provide rich detail and a focus on trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2007). Detailed descriptions regarding setting and methods have been provided. Creswell (2007) explains that the rich detail that emerges from qualitative studies allows the reader to decide for themselves on the transferability. Triangulation or multiple sources and methods were used to provide cooperating evidence regarding the phenomena.

Another limitation of this study was time. This class met for only five weeks, before they moved on to another related but different class. Had this been a more traditional class in which students met for longer, more data regarding some of the students struggling with difficult dialogue and a sense of otherness may have emerged.

Possibilities for Future Research

Most of the education literature focuses on safe spaces, constructed from above, finding ways in which the instructor or professor can construct a safe and empowering classroom experience. This research, however, indicates that even when safe space was constructed from below, and participants set up their own guidelines, the safespace broke down for some participants. Participants seemed genuinely motivated to try and create a safe space and an environment in which everyone could be heard at the beginning, but when the discussion became overheated or intense some participants felt less motivated to participate and as a result less likely to move along the critical consciousness continuum.

Future studies on how to better negotiate safe space from below (the students) and from above (the professor or teacher) would be helpful in understanding how to facilitate difficult dialogues that lead to critical consciousness. More studies on finding ways to manage the strong emotions that are part of the critical consciousness process could be beneficial. Another area of interest may be looking as how small breakout groups could facilitate more successful dialogue and a greater connection among students. In addition, it might be beneficial to study students after the class was finished to see if there is any kind of movement, either forward or back, to understand whether critical consciousness realization continues beyond the classroom or if there is backward momentum.

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Appendix

INFORMED CONSENT

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by *Myra Dutko, PhD student and adjunct faculty*, at National Louis University, Chicago, Illinois. The study is entitled: I Matter: Developing critical consciousness in higher education students. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand and describe critical consciousness development in higher education students. Critical consciousness is generally defined as the ability to see, judge and act in order to create a more equitable and just society. In addition, the lessons learned from this research will be used to offer recommendations for teachers working to promote critical consciousness.

Participants will be asked to journal about their classroom experience using prompts and questions (see appendix A). Participants will also be asked to participate in a focus group session (see appendix A) during the last week of a five week community organizing class. Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. Your identity will be kept confidential by the researcher and will not be attached to the data. Only the researcher will have access to all transcripts, taped recordings, and field notes from the interview(s). Your participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to you beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, your taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding of developing critical consciousness in the higher education classroom.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed.

In the event you have questions or require additional information you may contact the researcher: Myra Dutko, National-Louis University, 122 S. Michigan Ave, Chicago, Illinois 60603; 1-800-443-5522; Myra.Dutko@nl.edu

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact Dr. Bradley Olson, student

advisor/chair at 312-261-3464; Bradley.Olson@nl.edu or the chair of NLU's Institutional Research Review Board:
Dr. Judah Viola, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60603; phone,312-261-3527; email: Judah.Viola@nl.edu.

_____

Participant Name (Print)

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

_____

Researcher (Print)

_____ _____

Researcher Signature Date

If more than one researcher, leave enough lines for each signature.

Appendix A: Focus Group Questions

Focus Questions:

1. Think back to an important learning point during this five week course. Relive this moment—what were you thinking, what were you feeling, what made it stand out? When you are ready, write everything that comes to mind on the paper in front of you.
2. Draw a stick figure of yourself and write descriptive words around it that reflect on who you were before you came into this class, and then draw another stick figure of yourself and write descriptive words of you are after this class. If there is no change please indicate this.
3. Based on the changes that you listed in the in the stick figure drawing, Please circle the five most important types of learning you experienced in this class that contributed to those changes.

4. Imagine that you are asked to teach this community organizing class and you are required to write a brief curriculum outline detailing subjects that you would cover, and methods of teaching you would use. Put it on paper and be ready to share with the class.
5. Be prepared to share and discuss your answers

Appendix A: Journal Questions

1. Tell a story about what you did to change an injustice/problem. If you didn't do anything talk about why you didn't do anything.
2. How would you go about doing something about the social justice issues posed in class tonight?
3. Talk about how you feel after watching tonight's documentary and participating in tonight's discussions.
4. What do you think could be done to solve the problems posed in class tonight? If you believe changes can't be made talk about why?

Appendix A: Question #4

Circle the five most important types of learning you experienced in this class. Then, rate the following from 1-5, in order of importance (1=most important) of the types of learning that contributed to the personal change you wrote about in question 3.

Self knowledge

Learning about others

Self directed learning

Formal learning

Objective learning

Motivational learning

Reflective learning

Unconscious learning

Subjective learning

Emotional learning

Emancipatory/liberating learning

Spiritual learning

Transformative learning

Learning as a part of a community

Appendix A: I-Poem Process

The I-poems were created by sorting out all statements in the journals that began with "I", followed by any key statements for each participant. Each "I" statement is placed on its own line which creates the visual appearance of stanzas in a poem. Each week is denoted by an additional space between the stanzas. These short statements can be studied as a progression of voices detailing changes in voice that may not have been detected otherwise (Balan, 2005). The journal entries were read and all statements with I and the accompanying words were cut and pasted into a separate document. The process of eliminating additional words was a subjective elimination process in an attempt to keep the passages concise and to more clearly show the progression of voices within the entries.

Additionally, sentences that included the words *me, my, myself* and *we,* were included. The journals with the most complete and detailed entries were selected to be made into I-poems (those that responded every week for the entire duration of the class). The lines of the poems were left a bit longer than is the standard for I-poems, however, the phrases were left more in tact to fully illustrate the tone of the passage. This researcher then began identifying the prevalent voices in the passages, ultimately

identifying three categories—silenced, empowered and dissonant. Silenced voices in the passaged were underlined in red, empowered in green and dissonant in blue. Unlike poems which are constructed using literary form such rhyme and rhythm, I-poems are constructed using a strategy developed by Gilligan as described in the literature review (Gilligan, 1982). Of the fourteen students who participated in this research, six completed all five weeks of journaling—those were all used to construct I-poems. The I-poems selected for analyzing are representative sample of the collected I-poems.

Silenced Voice - Red

The silenced voice is a disempowered voice—not being seen or heard, being ignored, not having a voice at all. The silenced voice also expresses the feeling of being a victim, not having the ability to fight back. This voice may see injustice but feels unable to do something about it. For example, "I was a victim to many injustices, I try to weather the abuse, I am a little frustrated, I was vilified, I've tried to talk out my feelings on this, I felt so powerless, I understand injustice, I understand rage, I did not say anything".

Empowered Voice - Green

This voice focuses on recognizing injustice, feelings of efficacy and the desire to act on the recognized injustices. This voice expresses the ability to recognize injustice and also to act upon that injustice. Some examples in the text include: "I can think about all who are involved and several possible solutions, I volunteer at my church to give back, I should have not tolerated or ignored the racist comment".

Dissonant Voice - Blue

The dissonant voice is the voice of tension that arises between their own values and the values of the dominant culture.

Though Gilligan used this method primarily for interview transcriptions, the method has been used by other researchers to analyze artifacts. Zambo and Zambo (2013) used the listening guide and I-poems to analyze the dissertation proposals of six doctoral students in the Arizona State University EdD program written in first person format. The poems were constructed to explain the challenges each student was facing and the actions they took in response to those challenges. The method was originally developed to track changes and continuities in young women's subjectivity longitudinally. This method should be helpful to track changes in critical consciousness awakening and the changes that occur from week to week participation in this course as well as give insight into critical consciousness awakening.

Analyzing the focus group discussions will include the following process: Discussion was taped and transcribed. The facilitator used probes to facilitate deeper discussions and understanding by asking participants to explain further, give more examples or to offer a better understanding of participant's contributions. The researcher will act as co-facilitator to tape record and take notes on the session. Using Krueger & Casey (2000), the following protocol will be used to analyze the focus group transcriptions:

1. Transcribe focus group dialogue.

2. Researcher listens to tape, reviews field notes and reviews transcripts.

3. Prepare reports in a question-by-question format with amplifying quotes.

4. Look for emerging themes by question, and then overall.