

RESPONDING TO CRITICAL PEDAGOGY:
MARGINALIZED STUDENTS AND
THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of PAUL D. MENCKE find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Abstract

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Marginalized college students are retained at disproportional rates than their counterparts. A major factor of retention is student engagement in the classroom, which can be impacted by course design and instruction. Critical pedagogy aims to value all students' experiences through six elements of course design and instruction: decreasing teacher power, student self-reflection, dialogue, student voice, critical analysis, and action. This study analyzes marginalized student response to critical pedagogy. A University 101 course, designed to assist in retention, was instructed over a fifteen week semester at a large land-grant university. The course was exclusively reserved for students eligible for the TRiO federal programs; TRiO aims to assist in retaining low-income, first-generation, or students with a disability.

The results indicate a positive response by marginalized students to critical pedagogy. Five themes emerged from the data: Students' Response to the Course Design; Students' Response to the Action Research Project; Students' Response to Knowing Classmates; Students' Response to Specific Instructor Attributes; Students' Response to Other Courses. These results suggest further avenues to gain insight into the impact of critical pedagogy and marginalized

student retention. The study's conclusions indicate marginalized students must be included, as a collaborator in classroom, to demonstrate their value to the institution. Furthermore, a point is raised about the power of the university structure in contributing to low retention rates among this demographic, and how the structure must change in order increase retention rates.

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Dedication

Dedicated to my children, Paul Jr., and the little guy on the way,
as well as the participants of this study; you've taught me the
meaning of learning as a collaborative effort.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Marginalized college students are failing at an alarming rate in universities and colleges across the United States. Research suggests that a complex array of variables lead to early departure (Tinto, 2006/2007). The dominant discourse often frames these high attrition rates as deficiencies in marginalized students and their academic readiness for higher education. This study posits that this discourse must be reframed in order to resist the meritocratic ideology that views the individual as lacking the ability to succeed in higher education; the issue must be reformulated to include an examination of what universities are doing to push marginalized students away before they graduate. A critical theory lens provides a framework to dialectically analyze the interconnectedness of student and institution. By shifting the analysis away from the dominant message, which emphasizes the students' role in leaving college, institutions of higher education can begin to implement methods to make the university environment more inclusive to marginalized students.

Throughout this document, critical theory was used to analyze the issue of a disproportional number of marginalized students being retained in higher education. Critical theory is a method of inquiry which deconstructs social issues in an attempt to move past superficial analysis and develop a deeper understanding of the often hidden power dynamics that influence an issue (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003). One element of critical theory that assists in this complex deconstruction is dialecticism, which aims to eliminate binaries by analyzing the interplay of entities that are often viewed as separate. This research project began with the problem of the disproportional number of marginalized students being retained in higher

education, and through critical theory, related this problem to the larger issue of epistemological preference in the college classroom. Through critical pedagogy, which is critical theory in action (Kinchloe & McLaren, 2005), this study examined the hidden power dynamics of normalizing a White middle-class male epistemology and the detrimental impact of course curriculum being structured around this way of knowing.

Using critical pedagogy, this study explored marginalized students' response to a theory of instruction aiming to embrace multiple epistemologies. Furthermore, linking critical pedagogy to retention literature exposed how the low rates of retention for marginalized students is related to the power of the university and its privileging of a White middle-class male knowledge paradigm. Viewing the university as a power structure, which determines whose knowledge is preferred, allowed for a reframing of why marginalized students are being pushed out of higher education at a higher rate than their counterparts. This idea situated the university as a system built on socially reproducing society's class structure.

This study used critical pedagogy in a college course reserved exclusively for marginalized students, therefore exploring marginalized students' response to a course design and instruction rooted in the six elements of critical pedagogy: decrease teacher power, student self-reflection, dialogue, student voice, critical analysis, and action (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Shor, 1996). Developing an understanding of how these six elements move the issue of retention to an epistemological level, added to the retention literature an idea which has thus far been absent.

College student retention is an extremely important issue to institutions of higher education because lost students equal lost revenue. In the current economy losing students means

losing federal full time enrollment money, and every student not graduating equals one less alumni a university can count on for donations (Jamelske, 2009). Often the reasons administrators are interested in student retention because of an increased emphasis on generating revenue within institutions. Another factor associated with retention is the loss of a valuable student with experiences that could help diversify the college classroom. These are all aspects of how retention hurts the institution, but more importantly decreased retention rates severely impact the lives of students who do not graduate (Brewer & McMahan Landers, 2005). Recent figures show the median annual income disparity to be approximately \$19,000 between a person with a high school diploma and a college graduate (Jamelske, 2009). These reasons are just the beginning of why student retention is important, but they exemplify the importance of gaining more insight into college student retention.

Retention studies such as Braxton, Brier, and Steele (2007-2008) report that retention numbers have stayed consistent. Although it is known that these statistics are an issue for all students, most disparagingly it is reported that retention numbers for marginalized populations (i.e., students of color, low-income students, or first-generation students) are lower than their counterparts (Tinto, 2005). Studies throughout the past decades have been the leading force in gaining insight into many aspects of retention. Currently, research on retention calls for moving theory into practice and locating what works (Tinto, 2006/2007). More specifically what works in the curriculum design and instruction that increases student engagement (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000; Seidman & Brown, 2006), which is a major component of retaining students (Tinto, 1993).

This chapter outlines the main elements within this study on marginalized students' response to critical pedagogy. This chapter begins with the problem statement, purpose

statement, research questions, and a short literature review, and follows with an explanation of the significance of this study, key concepts, research design and methodology, and a report of the study. These elements provide an overview of the study undertaken with participants in a university course. The chapter aims to provide an introduction to this study, as well as situate this study in the work of John Dewey and Paulo Freire, a framework of collaboration with participants to construct knowledge together. Therefore, this study was an act of a researcher learning alongside participants.

Problem Statement

This study addressed the problem of a disproportional number of marginalized college students not being retained at four-year universities. Statistics on marginalized students support the compelling nature of this study: the graduation rates at four year institutions is 41.6% for students of color (not including Asian/Pacific Islander) (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). These numbers are troublesome when compared to statistics regarding White student retention at four year institutions, which indicate that their graduation rate is 57% (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Low-income students graduate at a rate of 49.4%, as compared to 63.7% for their middle-class and high-class counterparts (Horn & Berger, 2004). Furthermore, statistics surrounding students' ability to remain in college through their third year report the retention rate of first-generation students to be 73%, as compared to the rate of 88% for students from college educated backgrounds (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). These numbers demonstrate why this is a pressing issue in higher education.

A review of the literature demonstrates that student retention numbers are complex because of the multiple variables associated with this issue (Pan, Guo, Alikonis, & Bai, 2008). These statistics indicate that retention is problematic for all demographics, and increasing overall

retention rates is a difficult endeavor. However, this study focuses on an even more troublesome issue which is the retention of marginalized students. The Tinto (1993) model of retention is the foundation for the majority of retention programs in higher education. This model theorizes that retention is based on the integration of students into college through academic and social integration (Tinto, 1993). Throughout the past decades this model has been built upon to better understand retention and its complexity.

Current literature calls for research to explore what practices work to increase retention; integrating retention theory into practice (Tinto, 2006/2007). Investigating current retention strategies shows that Tinto's (1993) model is still the basis for retention programs on most campuses. Most of these programs fall under the umbrella definition of first year experience programs or intervention programs (Marina & McGuire, 2008). First year experience programs vary among specific institutions, but most often fall under the definition of summer bridge programs, targeted academic advising, living learning communities, peer mentoring, college introductory courses, expanded general orientation, and federal intervention programs (i.e., TRiO programs). These programs have mixed reviews when analyzing their impact on student retention at specific institutions; however, the literature concluded that these programs do have a positive impact on student retention (Jamelske, 2009).

Concluding that these programs have a positive impact on retention highlights the complexity of student retention; first year programs increase retention, but the national retention statistics have had minimal gains, if not decreased over the last decade (Heiman, 2010). Minimal retention gains support this study's research problem and leads to the research purpose. Without significant increases in marginalized student retention there must be further research to gain insight into other strategies that may initiate an increase in retention. Therefore, this study

explored an element of retention that could stand alone, or be combined with first year experience programs to pursue greater increases in national retention rates.

Tinto (2006/2007) has also called for more inquiry into faculty members' role in increasing marginalized student engagement in class. Student engagement is the term used to describe the combination of academic and social integration and is directly associated with retention (Tinto, 1993). Narrowing the focus of faculty influence on retention is the call for more research into classroom design and instructional techniques used to increase student engagement (McKay & Estrella, 2008; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Developing a greater understanding of how curriculum design and instruction may be combined with first year experience programs, specifically the TRiO programs, to increase student engagement could have important ramifications for future research into marginalized student retention. This idea is what led to the research purpose and research questions, and this study's intent of beginning to better understand the connection among critical pedagogy, marginalized students, student engagement, and retention.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

A call for further research into curriculum design and instruction, and how this may be integrated with current retention programs, led to this study's purpose: to better understand marginalized students' response to critical pedagogy. Examining student response to this theory of curriculum design and instruction begins the process of learning how critical pedagogy may impact student engagement, and therefore retention. The following research questions guide this study:

- 1) What are students' responses to assisting in the development of classroom curriculum?

- 2) What are students' responses to the inclusion of critical thought in the course?
- 3) How do students respond to their perspective/opinion/voice being the focus of the class?

Significance of this Study

This study continued the discussion of how curriculum design and instruction may be a component of increasing retention among marginalized students. Critical pedagogy is unique in its objective to collaborate with students to build knowledge in a mutual relationship between students and teacher (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970). Critical pedagogy calls for students' experiences to be used in the classroom in order to validate marginalized students' experiences. As collaborators, students become more engaged and therefore have a better chance of being retained. Critical pedagogy is based in the ideas of Dewey (1916) and Freire (1970). The six elements of critical pedagogy aim to increase learning by making course material relevant to students' lives. These six elements are: decreasing teacher power, student self-reflection, dialogue, student voice, critical analysis, and action (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Shor, 1996). Understanding how marginalized students respond to this theory adds to the knowledge of college student retention, and may lead to more studies to investigate the relevance of this theory to further progressing what is known about retention.

The expected benefit from this study was to inform retention programs, administrators, faculty, staff, and students of techniques that may impact the retention of marginalized students. My hope is that this study will give higher education workers a basis to stop making decisions for students and begin making decisions with students. Further significance of this study is its connection to the federal TRiO programs, and the marginalized students this program serves. Developing a better understanding of how to work with this demographic to increase student

engagement could play a key role in continued or increased federal funding. In the current economic situation many programs are being reevaluated to determine if they should continue to receive funding; the TRiO programs are no exception. As Brewer and McMahan Landers (2005) state, “Despite past success and broad support, however, the future of TRiO programs is not entirely secure” (p. 197). Therefore, in order to maintain funding it is important for studies to analyze the TRiO program and demonstrate components that may be added to improve its current design.

Research Design and Methodology

The theory of critical pedagogy was used to expose underlying power dynamics within the classroom, and also within the action requirement (Freire, 1970). Therefore, a combination of critical ethnography and participatory action research was used to develop a critical action research methodology. This methodology employs dialectical analysis of individual and society, as well as student and institution, to better understand the hidden power dynamics within these relationships (Thomas, 1993). This project aimed to stay embedded in the theory of critical pedagogy, which must move theory into practice to produce positive social change.

During instruction of a semester-long course, University 101, data was collected with six participants, all enrolled as students in the course. The methods used were consistent with a qualitative design: interviews, document analysis, class recordings, and observations. In addition, participants engaged in an action project, and this project served as additional data. This action project aimed to bring marginalized student voice into course curriculum; by doing so it demonstrated the agency students have as subjects with the ability to act upon the world to produce change (Freire, 1970).

Report of the Study

This dissertation is presented in seven chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the study, including the research problem, purpose, and rationale. The second chapter reviews the literature regarding college student retention. The focus of this chapter is on the foundation of college retention, the Tinto (1993) model, and how retention has progressed in the last seventeen years. The relationship of critical pedagogy with student retention is further explored in this chapter including an exploration of how course design and instruction might lead to increased engagement and retention. Chapter Three explores critical pedagogy, the theoretical framework that undergirds this study. The six elements of critical pedagogy are outlined and applied to the University 101. Chapter Four presents the methodology, including an explanation of critical action research methodology, data collection and analysis techniques, and measures of validity. Special attention is given to critical pedagogy's call for praxis and how the methods utilized in this project fulfill this theoretical necessity. Chapter Four also outlines the positionality of the researcher and how this may affect the study. Chapter Five details the results of the study and begins the discussion by exploring marginalized students' response to critical pedagogy. The results highlighted five themes that emerged when analyzing data, including some expected outcomes as well as some new ideas that may lead to further inquiry and a better understanding of what works in the classroom. Chapter Six includes the conclusion and implications regarding the results. This chapter also explores the university's power that was evident in the results and how this structural power can be detrimental to marginalized students. Chapter Seven concludes the study by reflecting on how the experience proved transformative to me as a beginning researcher and teacher. Instructor reflection is essential when following the theory of critical pedagogy; therefore, my learning experience must be included. Chapter Seven outlines my

experiences with critical pedagogy and elements that I suggest are important for anyone attempting to instruct a course through this theory.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter begins by identifying the complexities regarding retention, and outlining the foundation of retention theory: Tinto's (1993) integrationist model. Next, I outline how the Tinto model has been built upon to include the growing diversity in higher education, and the current retention strategies used by institutions. Then, I focus on Tinto's ideas regarding academic and social integration, and faculty members' role in increasing these constructs through classroom design and instruction. Responding to calls for research into classroom practices that influence retention, critical pedagogy is then posited as the next step to increase marginalized student retention.

Caveats to Retention

A review of student retention literature begins by noting the complexities associated with this issue (Pan et al., 2008; Tinto, 2005). Throughout the literature it is often explicitly stated, and at other times tacitly acknowledged, that multiple variables contribute to the reasons students leave or stay in college (Kuh & Love, 2000; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008; Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2005; Marguia, Padilla, & Pavel, 1991; Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2005; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Tinto, 1993). These complexities make establishing direct causal relationships about student retention quite difficult. In addition, an increasingly diverse student population complicates research even further because it adds more variables to the retention equation, (e.g., students of color, students with disabilities, low-income students, or first-generation students). There are other factors blurring retention statistics: student entry time and place, full-time or part-time enrollment, first year versus following year(s) attrition, institutional type (e.g., highly selective, private or public, four-year or two-year), voluntary departure or academic dismissal, returning to school after retention statistics are calculated,

leaving and transferring to another institution versus departure with no return (Kuh & Love, 2000; Locks et al., 2008; Maldonado et al., 2005; Nora et al., 2005; Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, & Trevino, 1997; Pavel & Padilla, 1993; Rendon et al., 2000; Tinto, 1993).

The complexity of this issue makes analyzing current statistics difficult. However, statistics regarding marginalized student retention demonstrate a common trait: students of color (Choy, 2001; Horn & Berger, 2004; KewelRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007; Planty, et al., 2009; Tinto, 1993), students from low-income backgrounds (Habley & McClananhan, 2004; Tinto, 1993), and first-generation students (Habley & McClananhan, 2004; McKay & Estrella, 2008; Tinto, 1993; Warburton, Burgarin, & Nunez, 2001) all have lower rates of retention than their counterparts. Although precise student retention statistics are difficult to obtain, one fact remains: marginalized student success is not proportionate to their enrollment in higher education (Tinto, 2005). This complex array of variables calls for more qualitative inquiries that might help researchers gain contextual and personal factors that affect students' decisions (Kuh & Love, 2000; Rendon et al., 2000; Tinto, 1993).

Theoretical Foundation of Retention

Current trends in student retention are influenced by Tinto's (1993) retention model. These ideas are simultaneously referred to as: interaction theory, interactionist theory, or integration theory. Tinto's influence is so profound throughout higher education that it has been analyzed by a wide variety of scholars. The Tinto Model (1993) acknowledges various theories (i.e., conflict, societal, organizational, and environmental) which focus on different aspects of how society, a student's environment, or the institution's organizational structure affect retention. However, his focus remains on the interactionist theory of student departure, which

forms around Arnold Van Gennep's theory of the rites of passage in tribal societies and Emile Durkheim's theory of suicide (Tinto, 1993).

The interactionalist model is based on integrating into the social and academic systems of the university. The academic system, "...concerns itself almost entirely with the formal education of students," and the social system, "...centers about the daily life and personal needs of the various members of the institution, especially students" (Tinto, 1993, p. 106). Three integral steps can predict or increase academic and social integration: separation, transition, and incorporation (Tinto, 1993). Increasing retention is rooted in the ability to successfully fulfill these three criteria; in turn leading to an increase in student social and academic integration, of which retention is a direct derivative. The first phase requires "separation of the individual from their past associations. It is characterized by a marked decline in interactions with members of the group from which the person has come" (Tinto, 1993, p. 93). The second phase involves transition into a university setting that often has different values and expectations than their previous setting (Tinto 1993). The final phase involves student incorporation by adopting skills and values prevalent within their new setting. This phase is described as, "the establishing of competent membership in that [new] group as a participant member... Though the persons may begin to interact once again with past group members, they will now do so as members of the new group" (Tinto, 1993, p. 93). These steps allow a new student to become involved in the institution and therefore have the best opportunity to succeed.

Many retention programs for marginalized students are also constructed around the interactionalist theory (Marina & McGuire, 2008). The three most prominent retention practices in four-year public institutions are described as academic advising, first-year programs, and learning support (Habley & McClananhan, 2004). Retention programs such as these most often

fall under the title of first year experience programs or intervention programs (Marina & McGuire, 2008). These current retention strategies will be discussed later in this chapter and are directly influenced by Tinto's interaction theory.

These retention strategies aim to assist student success in their new environment. Assistance programs help marginalized students through the academic (e.g., advising and learning support) and social transition (e.g., first-year programs), which leads to increased retention. Tinto (1993) describes important themes in retention,

On the individual level, the two attributes that stand out as primary roots of departure are described by the terms "intention" and "commitment"...On the institutional level, for the four terms of individual experience which affect departure we use the terms "adjustment," "difficulty," "incongruence," and "isolation." (p. 37-38)

Emphasis on social and academic success within the institution is seen in the four elements of student attrition: adjustment, difficulty, incongruence, and isolation. Tinto (1993) outlines these elements: Adjustment is the inability of individuals to separate from past associations, and is related to the pains of first-time separation from the family. Difficulty relates to academic rigor of college life. Incongruence is, "lack of institutional fit, refers to that state where individuals perceive themselves as being substantially at odds with the institution" (Tinto, 1993, p. 50). Isolation refers to students' inability to identify with someone or group on campus, and is often a derivative of incongruence, but other factors also influence isolation during the collegiate tenure.

These trends represent the beginning of many institutions approach to retention. Although the integrationist model can be useful and provides a map for increasing retention, it was developed over 15 years ago and is currently viewed as one part of the complex issue of

retention. However, Tinto's model is foundational in developing a deeper understanding of retention. Critically analyzing the integrationist model has moved retention strategies in a direction that is more inclusive of today's diverse institutions. Although this diversity has made the retention issue more complex, it has allowed focused attention on individual aspects of the Tinto model and this exploration has important possibilities and growth in the area of retention.

Building on the Tinto Model

An analysis of current research on retention shows the need for a cultural asset framework that validates marginalized students' experiences. Tinto (1993) also acknowledged that further studies need to be done to include a wider array of student experiences. Tinto (2006/2007) embraces the work of many scholars to validate and expand on the results of his model. The academic writings that ensued began to deconstruct the elements considered by Tinto as paramount to student persistence. Studies have been conducted with multiple sub-cultures testing individual facets of the interactionist theory; results suggest that many of its assumptions were incongruent with these populations (Braxton, 2000; Kuh & Love, 2000; Mayo, Murguia, & Padilla, 1995; Murguia et al., 1991; Pavel & Padilla, 1993). The main focus of these follow-up studies on Tinto's theory is his idea that the "best" method of persisting in college, and therefore success in college, is to shed one's previous attributes and begin to acquire the attributes or norms of the college environment (Kuh & Love, 2000; Locks et al., 2008; Maldonado et al., 2005; Rendon et al., 2000; Tierney, 2000). Tinto (1993) concludes that through this form of assimilation, the student will have a greater chance of social and academic integration or interaction, resulting in increased retention. Challenges to this view call for reframing the accepted attributes and norms of college to reflect the diverse student body (Locks et al., 2008; Maldonado et al., 2005; Rendon et al., 2000). This alternative perspective views

marginalized students' attributes, skills, and dispositions as characteristics the institution is missing or in needs to acquire to become more inclusive. Therefore, the lived experiences of marginalized students become assets to the institution (Maton, Hrabowski, Ozdemir, & Wimms, 2008).

Validation, or an asset model, is a progressive step in building on Tinto (Rendon et al., 2000). This step focuses on the institution's responsibility to include marginalized identities. Conclusions from these projects contribute to moving retention strategies forward. The asset model of retention has demonstrated positive effects on marginal populations (Cheatham, 1991; Maldonado et al., 2005; Maton et al., 2008). This move to embrace complex student characteristics as an asset to the university leads to an inclusive environment that promotes the success of all.

Current Retention Strategies

Following the Tinto model of retention, most colleges and universities have established some type of program or programs aimed at increasing academic and social integration during the first year (Marina & McGuire, 2008). These programs vary from institution to institution, but most fall under the general title: First Year Experience or intervention programs. The complexity within retention continues when examining first year experience programs. Most institutions conduct their efforts in a number of ways and it is difficult to find consistency among universities (Pan et al., 2008). There has been extensive review of these programs within specific institutions, and because of the complexity of the issue, the conclusions are mixed (Jamelske, 2009). However, the majority of the literature seems to lean towards the idea that first year experience efforts do have an impact on retention (Kurotsuchi Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Brown Leonard, 2007; Marina & McGuire, 2008; Pan et al., 2008).

First year experience programs fall under a variety of titles and definitions: summer bridge programs, targeted academic advising, living learning communities, peer mentoring, college introductory courses, expanded general orientation, and federal intervention programs are the categories that define most first year retention programs. Each of these categories differs from institution to institution; however, the objective of all first year experience programs is to increase retention rates through academic and social integration (Jamelske, 2009; Marina & McGuire, 2008).

Many reviews have reported positive gains through the implementation of first year experience programs (Horwedel, 2008; Keels, 2004; Kurotsuchi Inkelas et al., 2007; Marina & McGuire, 2008; Pan et al., 2008), and other reviews have concluded that first year experience programs do not have an impact on retention (Hendal, 2006-2007; Jamelske, 2009; Potts, Schultz, & Foust, 2003-2004). Although these studies demonstrate different conclusions, the literature seems to be in agreement with Jamelske's (2009) statement, "Overall, the evidence suggests that student involvement in some type of organized first year intervention report higher levels of satisfaction and involvement in campus activities, achieve higher grades and are more likely to be retained and graduate" (p. 376).

This is where the complexity of retention once again arises. Concluding that institution specific first year intervention programs have a positive impact on retention, the question must be asked: why have national retention statistics remained stagnant? As Heiman (2010) states, "The problem is that – even with all of these services and support systems in place – increased student retention rates are scattered and incremental. In fact the national data suggests that we are moving backward in retaining college students" (p. 1). This statement highlights the importance of continuing the quest to find more strategies that work at the institutional level, but can also be

replicated throughout higher education to promote the success of all students. One such program is the federally funded TRiO program, which will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

Many first year experience programs are aimed at all incoming first year students, and other programs are in place specifically to combat the issue of disproportional retention rates among marginalized populations (Horwedel, 2008; Keels, 2004). These programs are in place to work with marginalized students to promote their academic and social integration, which is often more difficult than their counterparts because of their marginality. A major contributor to this endeavor is the TRiO federal program. TRiO awards assistance to demographics that have been “historically underrepresented in higher education” (McElroy & Armesto, 1998, p. 374), which encompasses low-income, first-generation, and students with a disability. TRiO funding began in 1965 (Hodges & Sparks, 2008) with the initial three programs: Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services. The program was then expanded further to include: Educational Opportunity Centers, Staff and Leadership Training Centers, Ronald McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, Upward Bound Math and Science, and most recently Upward Bound Veterans Program. These programs have been studied independently with once again mixed results (McElroy & Armesto, 1998). However, the literature seems to point to the conclusion that these programs do have a positive impact on the students enrolled (Brewer & McMahan Landers, 2005; Hand & Miller Payne, 2008; Preston Thomas, Vann Farrow, & Martinez, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). The complexities of student retention repeatedly surface as a long list of variables, as well as studies being conducted at various institutions, enter the equation. Furthermore, the overall conclusion that TRiO programs have a positive influence on

student retention is blurred by the understanding of retention numbers having minimal, if not no increase in the last decade (Heiman, 2010).

At Washington State University there are five TRiO programs: Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, Student Support Services, Ronald McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and Educational Opportunity Centers. Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search are aimed at pre-college students; therefore, there are three programs offered to marginalized students on campus. The TRiO programs at Washington State University provide assistance to 160 students. The services offered are defined as: Academic advice counseling, Career counseling, Personal counseling, Support and encouragement, and Mentoring from faculty, staff, and peers (Washington State University, n.d.).

First year experience programs, as well as federally funded TRiO programs, positively impact student retention at specific institutions (Jamelske, 2009). However, this conclusion may not be influential enough to initiate large gains in national retention rates, leads to the question of what other factors may increase retention rates. There is now a need to locate other higher education practices, which could be used separately or in combination with first year experience and TRiO programs, that may positively influence retention. Therefore, it may be advantageous to find new retention strategies to combine with these programs. The next section discusses the direction this study pursued to gain insight into marginalized students' response to faculty members curriculum design and instruction techniques.

Faculty Influence on Engagement

Calls for further research into retention focus on faculty members' influence on student engagement (Braxton, Milem et al., 2000; McKay & Estrella, 2008; Seidman & Brown, 2006; Tinto, 2005, 2006/2007; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Combining a specific component of the

Tinto Model with the asset model led me to explore the role of faculty in increasing the social and academic integration of marginalized students. Academic integration is described as a “strong affiliation with the academic environment both inside and outside of class,” and social integration refers to “a strong affiliation with the university’s social milieu: peer group interaction, interaction with faculty, and student organizations” (Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2002/2003, p. 97). Social and academic integration is commonly referred to as engagement (McKay & Estrella, 2008), and has been shown to have a positive impact on student retention (Tinto, 1993). Narrowing the focus even more is exploring an element of both academic and social integration: faculty influence on curriculum design and classroom practice that can lead students to stay in college (Braxton, Milem et al., 2000; McKay & Estrella, 2008; Seidman & Brown, 2006; Tinto, 2005, 2006/2007; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005).

This area of retention is crucial because these are factors the institution can control (Tinto, 2006/2007). Shifting the focus from student characteristics to what the institution can do demonstrates the progression of retention strategies. Tinto (2005) states, “...student attributes such as personality, drive, or motivation are, for the great majority of institutions, largely beyond immediate institutional control. This is not the case, however, for the conditions or environments in which students are placed” (p. 321). The role of faculty impacts student learning and learning has been shown to impact engagement, which in turn influences retention (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). There is extensive literature on faculty’s role in retention (McKay & Estrella, 2008; Seidman & Brown, 2006; Tinto, 2005, 2006/2007). The potential role of retention theory and classroom action is where critical pedagogy meets retention.

From decades of retention research it has become clear that two elements are essential to keeping students in college: students’ first year is critical and faculty-student interaction in the

classroom may be the most influential piece of retaining students (Tinto, 2006/2007). Recent literature (Braxton, Milem et al., 2000; Seidman & Brown, 2006; Tinto, 2006/2007; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005) calls for research into three components of faculty-student interaction: faculty culture, institutional strategies for implementing change in classroom practice, and faculty's approach to classroom design and instruction. Although my focus is on faculty approach to instruction, I believe it is important to quickly outline the first two elements in order to understand why this change can be difficult.

Faculty culture has major implications on retention because culture often shapes faculty members' approach to instruction. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) state, "Faculty roles and expectations (i.e., faculty culture) in turn impact the culture for student learning and engagement" (p. 157). The reasons are numerous but often understandable and differ among institution type. Faculty members are often evaluated on and rewarded for their research publications and not teaching; the result is a de-emphasis on classroom practice. In addition, most college instructors are not trained in pedagogical methods. They often see retention as the duty of student affairs professionals, and faculty often place the onus of learning on the student. The culture surrounding the academy is not easily changed which is why retention theorists are calling on increased research in this area as well as institutional change strategies.

Institutional change in classroom practice must occur to ensure the retention and success of all students. This change is linked to faculty culture and approach to instruction. The literature calls for a look into institutions that have successfully implemented organizational change leading to faculty improvement in instructional techniques (Braxton, Milem et al., 2000; Tinto, 2006/2007; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). This is a difficult agenda due to faculty culture, but studies give a positive outlook on this proposition. Kuh, Laird, and Umbach (2004) demonstrate

that colleges with a focus on learning initiatives show signs that student learning is increased. The same study shows that students learn what is emphasized in over-arching curricular goals. Combining these two ideas gives hope that faculty approach to teaching methods can be changed through institutional strategies; in turn students then follow these instructional goals and learn more.

Faculty Course Design and Instruction

Reviewing the literature narrowed my focus from the overall integrationist theory of retention to the academic and social integration component of this theory, specifically on faculty members' roles within academic and social integration. Within the faculty role, I have located three areas that call for further research: faculty culture, institutional strategies for implementing change in classroom practice, and faculty members' approach to classroom design and instruction. Focusing on faculty approach to curriculum design and instruction is consistent with my interest in critical pedagogy. Before outlining how critical pedagogy may inform retention efforts, I will explore the literature regarding the impact classroom practice has on retention and current examples of methods being studied.

Educational practices have become a major focus of retention theory (Tinto, 2006/2007). Faculty-student interaction, especially inside the classroom, is important because there is often no other times these two parties communicate. This classroom interaction is where theory meets practice; previously the focus was on greater faculty-student interaction in and outside of class. While such calls made sense in theory, in practice it is difficult to ensure. Therefore, Tinto (2006/2007) states, "The realization of the gap between research and practice...lead[s] to what is now a heightened focus on 'what works'" (p. 4-5). Knowing what educational practices work

will enhance the chances that students will be retained; understanding what educational practices work with marginalized students gives hope for increasing their retention.

Understanding the over-arching theory of Tinto's retention model demonstrates the need to focus on engagement of students (i.e., academic and social integration). If this need is met by the university then students will be retained at a higher rate. It has been shown that engagement is dependent on students' experiences in the classroom (Tinto, 2006/2007). Therefore, classroom experience is a key component of increasing retention. This is even more apparent when working with marginalized populations. Curriculum design and instruction are tantamount to the success of students. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) state, "...if educational practices lead to student engagement and student engagement leads to certain outcomes of college (e.g., student learning and retention) then it can be said that educational practices indirectly lead to student outcomes from higher education" (p. 156).

Faculty members' role in learning and student success must then be studied further (Tinto, 2005). Recent studies have outlined different forms of instruction that have produced beneficial outcomes to student learning. The most extensive literature is on active learning (Braxton, Bray, & Berger, 2000; Crosling, Heagney, & Thomas, 2009; Kuh, et al., 2004; McKay & Estrella, 2008; Seidman & Brown, 2006). Active learning, or "activities [that] include discussion, questions faculty ask students in class, cooperative learning, debates, role playing, and the questions faculty ask on course examinations" (Braxton, Milem et al., 2000, p. 571), requires students become participants in their education. This strategy directly opposes passive learning (e.g., lecture) that is often found in the majority of college classrooms. Lecture courses decrease faculty-student interaction to a monologue where students become simply a pair of eyes, and a hand for note-taking in the class (Shor, 1996). Such passive learning can be

especially detrimental to marginalized students because of the White middle-class male perspective of traditional curriculum.

Active learning methods have shown to increase student engagement. Kuh, Laird, and Umbach (2004) explain, “Perhaps the most promising results are those related to active and collaborative learning. This pedagogical approach is positively and significantly related to *all* areas of student engagement and *all* measures of what students gain from their collegiate experience” (p. 29). A variety of active learning techniques have been studied and shown to have an impact (Braxton, Milem et al., 2000; Crosling et al., 2009; Kuh et al., 2004; McKay & Estrella, 2008; Seidman & Brown, 2006). Although active learning was defined above, different authors focus on some aspects of active learning and others vary from the definition.

Successful active learning strategies vary in format. Some recent active learning projects demonstrate its impact on learning and on engagement. Seidman and Brown (2006) conclude in that “active learning wielded a statistically significant impact on students’ intent to return to school” (p. 113). Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) conclude that a positive relationship was found between faculty members using active and collaborative learning methods and student gains. McKay and Estrella (2008) explain that their results “revealed strong relationships between quality of interaction with faculty in service learning courses and first-generation students’ academic integration, social integration, and beliefs about accomplishing academic goals” (p. 368). These recent projects also call for more research into other pedagogical approaches in the collegiate classroom. Specifically, there is a call for research into practical methods for the success and retention of marginalized students (McKay & Estrella, 2008; Tinto, 2005).

To gain a deeper understanding of pedagogies aimed at marginalized students there is a need to explore the use of critical pedagogy in college classrooms. Critical pedagogy can be the next step in active learning that uses democratic principles in the classroom to make curriculum inclusive of all viewpoints. Active learning is a part of critical pedagogy but it takes this idea even further. Critical pedagogy aims to listen to students' voice in the design and implementation of classroom practices. For this reason it becomes a progressive step for further understanding how faculty approach to class design and instruction can increase engagement, including the experiences of marginalized students.

Although active learning has demonstrated success, it has been shown that active learning without student voice can become oppressive to specific demographics. Swaminathan (2007) found in seminars with students that service learning outcomes differ between White students and students of color. The students of color reported being treated as if their service learning project was court-mandated while White students were viewed as being altruistic. Critical pedagogy's foundation comes from Dewey (1916) and Freire (1970) and focuses on both content and curriculum through six elements: decreasing teacher power, student self-reflection, dialogue, student voice, critical analysis, and action. These components aim to make the classroom an environment of inclusivity where students and teachers work together to build knowledge. Approaching the classroom this way empowers students by not only actively learning from the curriculum, but actively learning with the curriculum. Critical pedagogy brings students into the design and instruction of the course, whereas active learning only includes them in the instruction.

Critical pedagogy posits the instructor as an active political agent and the classroom as a place to struggle against oppression through social action (McLaren, 2003). Transitioning from

active learning to critical pedagogy allows course design to include multiple perspectives, decreasing the oppression found in traditional pedagogies. The call for research into new pedagogies is overwhelming. When talking about marginalized students and retention, Tinto (2006/2007) concludes, “That work requires us to leave our retention fiefdoms and join forces with larger educational movements that seek to restructure the way we go about the task of educating all not just some of our students” (p. 13). This call for joining forces with other movements can be answered through the use of critical pedagogy. Understanding more about marginalized student response to critical pedagogy is the first step in this process. Studying this issue will begin an understanding of how critical pedagogy can be linked to engagement and therefore retention.

Conclusion

Retention is a complex issue that has been studied for decades. Tinto’s (1993) integrationist model is the most widely accepted theory of retention. However, this model has been altered and updated to include multiple perspectives. From this vast literature it is now known that faculty members have a tremendous impact on student retention through increasing engagement. Studies have shown that curriculum design and instruction play an integral part in retention. Active learning has demonstrated positive gains when analyzing classroom practice. However, there has been no research into the impact critical pedagogy may have on student engagement. The literature calls for studies to focus on pedagogical techniques that can produce positive gains in engagement; specifically methods aiming to be inclusive of marginalized students. A study into student response to critical pedagogy is the next logical step in the process of analyzing pedagogies, to find out what works.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Higher education is often viewed as a way for all students to become enlightened and have a chance at social mobility. College statistics paint a different picture; a disproportionate retention rate for marginalized students is evidence to this claim (Tinto, 2006/2007). In higher education marginalized student retention demands the attention of administrators and faculty (Tinto, 2006/2007). Marginalized student retention involves a complex array of reasons for student attrition from college, but it can be implied that marginalized students experience some external force or forces during college that makes matriculation more difficult than students from “traditional” backgrounds (Locks et al., 2008).

I posit the traditional curriculum as having a major impact on retention rates for marginalized students. The current curriculum is filled with tacit reminders of marginalized students’ experiences as being undervalued or not acknowledged. Their “non-traditional” experiences are often essentialized as add-on lessons or never mentioned at all. “Hidden” curriculum or those forms that implicitly reinforce the status quo consists of components often outside of the formal curriculum that have a non-direct way of placing order to society (Greene, 1986, McLaren, 2003). A theory of critical pedagogy aims to expose these omnipresent, but often unacknowledged, factors leading to the success or failure of specific student populations.

This chapter examines the theory of critical pedagogy, and its goal of individual transformation, as a method of exposing the direct and non-direct power dynamics influencing students’ experiences in school and life. Teaching to transform through critical pedagogy involves instructional techniques designed to allow for a democratic style of instruction which leads to a critical consciousness about the world and students’ identity within the order of society

(Givens Generett & Hicks, 2004). This chapter will also examine the integral contributions of John Dewey and Paulo Freire and the elements of critical pedagogy. These elements will be outlined to understand how the University 101 course was structured to promote an environment inclusive of all students and better understand how marginalized students respond to critical pedagogy.

Theoretical Foundation of Critical Pedagogy

A review of the literature situates the theory of critical pedagogy as an instructional technique with the goal of providing a space for personal transformation. The work of critical educators is heavily influenced by Dewey and more specifically the term “critical pedagogy” is a direct off-spring of Freire’s (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Darder et al., 2003; Greene, 1986, Shor, 1996). When reviewing curriculum designed to stimulate a transformative experience through critical pedagogy, the work of these two educational theorists is integrated into almost all of the lessons designed to promote democracy, social justice, and freedom. Critical pedagogy aims to develop a microcosm of democracy within the classroom, a dialectical understanding of the world, and a critical understanding of the hidden effects of power and privilege on a society that claims to give equal opportunity to all (Darder et al., 2003; McLaren, 2003). In the classroom these concepts are realized through six elements: decrease in teacher power, self- reflection, dialogue, student voice, critical analysis, and action.

Critical pedagogy views education as a socio-political space which positions the instructor as a political agent (Freire, 1998, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Greene, 1986; McLaren, 2003). Consequently, teaching is never “neutral” (Freire, 1998; Giroux, 1988, 2003) and requires the instructor to take a political stance. Critical pedagogy posits that “neutral” reifies the status quo by failing to challenge the dominant discourse, which results in acquiescence to the traditional

politic. A critical instructor rooted in progressive ideology challenges traditional thought by analyzing educational topics through dialecticism (Darder et al., 2003; Giroux, 1988; Leistyna, Woodrum, & Sherblom, 1996; McLaren, 2003). This term is the foundational element in critical pedagogy and must be fully explained in the way I understand its contribution to the practice of critical educators.

Dialecticism is complicated, can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and is instrumental in producing change through critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy outlines the practice of dialecticism in a way that requires students and teachers to analyze objective knowledge, objects, or subjects in a manner that connects them to a historical context which accounts for traditional norms, values, and standards of a specific time and place (Giroux, 2003; Leistyna et al., 1996). Dialecticism also investigates the connection between elements in our lived experiences such as the dialectical relationship of the terms, “underprivileged” and “overprivileged;” in addition it would analyze both concepts together to gain a deeper understanding of how each is connected and the ways each interact (Darder et al., 2003). Dialectical analysis allows students to eliminate dichotomous thinking and begin to understand how the interaction and contradiction of elements affect their lived experience. Dialecticism is the basis for challenging objective knowledge by investigating the meaning of things as being more than a simple static object, but a complex dialectic between objectivity and subjectivity. Understanding this concept allows students to see the world as socially constructed and furthermore to critically analyze the connection between knowledge, power, and domination (Giroux, 2003). Therefore, dialecticism is the centerpiece to critical pedagogy’s ability to transform students into subjects that are able to act upon their life situation in order to produce a better future.

A main goal of critical pedagogy is its goal of transforming society through merging theory with practice (McLaren, 2003; Shor, 1996). Transformation is the main objective of critical pedagogy (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1998, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Greene, 1986; Shor, 1996). Giroux (1988) explains,

For radical pedagogy to become a viable political project, it has to develop a discourse that combines the language of critique with the language of possibility...Similarly, it has to provide the theoretical basis for teachers and others to view and experience that nature of teacher work in a critical and potentially transformative way...and the definition of teachers as transformative intellectuals. (p. xxxii)

Transformation of both student and teacher is inherent throughout the theory of critical pedagogy (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1998, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Greene, 1986; Shor, 1996). In critical pedagogy, personal transformation ensures students are learning in a critical space, as well as reinforces the importance of learning through a social action project (Givens Generett & Hicks, 2004).

Critical pedagogy's transformative aim is rooted in the idea of moving theory into action and this action component is integral to transformation. Through the tenants of critical pedagogy, the instructor is responsible for working with students to expose the contradictions of society and, therefore, gain a deeper understanding of the context surrounding perceived social inequalities throughout their lived experience. Critical educators must pursue this path by decreasing the power of the teacher, having students self-reflect, initiating classroom dialogue, embracing student voice, encouraging critical analysis, and developing a social action project. Critical pedagogy's transformative goal calls for students and teachers to work together to locate the edge of their knowing. When students' current understanding of the world is disrupted

transformation occurs through a reformulation of the habits of mind, assumptions, and perspectives, making them more inclusive of outside worldviews (Mezirow, 2003).

Current world views can be disrupted by gaining a critical perspective of the world and its perceived “natural” state. Critical pedagogy aims to develop a critical individual who is astute in deconstructing the common sense, or taken-for-granted aspects of society (Leonardo, 2004; McGregor, 2004; Whang & Waters, 2001). This foundation of critical thought was first highlighted by Marx as he explored this idea through the term “social consciousness.” Marx’s critical theory had an impact on both Dewey and Freire.

Dewey was instrumental in the twentieth century as the leading advocate for democratic education. Much of his emphasis in his seminal work, *Democracy and Education* (1916) was on an educational system that would bridge the divide among the order of society. In *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey states that a democratic education must incorporate the learners’ lived experience, and by doing so, students become contributors to each lesson through a social process. Dewey (1938) explains this dialogical process:

When pupils were a class rather than a social group, the teacher necessarily acted largely from the outside, not as a director of processes of change in which all had a share. When education is based on experience and educative experience is seen to be a social process, the situation changes radically. The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities. (p. 59)

Dewey’s ideas dramatically impacted the ideology of progressive educators and have similarities to the liberation ideology of Paulo Freire.

Freire (1970) called for focused criticism which allows students to locate agency when confronting their perceived limited situations and reinterpret them as situations to be acted upon.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) he lays the foundation for personal transformation, through critical pedagogy, by describing this as gaining a critical consciousness about the world and a person's situation within the order of the world. Critical consciousness is a derivative of social consciousness; Freire's consciousness is not solely based on a person's social situation. Although Freire focuses much of his writing on class issues, critical consciousness moves past Marx and is applicable to other forms of marginalization such as race, gender, sexuality, and not limited to class. Freire (1970) continues to inform critical pedagogy through his example of a dialogical relationship with the student, in which he advocates for a collaborative learning effort between student and teacher focused on the object of knowledge (Shor & Freire, 2003). Building a partnership with students allows the classroom to become inclusive of, and relevant to all students, as their lived experience becomes integrated into the subject matter (Dewey, 1938, 1916; Freire, 1998, 1970). Critical pedagogy has the ability to transform both the oppressed and oppressor; therefore, the curriculum must be concomitantly designed by teacher and student to promote intrinsic motivation within both and illuminate democratic practices within education. I found this element of critical pedagogy to be one of the final stages of becoming a transformative educator, and it is imperative to understanding the classroom as an inclusive space.

Dewey and Freire also advocate for the inclusion of all perspectives in the classroom. Dewey (1916) refers to this as democratic education and Freire (1970) defines this approach as a question-posing education. These ideas are opposed to the traditional form of instruction, which Freire calls a banking education and Dewey posits as dualism. Their educational philosophies speak of the rupture in hierarchy between teacher and learner. Dewey (1916) states, "This does not mean that the teacher is to stand off and look on...the teacher is a learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, a teacher" (p. 160). Freire (1998) reinforces this idea by stating, "There is, in

fact, no teaching without learning... Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning” (p. 31). Both theorists stress the importance of the autonomy of the learner and the formation of freedom of thought which allows the student to understand that knowledge is indeed constructed and therefore not “natural.” Dewey (1916) calls for an education that does not vocationalize the masses, but combines labor and leisure to be “useful and practical to nurture of appreciation and liberation of thought” (p. 257). This “liberation of thought” can be seen as analogous to Freire’s formation of a critical consciousness which gives a directive to overcoming oppression: “To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (Freire, 1970, p. 47).

Liberation of thought or critical consciousness is the foundation for my interpretation of critical pedagogy’s transformative objective. For transformation to take root, students must locate a new conscious. An education that posits this concept as its mission and vision must adhere to the principles of democratic and problem-posing instruction. These instructional techniques allow students to understand the world as absent of “Truth” and a belief in multiple perspectives demonstrating the multiplicity of truth making. This multiplicity of truth making begins to form the classroom as an inclusive place accepting of the experiences of marginalized identities. Furthermore, illuminating the power structures that produce knowledge promotes an understanding of Western “norms” as having a production cycle that is controlled by the dominant discourse. Critical analysis of the idea of knowledge construction exposes students to a deeper understanding of their place and their perspective within the educational environment and the world. Their perceived “natural” opinions, likes, wants, needs, and goals are then reframed as

influenced by the dynamics of power and impotency, privilege and oppression; moreover, a new future with new possibilities begins to form in which they can become confident in their opinions, likes, wants, needs, and goals that come from their genuine being in the world, and not what has been constructed as “right” or “wrong.” Self-liberation from the ill effects of oppressive forces, direct and non-direct, that are present throughout students’ lives is the goal of critical pedagogy’s transformative effects (Darder et al., 2003; McLaren, 2003; Greene, 1986). In this manner, critical pedagogy and its transformative derivative becomes a vehicle of freedom, social justice, and equality in the classroom. Freire (1970) states,

One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings’ consciousness.

Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (p. 51)

Students involved in an environment of learning that promotes these conscious raising concepts begin to see their self and their life situation as a subject in which an alternate future course can be charted; whereas, education absent of the development of a critical conscious is destined to reproduce the status quo with no hope for new directions (Dewey, 1916). Personal transformation occurs when students begin to critically reflect and deconstruct their preconceived assumptions (Mezirow, 1998). Through an understanding of the social construction of knowledge, students begin to critically analyze taken-for-granted or common-sense assumptions that are often viewed as “natural,” “normal,” or “just the way things are” (Greene 1986; Shor, 1996). Critical analysis of student assumptions regarding the “natural” state of the world allows for a deconstruction of the effects of power and privilege in shaping the world.

Students can then begin to question their “taken-for-granted” environment in which their experiences are marginalized and begin a problem-posing quest to transformation.

The problem-posing journey intrinsically motivates students to ask questions such as: How has my identity been produced by dominant power dynamics? Who has gained from my identity being shaped by the dominant discourse? Who has been hindered by my identity being shaped by the dominant discourse? What privileged/oppressive systematic social mechanisms have helped/impeded my lived experience? Who has benefited/suffered from the effect systematic social structures have had on my lived experience? Whose knowledge is preferred? Why is it preferred over other forms of knowledge? How has the preferred knowledge affected my lived experience? Who has benefited/suffered from the dominant knowledge?

These questions lead to a transformative experience because of their ability to push students to the edge of their knowledge (Garvey Berger, 2004). The transformative experience produces a dramatic shift in a student’s current understanding of the world and causes a “distorting dilemma” (Generett, 2009) that disrupts the learner’s past and makes the future unrecognizable. My own transformative experience is similar to this; I describe the process as my current understanding of the world exploding and coming back together in a completely reconfigured pattern where all the pieces do not fit together in the same way. At first, this was an extremely frightening situation, but through time my new mentality began to feel secure and comfortable as I began to feel a deeper understanding of the world and its people (see Appendix A for the poem I wrote during my transformative experience).

Now that I have outlined my conceptualization of critical pedagogy’s transformative aim, it is important to understand the elements which are essential to the facilitation of a course rooted

in critical pedagogy and the objective of inspiring a transformational process. Throughout the literature, common themes supporting an approach to critical pedagogy are apparent. These themes have their genesis in the work of Dewey and Freire, but much of the literature takes the foundations of these theories further. From a review of the literature and my personal experience it is possible to deduce which instructional elements are instrumental in making a course inclusive to all students. Although these techniques by no means guarantee a transformative experience, they are used to provide a space for students to be contributors to the learning process.

Elements of Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy's transformative aim is to develop a critical consciousness about the world and students' lives within the world order. Freire (1970) calls for critical pedagogy to incorporate dialogue and praxis, and describes the process of transformation as a continuous cycle of action and reflection. Critical educators use the theory of critical pedagogy and transformative learning to inform their practice. Moving theory into practice is done in the classroom through focused attention on decreasing the power of the teacher, student self-reflection, dialogue, embracing student voice, critical analysis, and action. This section will detail the main elements used during design and instruction of University 101, and its aim of promoting a transformative process through the theory of critical pedagogy.

Decreasing Teacher Power

Decreasing the power of the teacher is a difficult but essential process within a critical classroom. Bartolome (2003) states, "Teachers play a significant role in creating learning contexts in which students are able to empower themselves" (p. 423). This process of

empowering students begins on the first day of class. During this time it is important to begin by altering the discourse of power relations between teacher and student. Shor (1996) explains that during this time students will quickly determine if the course is outside of the instructional norm or just another lecture-based session they will have to endure for the entire semester. It is essential to initiate student ideas to inform the structure and direction of the course on the first day. This approach is best realized by refraining from talking or dominating the conversation – being the “giver” of information on the first day and intentionally asking questions to begin the course with student voice as the priority; furthermore the course syllabus must not be distributed until the end of class or withheld until the next class meeting (Shor, 1996). This idea allows students to witness their ideas, and not the instructor’s expectations, as the foundation of the course.

After the first day of class, teacher power must be continually and purposely managed to ensure that both student and teacher are both teachers and learners within the classroom (Freire, 1998). Many methods assist in keeping the classroom as democratic as possible, including encouraging student participation in redesigning the syllabus to better fit their needs while maintaining the focus of the course, asking for student input after each class session to know what was helpful or unhelpful during class (Shor, 1996), allowing students to critique their own or each other’s work and determine their grade, and asking for student input on their expectations of the professor all assist in reducing teacher power. Other student empowerment techniques such as dialogue and student voice will be outlined later in this section.

Decreasing teacher power in the classroom is instrumental in being inclusive of all students, especially students located on the margins of traditional education (Bartolome, 2003). Traditional classroom curriculum has damaging effects on many marginalized students because

it alienates students' experiences (McLaren, 2003). By increasing students' power within the classroom, marginalized students are able to give input as to how a course will better facilitate their learning, validate their life experiences, and shift to an experience that is done with them and not to them. McLaren (2003) explains: "To what extent does compliance with the rituals and norms of school mean that students have to forfeit their identity as members of an ethnic group?" (p. 91). Focusing attention on decreasing the teacher's dominance, the semester begins and continues to uplift the human potential of all students.

It is also important to note that an instructor's power cannot be entirely eradicated. To assume that critical pedagogy can eliminate the power dynamic between teacher and student would be misleading (Freire & Macedo, 1996). It is known that there is a power disparity before student and teacher ever encounter each other (Shor, 1996). Followers of the theory of critical pedagogy understand that in our current socio-historical climate the power in classrooms is not and cannot be equal. However, this power dynamic can be made more equitable through the methods previously mentioned and this is the aim of critical educators.

Self-Reflection

The beginning of a transformative curriculum based on critical pedagogy must include a deconstruction of individual identities through critical reflectivity (Givens Generett & Hicks, 2004; Whang & Waters, 2001). Critical reflectivity is defined as "exemplifying a greater consciousness of how lived experiences shape meaning-making and their relationship to others" (Givens Generett & Hicks, 2004), or as Garvey Berger (2004) explains, "Reflection that does not simply notice what is but begins to unpack what is (to question assumptions, use new lenses, new

perspectives, etc.)” (p. 337). Mezirow (1998) defines this step as a critical self-reflection of assumptions:

Critical self-reflection of an assumption (CRSA) involves critique of a premise upon which the learner has defined a problem (e.g., ‘a women’s place is in the home,’ so I must deny myself a career that I would love). Significant personal and social transformations may result from this kind of reflection. (p. 185)

The importance of critical self-reflection is its ability to push students to the edge of their knowing (Garvey Berger, 2004). Pushing students to the edge of their knowing challenges their current world view and can lead to understanding the world as a socially constructed environment which can be changed. Furthermore, it is the centerpiece of students’ understanding of themselves and the world around them (Hicks, Garvey Berger, & Generett, 2005). Personal identity determines values, norms, and perspective; all which have a major impact on interpretation (Hicks et al., 2005). By deconstructing identity, students are able to see the explicit and implicit power dynamics that are integrated into our daily thoughts and actions, and how students become acquiescent to the effects of power and privilege. McLaren (2003) defines this process as empowerment in “which students learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way we live” (p. 214). This idea can also be understood as making the ordinary extraordinary (Shor, 1996). Analyzing students’ identity within the world is paramount to beginning the process of gaining critical consciousness about the world (Givens Generett & Hicks, 2004).

Dialogue

Dialogue is the key to putting the theory of critical pedagogy into practice (Freire, 1970). Classroom dialogue must be designed around generative themes that come from the students and have relevance to their lives. During discussion the teacher purposely does not control the direction of the conversation, but periodically challenges the participants about their assumptions. Student assumptions are deconstructed in a manner focused on the object of knowledge (Freire & Macedo, 1996) and whose knowledge is given priority and why. Furthermore, dialectical analysis is used to interrogate preferred knowledge to non-preferred knowledge, as well as who gains and who loses when this form of knowledge is preferred and assumed to be correct. Dialogue then allows students and instructor to work together to critically examine personal assumptions and how those assumptions are rooted in the current socio-historical and socio-political climate. Examining students' assumptions through a critical lens relates directly the previously mentioned self-reflection and often begins the transformational process for students.

Dialogue is integral to making the critical classroom an inclusive space that promotes multiple frames of knowledge as essential to the process of learning with and from one another. "It is this educational strategy that supports a problem-posing approach to education – an approach in which the relationship of students to teacher is, without question, dialogical, each having something to contribute and receive" (Darder et al., 2003, p. 15). This dialogic structure is designed to humanize all students and combat the dominate discourse that regulates students to believe Western knowledge is the correct and best paradigm. The beauty of critical pedagogy's dialogic element is that it does not negate Western ideals as incorrect, but views them as just one other form of knowledge.

Student Voice

Curriculum designed through the theory of critical pedagogy must be focused on listening to students and allowing their voice to be not only heard but embraced. When student voice is honored as knowing and intelligent it produces generative themes that are used to continually mold the fluid structure of the course. As Swaminathan (2007) explains, “Consequently, to address savage inequalities and meet social justice objectives, it is crucial to create spaces in schools for students’ voices to be heard and taken into account in structuring educational experiences” (p. 22). Listening to students provides the foundation for rich and democratic learning environments that promote inclusivity among all students. Critical pedagogy’s aim to bring student voice to the classroom demonstrates that students’ experiences add value to the classroom and furthermore, the classroom would be incomplete without student input.

Instructional techniques that encourage student voice be included in the curriculum can have a dramatic impact on marginalized students (Bartolome, 2003; McLaren, 2003). Student voice, particularly that of marginalized students, is often suppressed in the traditional classroom or viewed as a deficit to the learning environment; leading to student withdrawal or resistance to education (Bartolome, 2003). By listening to students the teacher once again becomes a learner and students are empowered as instrumental contributors to the learning process. Through this process, critical pedagogy becomes a vehicle for learning that brings the teacher’s knowledge together with the student’s knowledge to build knowledge around a specific subject.

Critical Analysis

Critical questioning of society is another integral element in critical pedagogy’s goal of pushing past the edge of students’ knowledge (Garvey Berger, 2004; Leonardo, 2004). Criticism

awakens the consciousness of individuals and begins the process of self-production through deconstruction of the taken-for-granted or common sense ideology (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988; Greene, 1986; Leonardo, 2004; Shor, 1996). McLaren (2003) calls for critical thought because it “focuses on the interests and assumptions that inform the generation of knowledge itself. A critical discourse is also self-critical and deconstructs dominant discourses the moment they are ready to achieve hegemony” (p. 210). Critical analysis must not be a matter of being critical for criticism’s sake, but rather developing a focused criticism or investigative stance (Whang & Waters, 2001) which exposes the contradictions in students’ lives (Leonardo, 2004). Criticism of identity production, systematic social mechanisms, and knowledge production through a critical eye on privilege and oppression exposes students to the cruel reasons for constructing the hierarchy of the world in its current state.

Through critical analysis students are transformed by asking questions that challenge the contradictions of society and their lived experience. Contradictions become curiosities for student inquiry, and a dialectical view of knowledge helps to expose the half-truths of the dominant discourse. A classroom promoting critical analysis and dialectical techniques of inquiry aims to be inclusive of all students through deconstructing knowledge claiming to be objective (Darder et al., 2003; Freire, 1970; Greene, 1986). Through critical analysis students begin to reformulate their place in the world and their order in society; therefore, allowing students to see themselves as an agent with the power to enact social change. As McLaren (2003) states, “The point to remember is that if we have been made, then we can be ‘unmade’ and ‘made over’” (p. 92).

Action

Action is the final and most important element for critical pedagogy to become transformative (Hicks et al., 2005). Freire (1970) refers to the action process as praxis, or theory leading to action, and affirms that it is imperative to the transformational experience. “The educator with a democratic vision or posture cannot avoid in his teaching praxis insisting on the critical capacity, curiosity, and autonomy of the learner” (Freire, 1998, p. 33). This element allows students to use the elements of critical pedagogy to inform a social action project. A social action project exposes social injustice within students’ communities and empowers community members. This project is never viewed as complete but continues to build upon itself in an infinite cycle: plan, act, reflect, and re-act (Herr & Anderson, 2005; McIntyre, 2008; Stringer, 2007; Tripp, 1990). The action cycle continues to work with the community to locate oppressive systematic social issues the students’ experience and confront these issues to advocate for democracy, social justice, and freedom.

The incompleteness of a social action project parallels what Freire (1998) refers to as the “unfinishedness” of the human condition. Finding comfort in knowing that social action, along with the condition of being human, is an infinite endeavor prepares students and teacher to embark on a social action mission that can be viewed as a process of learning from the world to be analyzed, reformulated, and acted upon again in the name of social justice and human completion. By acting and re-acting with this mental framework, both students and teacher can continue to be transformed by continuous engagement with social action projects (Givens Generett & Hicks, 2004).

Critical Pedagogy in the Higher Education Classroom

Facilitating a course through the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy is not an easy task (Shor, 1996). Many teachers who subscribe to the tenants of critical pedagogy are reluctant to practice these instructional techniques because it is often labeled as “radical” pedagogy (Shor & Freire, 2003). I resist labeling these methods as “radical” because they must be implemented for the liberation of all students and teachers. The term “radical” is often seen as “subversive” or “way out there,” and allows teachers looking for socially just instructional techniques to disqualify critical pedagogy’s transformative objective before they understand its value. The idea of teaching a radical curriculum may contribute to the anxiety surrounding critical pedagogy (Freire, 1998; Giroux, 1988).

Initially, anxiety regarding the instruction of a course rooted in critical pedagogy stems from my fear of being a political agent within the classroom. However, I came to understand that all of my anxiety is based in the difficulty of combating the traditional schooling paradigm aimed at reinforcing the current “norms” as “natural.” As Shor and Freire (2003) explain, “If your dream is one of transformation, then you fear the reaction of the powers that are now in power” (p. 481). I knew from my own transformative experience that this process often takes years to allow students to unlearn the indoctrinating lessons from a lifetime of living within the dominant discourse. I feel it is essential to any conceptualization of critical pedagogy’s transformative aim to make it known that fear is a rational part of transformative teaching.

This anxiety became reassuring by understanding the fear as the beginning of praxis. Shor and Freire (2003) state,

You say that fear is a sign that you are doing transformational work well. It means that you are making critical opposition, engaging the status quo in a contention for social change. Your dream is entering reality, contending in history, and provoking unavoidable reaction and risk. (p. 482)

When viewing fear and risk from this standpoint it allows the instructor to gain assurance from these emotions. Other remedies to my anxiety stemmed from Dewey's (1916) ideas regarding learning as a continuous process that happens in the context of all social interaction, and knowing that the teacher is constantly learning and is not the holder of all knowledge. These ideas allowed me to gain confidence in the notion that bringing the tenants of critical pedagogy to the classroom will inevitably lead to an increase in social awareness. By consciously focusing on decreasing my power in the classroom, student self-reflection, dialogue, student voice, critical analysis, and action students will be immersed in a classroom aiming to challenge the status quo; furthermore, their reaction to this instructional technique will provide insight to better understand marginalized students' response to critical pedagogy.

Through understanding my fear and anxiety as positive components within teaching to transform, I became excited in the prospects of working with marginalized students in an inclusive space as a teacher and learner. By focusing on the ideas of Dewey, Freire, and other critical educators, I designed and instructed the University 101 course based on the six elements of critical pedagogy: decrease teacher power, student self-reflection, dialogue, student voice, critical analysis, and action. Student reaction to this non-traditional style of instruction is essential to understanding if this theory can be implemented in other educational settings to promote the success of all students.

Conclusion

Critical pedagogy has its roots in the works of Dewey and Freire (Shor, 1996). I believe an essential component to understanding critical pedagogy is seeing the educational environment as a socio-political space where political neutrality equates to acquiescence to the dominant ideology. These ideas lead to the belief that the teacher is a political advocate who can choose to reinforce the traditional belief structure or work to expose the oppressive effects of the current educational structure. By working to include all students, I believe institutions of higher education can become the catalyst for social justice. This goal can only be accomplished by working collaboratively with students to locate a critical consciousness which allows students to view themselves as subjects and not objects. This critical consciousness leads to a deconstruction of students' perceived identity and a re-construction of their identity through an altered lens.

My personal foundation of critical pedagogy is derived from Dewey and Freire, as well as my own transformative experience which was centered on the idea of reality being a social construct. Dewey and Freire are instrumental to the theory of critical pedagogy through their educational philosophies of democratic, experience based schooling and a problem-posing education through dialectical analysis. The ideas of these two theorists promote an understanding of knowledge as constructed and absent of a Truth. An educational model following the philosophy of Dewey and Freire allow for the lived experience of each student to be validated.

A review of literature produces an outline for practicing critical pedagogy: decrease teacher power, student self-reflection, dialogue, listen to student voice, critical analysis, and action. I followed these components during instruction of the University 101 course which

produced the greatest opportunity for the inclusion of all student perspectives in the classroom.

With these components as the foundation of the course student response to critical pedagogy was qualitatively examined to develop an understanding of the impact this theoretical framework has when put into practice.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This study explored marginalized college students' response to a one-credit university course that utilized critical pedagogy. A fundamental tenet of critical pedagogy is that the inclusion of all students' experiences can lead to a transformative experience that exposes the world as a social construct, as well as challenge traditional "norms." In this case, it was assumed that this challenge to the status quo would be a major component of understanding the higher education atmosphere as located within the dominant discourse, which must be deconstructed to legitimize marginalized students' lived experience as valid. This validity of lived experience allowed students to view themselves as an asset to the university (Rendon et al., 2000).

A disproportional number of marginalized students are not retained at four-year universities. This trend presents challenges to colleges and universities (Tinto, 1993). This study explores how critical pedagogy may assist in retaining these students. Therefore, my preliminary research questions were: What are students' responses to assisting in the development of classroom curriculum? What are students' responses to the inclusion of critical thought in the course? How do students respond to their perspective/opinion/voice being the focus of the class?

The study's methodology was driven by the research problem, research questions, and the theoretical framework. Combining critical research and participatory action research, to form critical action research, is directly related to the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy's transformative goal, which is informed by Dewey and Freire. Critical research emphasizes the dialectical relationship between individual and society; participatory action inquiry adds to this dialectic the interconnectedness of theory and practice. Both methodologies are critical in their

aim to emancipate participants through critical theory (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Madison, 2005; McIntyre, 2008; Thomas, 1993).

Utilizing critical action research to examine students' response to critical pedagogy provided insight into how this instructional technique can be used throughout the college curriculum to legitimate a variety of lived experiences. Furthermore, students' reaction to critical pedagogy demonstrated how theory and practice coalesce to become a catalyst for a rich learning environment inclusive of all viewpoints. Conclusions from this project aim to promote a better understanding of how to work collaboratively with marginalized students to view their lived experience as an asset to the university. Gaining insight into students' response to critical pedagogy challenges traditional "norms" associated with college instruction and therefore, work to promote a more socially just university.

In this chapter I detail how the theoretical framework undergirds this study; outline the methodological traditions of critical action research and the methods used to follow this research paradigm; explain the limitations of the study; and finally, explain my positionality and the impact my life had on the selection, pursuit, and data collection of this research project.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study aimed to gain greater insight into the response of marginalized college students to critical pedagogy. I worked at the intersections of critical research and participatory action research to form a critical action research project. This methodology is driven by the theory of critical pedagogy (Fals Borda, 2001; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; McIntyre, 2008; Zuber-Skerrit & Fletcher, 2007). Dewey's (1916) call for democratic education through an incorporation of students' experiences, and Freire's (1970) emphasis on critical consciousness through dialogue, dialectical analysis, and praxis are analogous to critical

research and participatory action research (McIntyre, 2008; Thomas, 1993). Furthermore, Freire's (1970) idea surrounding dialectical analysis can only be observed through qualitative methods (Giroux, 2003). Dialectical analysis is strictly limited to qualitative designs because of its constructionist approach (Crotty, 1998) and the manner in which it opposes dichotomies and refrains from viewing any object or subject of study as static (Carr & Kemmis, 1989).

Furthermore, this theory rejects concrete assumptions surrounding the element of inquiry and instead analyzes the interconnectedness of object and subject through a dialectical framework. In this framework, the subjectivity of the researcher is constantly in flux depending on the socio-historical or socio-political context from which the subject or object is observed. In addition, all objects bring meaning and therefore the objectivity and subjectivity are uniquely interconnected. Viewing a study through dialectical theory forces the data to be seen as subjects and objects with an essence determined by a complex array of variables, not as static entities that can be predicted or controlled (Carr & Kemmis, 1989). This framework was selected because of its focus on finding the hidden power dynamics within the relationship between marginalized students and the university. Critical action research embraces dialectical analysis and qualitative measurement because of the valuable information uncovered through locating the essence of students' experiences within the university (Stringer, 2007; Thomas, 1993).

Outlining the way critical pedagogy's transformative mission drives the methods of this inquiry is important to understanding my assumptions and my conceptualization of the study. The following section explains the relationship between the theoretical framework and methodology.

Critical Action Research

Critical action research is grounded Marx's philosophy of social or class consciousness. Social consciousness, as described by Marx, is the manner in which an individual's class affects their complete being and their future endeavors through social reproduction. Marx is often referred to as the protagonist of critical thought and has had an effect on all contemporary critical theory (Madison, 2005). As established in chapter three, Marx's ideas are prevalent throughout the writings of both Dewey and Freire with a focus on education's ability to become democratic and less oppressive.

Critical theory is an integral component of critical pedagogy as enacted in this study in that I aimed to collaborate with marginalized college students to foster a democratic classroom that views student perspectives as paramount to the learning experience. Imperative to understanding critical theory is the component of Freire's (1970) praxis and initiating change through critical action research. The terms critical theory and critical action research are often understood as infinitely bonded due to their synonymous nature. Critical action research, therefore, is described as the action component of critical theory (Kinchloe & McLaren, 2005).

My conceptualization of critical action research is further reinforced by the theory of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy's transformative aim is a direct descendant of critical theory and is seen as acting on critical theory (Giroux, 1988; Greene, 1986; McLaren, 2003). Critical pedagogy calls for the instructor to approach the curriculum and students from a political stance, as a microcosm of educational democracy through decreasing the teacher's power, promoting student self-reflection, and appreciating student voice, classroom dialogue, critical analysis, and action. This ideology aims to develop a critical consciousness in students. Furthermore, the teacher and students work together to expose the hidden power structures influencing their lives.

This approach is consistent throughout both critical pedagogy and critical action research methods.

Critical theory is the driving force informing the conceptualization, methods, and data analysis of a critical action research (Thomas, 1993). When conducting a critical action research project, the researcher often becomes immersed in the participants' environment and collects data through common interactions and individual interviews with participants (Creswell, 2008). Critical action research also insists on locating the hidden social power dynamics that are present in the lives of marginalized segments of society (Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993). Often these systemic oppressive forces are buried in the environment and revealing them is dependent on a continued focus on the dialectical relationship between individual and society. While conducting critical action research, the researcher must understand the implications of the inquiry on the lives of the participants, and aim to represent them in a fashion acceptable to them (Madison, 2005; Van Maanaen, 1988). Therefore, critical action researchers accept the "task of raising their voice to speak to an audience on *behalf* of their subjects as a means of empowering them by giving more authority to the subjects' voice" (Thomas, 1993, p. 4).

This methodology also gives voice to participants by analyzing the data through a dialectical approach, which aims to gain deeper insight into the complex relationship between individual agency and the larger social structure (Anderson, 1989; Groves, 2003; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993). Through dialecticism, the multiplicity of individual experiences and their interaction with the larger social structure are analyzed. Examining the multiple facets that promote or limit human agency leads participants and researcher to a newfound understanding of their place in society and how to act upon a situation in order to remove themselves from "what is" and advocate for "what could be" (Freire, 1970). This idea shifts the notion of empowering

participants through emancipation or liberation from a corporeal experience to a mental experience.

Empowering participants is a major component of critical action research (Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993; Tuhiwai Smith, 2005). Empowerment happens through revealing systemic social contradictions in the lives of the subjugated (Anderson, 1989; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993; Tuhiwai Smith, 2005), and is directly linked to the overarching belief of critical action researchers that inquiry cannot be objective or neutral (Madison, 2005; Van Maanen, 1988). Furthermore, the subjective nature of research must be celebrated through politicking for social justice (Hyttén, 2004; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993). This study brought the methodological theory of critical action research into the college classroom; therefore, participants' responses to critical pedagogy could be analyzed to better understand university practices that help or hinder marginalized student success.

Methods

Site and Participants

From August 26, 2009 to December 16, 2009, this study was conducted in a one-credit course, at a large land-grant institution in the Pacific Northwest. Focusing on critical action research's interrogation of power, I selected a federal retention program, offered through the Department of Student Support Services, because it awards scholarships to students meeting one or more of these criteria: students from low-income backgrounds, first-generation college students, and/or students with a disability. This located the study within a scholarship program that serves a student population that is outside the constructed "norms" of the college milieu; therefore, working with students whom Freire (1970) would associate as being more likely to

have experiences within the university that label them as “objects” being acted upon, rather than “subjects” with agency to act.

The course was instructed in two classrooms on the Washington State University campus. The registrar’s office scheduled the course to meet in Fulmer Hall, room 150. This room had no windows and the desks were bolted to the ground. At the conclusion of the first day of class it was decided that we would meet in a bigger room with movable desks; therefore, the remaining class sessions were held in the education building, Cleveland Hall, room 242. This room was extremely large for a six student class, had four small vertical windows, and allowed us to move the tables into a square shape.

Participants were encouraged to enroll in the course by their retention counselor within the Department of Student Support Services. Using purposeful sampling, this site and its participants were selected because of their specific characteristics (Patton, 1990): first-generation, low-income, or disabled. Within the purposeful sample, maximum variation sampling was used by including all participants enrolled in the course (Patton, 1990). The course was open to twenty-five students; however, only six students enrolled in the course. All participants signed consent forms to partake in the study.

The participants were extremely diverse. Participants completed a demographic form during the first class and mentioned other characteristics throughout the semester. These characteristics included: race, gender, age, disability, year in college, religion, first-generation status, transfer versus non-transfer student, full-time versus part-time enrolled, and hometown or country. All participants were first-generation college, full-time enrolled, and non-disabled. The following table outlines the participants’ characteristics. This rich diversity among the class provided a unique setting for understanding student response to critical pedagogy.

Table 1: Participant Demographic Chart

Name	Gen-der	Race*	Age	Year	Religion	Home-town	Ref-ugee	Coun-try
Ashley	F	White	18	1	N/D**	Kent	No	USA
Cameron	F	Asian	19	1	Buddism/ Catholic- ism	Seattle	No	USA
Khalid	M	African- America n	25	4	Islam	Seattle	Yes	Somalia
Matt	M	Caucasia n	18	1	N/D**	Spokane	No	USA
Mohammad	M	African (Black)	32	3	Islam	Auburn	Yes	Liberia
Riley	M	White	19	1	N/D**	Port Orchard	No	USA

*Race was individually declared

**N/D : Not declared

Gaining Access

Creswell (2008) explains that gatekeepers are a key component to an inquiry. Madison (2005) states, “‘Gaining Access’ is a major concern in qualitative research...you must consider how you enter the terrain of your subjects in ways that are appropriate, ethical, and effective” (p. 22). Therefore, I developed positive rapport with the directors of both the Department of Student

Support Services and the Center for Advising and Career Development. In meetings with the collaborating departments I focused on being appropriate and ethical (Madison, 2005), and it was determined that I would follow the pre-established syllabus (Appendix B). However, I was permitted to incorporate an additional course objective into the syllabus: “What forces (social, political, economic) influence your decisions about what major/career to pursue?” Furthermore, the course supervisor within the Center of Advising and Career Development was extremely generous and flexible in regard to lessons being taught. These compromises allowed me to adjust methods, activities, and assignments to implement critical pedagogy as well as a participatory action project into the classroom. These two components allowed for the course to focus on student voice and brought an element of praxis into the classroom (See Appendix C for the Assignments Collected).

Consent

This study was certified exempt by the Washington State University Institutional Review Board (Appendix D). Before class began, I collected signed consent forms from the host departments (Appendix E). During the first class all participants signed the consent forms (Appendix F), though I made it clear that they were not obligated and would not be penalized for opting out of the study. Madison (2005) explains that all inquiries must have a “lay summary” in which, “...the purpose of the lay summary is to explain your project to the people who are central to it; therefore, they have the right to know and you have the responsibility to explain your presence in their lives” (p. 23). Therefore, each consent form had a descriptive section that I read on the first day of class explicitly stating that participation or non-participation would not be factored into students’ course grade.

Data Collection

Creswell (2008) emphasizes the importance of aligning data collection with one's research question. In this study, I collected multiple types of information from the students (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) to validate results regarding their response to critical pedagogy. The following sections provide an explanation of my data collection techniques, which are grounded in a critical action research methodology (Crotty, 1998; Madison, 2005).

Interviews

Interviews are an integral component of qualitative research. Fontana and Frey (2005) state,

Both qualitative and quantitative researchers tend to rely on the interview as the basic method of data gathering whether the purpose is to obtain a rich, in-depth experiential account of an event or episode in the life of the respondent or to garner a simple point on a scale... (p. 698)

Therefore, in addition to recording each class, data collection included individual interviews (Creswell, 2008). Sixteen interviews between thirty and sixty minutes each were audio recorded. Brief notes were taken during each interview to record all aspects of the student, including: setting, body language, facial expressions, and hand gestures (Angrosino, 2005). Other notes focused on abstract words that can contain multiple meanings. After students had finished explaining their answer I would probe for a better understanding of the abstraction. This strategy ensured that I was not assuming I knew what the student meant, but asked further questions to clarify their statements.

Extra credit was given for participating in the interviews and students opting out of the interview were given the opportunity to complete a writing assignment to gain the same amount

of extra credit. This assignment required a similar time commitment and therefore, preferential treatment was not given to interview participants. The same five students (Ashley, Cameron, Khalid, Mohammad, and Riley) signed up for all the interviews and one student (Matt) signed up for only the final interview. To ensure that I collected data over an extended period of time (Creswell, 2008), interviews were conducted three times during the semester: September, November, and December. Seidman (2006) states, “The first interview establishes the context...The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience...the third encourages the participant to reflect on what the meaning of their experience holds for them” (p. 17).

The first interview was conducted to gain an understanding of each student’s background. The following two interviews focused on student reflection in regards to their experiences with critical pedagogy throughout the course. An additional interview focused on member-checking occurred after the course ended, in February 2010. All interviews except one were conducted in a secure room on the lower level of the Compton Union Building, a neutral and comfortable place. This setting was selected in order to reduce student anxiety and set up a more neutral relationship (Seidman, 2006). The exception was the third interview (December 2009) that was conducted in the privacy of the classroom immediately following the final class session (final interview with Cameron). The interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix G for interview protocol). The flexibility of a semi-structured approach allowed for probing questions to clarify the meaning of words or phrases. Madison (2005) describes the reason for asking probing questions, “During the interview session, topics and questions will arise that will invariably lead you to feel that you need to gain a deeper or clearer understanding of what has been expressed” (p. 33). Open-ended,

non-directional questions allowed for the experiences of the participant to be less constrained by the interviewer (Creswell, 2008).

During the participants' interviews I listened for abstract words and meanings, and focused on these instances to more fully understand their point of view regarding their reaction to critical pedagogy. These moments enabled me to ask follow-up questions to gain deeper insight into their experiences with course structure and instruction that focused on decreasing the power between teacher and student, student self-reflection, dialogue, listening to students, critical analysis, and action. This method of interviewing allowed me to gain an understanding of how critical pedagogy is viewed from a student perspective. All individual interviews were transcribed and categorized by participant name and interview number; furthermore each transcript was given line numbers to easily locate statements used in the results and discussion chapter.

Observations

Observations, both of participants' activities and the environment where the activities take place, are important to social science research (Angrosino, 2005). In this study, participant observation occurred in the classroom and during each interview. The role of observer is never neutral and power is embedded within the observation (Madison, 2005; Van Maanan, 1988). As the instructor of the course, it was often difficult to observe the body language and gestures that contributed to the meaning of what was being recorded (Agrosino, 2005). Therefore, I quickly realized the best method of recording participants' body language was to make tally-marks on the class outline for each time a participant showed a sign of being tired (i.e., yawn, eyes glazed over) or if they showed signs of being excited (i.e., quick answers to questions, exclaiming a statement). To ensure I did not draw attention to my tally-marks I placed them on my class

outline in the area corresponding to where each student was sitting. This observation method proved to be difficult because of the combined task of teaching and observing. It is important to note that each recorded class session was not transcribed, but rather excerpts of participants' statements were taken to help verify themes and categories that emerged. These excerpts were labeled by the date of the class session in which they were extracted.

Documents

Collecting public and private documents is a valuable source of information contributing to the quality of a qualitative research design (Creswell, 2008). Therefore, data included both private and public assignments submitted by each participant. These documents, especially the private texts, "provide the advantage of being in the language and words of the participants, who have usually given thoughtful attention to them" (Creswell, 2008, p. 231). This information compared participants' verbalized, in-class perspectives, with their private display of opinions.

Other documents used in data analysis include a participant demographic sheet that was filled out during the first class session. This form asked for students' age, race/ethnicity, physical or mental disability, full-time versus part-time enrolled, transfer or non-transfer student, grade point average, and other relevant data. There were also course evaluations collected throughout the semester. After each class, participants were asked to complete an "after-class assessment." This technique collected participant feedback from every lesson, and aimed to decrease the power of the instructor. The after-class assessment was completed at the end of class and participants were asked to anonymously write critical thoughts about that day's lesson. This was not mandatory and participation varied. Other course evaluations took place in the middle of the semester; participants evaluated how well the instructor was fulfilling the expectations outlined

on the first day of class. The final evaluation was conducted during the final class and both of these critiques were anonymous.

Another source of rich data is the researcher's reflective journal (Herr & Anderson, 2005). This journal recorded my growth as a researcher and instructor, took place at the end of each class, and was interconnected to my fieldnotes. This journal enabled me to record and analyze the use of critical pedagogy, and aided in deconstructing the power dynamics of researcher to participant (Thomas, 1993). Creswell (2008) refers to this as "researcher reflexivity;" researchers understand that "[a]s individuals who have a history and a cultural background themselves, they realize that their interpretation is only one possibility, and that their report does not have any privileged authority over other interpretations that readers, participants, and other researchers may have" (p. 485).

Participatory Action Project

Another source of data came from a participatory action research project introduced in week five of the semester. Participatory action projects promote social change through an infinite cycle of plan, act, reflect, and re-act (Herr & Anderson, 2005; McIntyre, 2008; Stringer, 2007). This cycle began in class with an introduction to the participatory action project. During this time, it was important to state the objective of the project (Creswell, 2008), which was to implement marginalized students' voice into the University 101 course curriculum. The plan aspect of this data collection method incorporated interviews, observations, and document analysis (Creswell, 2008). The six participants enrolled in the course conducted video recorded interviews. The interview questions were developed collaboratively in class by the participants and teacher. These questions were asked in an interview of two of the participants' peers, one classmate from their section of the University 101 course, and another student from the Student

Support Services program. One student (Ashley) conducted only one interview because of a scheduling problem. It is also important to note that although I helped to set up the video recorder before the interviews, I was not present during the interview process. The interviews focused on how to make the University 101 course better, through the perspective of students. All students interviewed were first-generation college, low-income, and/or disabled. These interviews lasted between ten and sixty minutes. Verbal consent was confirmed from their peer before proceeding. One participant (Mohammad) forgot to gain verbal consent and was later given written consent. Before each interview the consent forms were read aloud in a lay summary described previously by Madison (2005); it is important to note that this consent form was approved by the Washington State University Institutional Review Board. Confidentiality of the participants' peers was assured through the consent form, and the video was stored in a secure location (Creswell, 2008).

During analysis of the participant to peer interviews, I extracted quotes while reviewing the video tapes. These quotes were categorized under the interview question prompting each response; this included a "miscellaneous" category to ensure that outliers were not discarded. The categories included: "Background of students; Expectations of a University 101 course; Marketing for University 101; What elements could make the first semester of college easier; Is a course about majors/careers important." To uphold the democratic principles of participatory action research, participants were included in forming themes from the categorized quotes. From these themes, participant's developed conclusions. As McIntyre (2008) explains, "...we came together, reviewed each group's summary, and began the process of framing an agreed-upon presentation based on the themes the young people extracted from the data" (p. 53).

Collaborative data collection and analysis completed the plan element and moved the project into the act stage.

After conclusions were developed the participants worked together on a presentation to outline their results. To demonstrate the agency of marginalized participants and increase the possibility of change, it was imperative that the results were presented to decision makers within the University (Herr & Anderson, 2005; McIntyre, 2008). Therefore, I invited members of the Center for Advising and Career Development (i.e., sponsoring department for the University 101 course), the Department of Student Support Services (i.e., sponsors of students' scholarships), as well as other distinguished guests from the university to the presentation. However, not all departments were able to attend and during the presentation there was one member from the Center for Advising and Career Development and one distinguished guest in attendance from the College of Education. A DVD of the presentation was delivered to the Department of Student Support Services to enable the students' perspective to be seen and heard by the department.

Presentation of the results is of utmost significance to a participatory action research project. As McIntyre (2008) states, "...acting on something that people have control over is exactly the kind of thing that contributes to people's beliefs that they are creative, knowledgeable, and capable of making a difference in their own lives" (p. 40). This element of the participatory action inquiry demonstrated the agency present in the lives of marginalized students (Freire, 1970). Furthermore, the presentation of students' results demonstrates the act component of this methodology and moves the project into the reflect stage (Herr & Anderson, 2005; McIntyre, 2008; Stringer, 2007).

Reflecting on the action taken is an important component to participatory action research (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Creswell (2008) states, "This involves

trying out a potential solution to your problem and monitoring whether it has impact. To determine this difference, you might consult your original objective...” (p. 612). Due to time constraints, participant reflection was planned for the final class meeting; unfortunately only two participants were present. Their reflections were brief but revealed interesting conclusions. Critical reflection on the plan and act phases often leads to new ideas and questions.

The next element of the project planned to utilize participant reflection to promote more action or re-action. Stringer (2007) points out the importance of continuing an agenda for social change through reflection aimed at future improvements and re-action. Time constraints prevented this stage from happening and a new path for action was not formulated (Herr & Anderson, 2005; McIntyre, 2008). Although this stage was not completed, the exposure to the participatory action process allowed participants to understand how change is initiated.

This action segment of data collection was essential to this study rooted in the theory of critical pedagogy; acting upon the world in order to change it (Freire, 1970). Therefore, this became another tool for better understanding students’ response to critical pedagogy.

Data Analysis

Before the study concluded, I began the data analysis by recording my thoughts about the data being collected (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). I formed files of each class session, the interviews, and any miscellaneous data; this included observation notes from the out of class “study group,” various emails that were sent, and an outline of one student’s turbulent week. A monthly report was written to reflect on my interpretations of the data and the entire research process. Also a monthly poem, written by me, was included to express my thoughts regarding the research. These strategies allowed for a continued analysis throughout the study.

After completing the study, information from in-class audio recordings, one-on-one interviews, assignments, and observation notes built an information database. From this database, I explored the data to get a general sense of the material through “a preliminary exploratory analysis” (Creswell, 2008, p. 250). After reading, and re-reading all of the transcripts, fieldnotes, journal entries, and class assignments, I began to code the data. These codes were not limited to any number and it was imperative to allow the codes to fit the data and not vice versa (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Information relevant to two or more categories was included in all possible categories. Furthermore, outlier information was not discarded, but rather categorized to protect against bias (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

These codes were then placed in categories, which were centered on the main storylines that emerged from the study; sub-categories were then developed to explore data within each category (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). These sub-categories were more specific in regard to how students responded to critical pedagogy. The sub-categories allowed for the development of themes. These themes were analyzed through a theoretical framework (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) of critical pedagogy to gain a deeper understanding of how classroom power dynamics contribute to marginalized students’ experiences in higher education. This segment of data analysis was most important as the quotes, documents, and observations, which produced codes, categories, and themes, coalesced to provide a rich analysis of the data and research conclusions.

The data was analyzed using the computer program Nvivo, which assisted in coding and categorizing. All information analysis was consistent with critical action research and its analysis techniques of using a critical lens focused on the dialectical relationship of individual and society (Thomas, 1993) as well as participant to institution. A focus on these relationships revealed hidden power dynamics contributing to the experiences of marginalized students in college. Data

analysis continually focused on the study's research questions which give insight into student reaction to assisting in the development of the curriculum, the inclusion of critical thought, and students' voice being the focus of the class; all major components of critical pedagogy's transformative goal. Analyzing the data to better understand students' response to critical pedagogy may then be used to further understand how the university can be more inclusive of marginalized students.

Validity/Reliability

Although this study is rooted in a constructionist epistemology of dialecticism, which views knowledge as socially constructed by the dominant discourse, it is essential within this dominant discourse that data collection and analysis prove its validity and reliability. Creswell (2008) describes the process of establishing validity in qualitative research: "...the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the results through strategies such as member checking or triangulation" (p. 648), Stringer (2007) explains that reliability means, "results should be replicable to any person similarly placed" (p. 192). When conducting a qualitative inquiry, the literature states that the researcher must focus on four components of validity and reliability: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stringer, 2007). In many ways this study adhered to these components. However, catalytic validity was also used to validate the research.

The credibility of this study was obtained through triangulation and member checking (Creswell, 2008, Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stringer, 2007). Creswell (2008) states, "this [triangulation] ensures that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals, or processes. In this way, it encourages the researcher to develop a report that is both accurate and credible" (p. 266). Member checking was done by

working with the participants to determine if my interpretation of their statements was accurate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the interview in February 2010, member checking was conducted by asking participants “whether the description is complete and realistic, themes are accurate to include, and if the interpretations are fair and representative” (Creswell, 2008, p. 267).

The transferability of the research is important to the inclusion of marginalized students’ ideas and experiences in higher education. A better grasp of students’ response to critical pedagogy will assist universities in knowing if this approach to instruction can increase retention rates. The ability to transfer these conclusions to other settings is the duty of outside readers (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Stringer, 2007). Outside readers are able to extract information that will assist their classrooms, retention programs, or universities in making marginalized students feel valued.

To satisfy the dependability of the inquiry, an external audit was mandatory for the completion of my dissertation, and was conducted by my doctoral committee. Furthermore, the confirmability was fulfilled through maintenance of all data records for the time length specified in the Washington State University Institutional Review Board.

In addition to the four components identified for qualitative research, this study as a critical action research project also had to meet validity criteria consistent with this methodology. Therefore, catalytic validity was used because of its Freireian aim of participant transformation through a process of “self-understanding and...self-determination through research participation” (Lather, 1986, p. 67). It is important to understand this validity as including the participants and extending to the researcher; as a teacher and learner (Freire, 1970) within the classroom, transformation of the researcher must be taken into account. This validity criterion was adhered

to through the inclusion of the action component within the course, critical dialogue with participants, and the reflective journal and poems of the researcher.

Limitations

An explanation of limitations is important to assist future research designs associated with critical pedagogy. Creswell (2008) defines limitations as, "...potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher" (p. 207). The limitations of this study were the amount of time available to collect data, the difficulty in recording participants' non-verbal actions in the classroom, and the power dynamics surrounding the teacher-participant relationship. Washington State University conducts their academic year on a semester system which allocates a fall and spring term that consist of fifteen week courses. The course length was limiting because it restricted time available to collect data. Furthermore, one class landed on a national holiday eliminating another week of data collection.

Observing participants during class sessions was more challenging than expected and therefore a limitation that needs to be addressed in future studies. I did not expect this to be such a difficult task; trying to stay focused on instruction techniques while simultaneously observing six participants' non-verbal actions proved complicated. Although I thought I had properly planned for this situation, more planning must go into this part of the project during future studies.

Another limitation was the power dynamic inherent in the teacher-participant relationship. Although critical pedagogy aims to decrease the authoritative dominance of the instructor, it is difficult to erase this dynamic in our current educational structure focused on grade reports. Therefore, participants aim to satisfy the teacher had an effect on the data collected. An attempt eradicate this power dynamic took place before the third interview; each

student was told they had earned an A in the course (which was true). However, the teacher-participant dynamic is difficult to overcome and does have implications on the data collected.

Researcher Positionality

Throughout the entire study, it was imperative that I understood the impact my life experiences had on the data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Locating my positionality was important to better understand the research project; however, I had to take this idea one step further and become self reflexive. This involves understanding how my positionality is embedded in power and domination and the effects that resulted from the hierarchy of researcher and participant (Hyttén, 2004). I had to be aware of the effects of my research design in producing an interpretation of events through my cultural lens. While using critical action research, I aimed to combat this issue through empowering the participants; however, I fully acknowledge all research incorporates some form of domination and oppression.

Exposing the subjective nature of this study follows a Freireian (1970) philosophy. Detailing my personal subjectivity began the inquiry from a place that embraced the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy, in which all truth is constructed through the lived experience of the researcher and is therefore expressed through dialecticism as both truth and myth.

The selection of critical action research is grounded in my life experiences: being a White middle-class male, raised on a military base with parents who were inclusive of all people, as well as continuing life-long friendships with my three best friends from high school, all men of color from poor single parent households, marrying my spouse, who is a middle-class African-American woman, and having a three-year-old bi-racial son. These characteristics and experiences influenced my life and I often searched for words to articulate the complex social situations I experienced. I often thought I had found the reasoning behind many of the complex

situations I was experiencing around race, class, gender, and sexuality; however, my previous reasoning was too simplistic and layered in hegemony. Pursuing an advanced degree in Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Education opened new understandings of the complex social issues I experienced and through my transformative experience I believe critical pedagogy is the most promising method of transgressing the current oppressive educational structure. Coming to know my identity as produced by the dominant discourse and beginning to see myself as a subject with the ability to act upon the world, as opposed to an object waiting to be acted upon (Freire, 1970), was a liberating concept during my transformative experience. I believe that a better understanding of marginalized students' response to critical pedagogy will show this instructional technique as uplifting to students and may be the vehicle for a transformative experience.

Reflecting on my identity I came to see how my experiences influenced my reality and how all realities have a foundation in an individual's experiences. Connecting these ideas to my passion for education led me to explore Dewey and Freire. Serendipitously I realized Dewey and Freire have been influencing my ideas throughout my pre-service teaching courses, student-teaching, and substitute teaching experiences. However, I did not know educational theory and would have described my instructional technique as teaching alternative views of history. I now understand my teaching style throughout those years as a small form of critical pedagogy.

Gaining a deeper understanding of the theory of critical pedagogy and its transformational abilities, combined with my transformative experience within the doctoral program, piqued my interest in continuing to learn more about Dewey and Freire. I found much solace in Freire's call for action through praxis. Although I appreciate meta-theory and its ability to inform practice, my life has been focused on "doing" and not just "talking." Therefore,

Freire's (1970) idea of critical pedagogy through a problem-posing education and praxis led me to pursue critical action research.

Furthermore, I fundamentally believe any research based on Freireian ideas must involve action. Claiming to follow Freire, but adhering to conventional research paradigms reinforces the status quo (Shor & Freire, 1986). Research not aiming to produce social change through praxis is theorizing about social change and therefore not acting to influence social change. I interpret the act of not acting as a fundamental political action rooted in acquiescence to the status quo; therefore, no action is still a political stance. This idea is the foundation for explaining how critical pedagogy's transformative aim is the impetus for the selected methodology.

My positionality had a direct impact on the inquiry; not only from my belief that critical pedagogy would illicit positive student response, but from the racial makeup of my family. Of the two men of color in the class, one was inspired by my wife to enroll in the class (without my knowing) and the other met both my wife and son in the course of the semester. Although I did not intentionally set up any of these meetings, I believe a deeper rapport was established with both men of color because they knew my wife was African-American and my son was bi-racial. This was an additional component that may have impacted their response to critical pedagogy.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to better understand marginalized students' response to critical pedagogy. This leads to an understanding of how this instructional technique can impact marginalized students' time in college. Focusing on critical action research during course design and instruction follows the principles of Freire and Dewey. Data was collected and analyzed through a dialectical framework of the interconnectedness of participant and institution, as well as individual and society.

The results of this study inform the higher education community of student response to critical pedagogy, as well as provide further details as to how this instructional technique can be utilized to develop more inclusive university environment. This information aims to increase the equality within higher education, which in turn leads to a more socially just nation and world.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reporting the results of how marginalized students respond to critical pedagogy lays a foundation to better understanding this instructional technique's influence on student retention. The data was analyzed to gain insight into how students reacted to a class being taught with a focus on the six components of critical pedagogy: decreased teacher power, student self-reflection, dialogue, student voice, critical analysis, and action. The results demonstrated the positive response of marginalized students to critical pedagogy. Furthermore, the results suggested that all six participants responded favorably to this instructional technique and the more marginalized students reported their increased appreciation for critical pedagogy.

This chapter describes each participant in the class to draw a better picture of them and their background. It then outlines the results of the study through categories, sub-categories, and themes that emerged while analyzing that data. The five themes from the data were: Students' Response to Course Design; Students' Response to the Action Research Project; Students' Response to Knowing Classmates; Students' Response to Specific Instructor Attributes; Students' Response to Other Courses. These themes are outlined to better understand the salient elements of student response to critical pedagogy.

Participant Description

The six participants varied in characteristics and life experiences. Although the diversity of the participants has been outlined previously, to better understand the results a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of each participant is necessary. Critical pedagogy's inclusion of all life experiences makes it ideal when working with a diverse classroom. The following

descriptions give insight into participants' background information which was collected during the first individual interview and during class time throughout the semester.

Ashley

Ashley was 18 years old, White, and from Kent, Washington. She was a first-generation college student, freshman, and was undecided in what major to pursue. She had joined a sorority during her first semester at Washington State University, but lived in the residence halls. She is a huge fan of Elvis Presley because he inspires her, and has a nine year old sister. Her mother and father were still married; her father was a local nighttime truck driver who had attended the University of Washington but had to quit because of financial reasons. Ashley stated that he was the "hardest working person that I've known in my entire life," (interview 1, line 79) and she wants to take advantage of opportunities such as college because she knows her dad wishes he could have finished. Her mother's educational background included having attended a community college for a few months.

Ashley has a passion for her family and stated that she was a "daddy's girl." In a paper that was submitted she wrote, "Mentors in my life are definitely my parents. I know that I look up to them both so much...I know they would do anything for me." Coming to college was difficult because leaving her family was hard. Ashley mentioned financial concerns often and explained that her grandmother had planned to pay for college until her death shortly before her arrival at Washington State University. After her grandmother's death, Ashley had to turn to financial aid to support her in college. She described the financial aid process as grueling because her parents could not help her like her roommate's parents who had attended college.

She stated, “All summer it was just like oh I hate this. I don’t even wanna finish this financial aid stuff. I just want to stop and like wish it was done and all that stuff” (interview 1, line 389).

Ashley missed two classes early in the semester, and missed the final class meeting, but she was one of the most attentive participants and was quick to enter discussions. Statements from an interview with her, her after-class assessments, and her mid-term course evaluation depict her as enjoying critical thought and wishing we would do more of it. After the November 14, Facebook/MySpace lesson, her after-class assessment stated, “Today was a good discussion, kind of wish it would have been longer.” She taught me that students appreciate being challenged to critically think. In my last monthly reflection (Appendix H) poem on December 18, I wrote the following stanza about my experience with Ashley.

LEARNING THE ROPES

“Welcome to the first day of class. Ashley seems nice and she’s talking – can’t beat that.”

Dad’s a truck driver – hardest working man she knows

Why is she not coming to class? What can I do to make her want to come to class?

She joined a sorority. I’m sure she’s fitting in well, she seems pretty cool.

That’s cool – she stayed after to chat about her struggle in school and is nervous about retaining her financial aid

She’s not missing class anymore...I’m so relieved.

She really liked the outside conversation; she wants to be mentally challenged

Great job in the presentation

“Ashley has made me realize students like to be challenged mentally.”

These students are the best!

Cameron

Cameron was 19 years old, Asian, and from Seattle. She was a first-generation college student, freshman, and undecided in what major to pursue. Her mother and father are still married and immigrated to the United States before she was born. Her father is from Thailand or Laos (she could not remember) and her mother is from the Philippines. When speaking about her parents' native languages, Cameron said she could not speak her father's language, but, "...I could say some words but I can't understand it, but I can understand Filipino pretty well, or Tagalog really well" (interview 1, line 72). Cameron mentioned numerous times the depression she went through during high school but explained that she was over it now. She often stated that she enjoys helping people and would like to pursue a major that allowed her to help people. In a paper that was submitted she wrote, "A major I'm considering would be something along the lines of sociology or psychology and really a career helping people would be my ideal job because I always put people before me 93% of the time."

Cameron is the only child in her family, was raised in a Buddhist and Catholic household, and equates her parents' culture to their strict parental ideology. Her parents have always stressed the importance of education and going to college. This point was explained as, "...my parents were always like, oh you have to go to college because like, that's like what you do even though they didn't really go..." (interview 1, line 127). Cameron attended private schools since pre-school. She loves music and is very creative, which is demonstrated by the shirts and hand bag she had altered and brought to class.

Cameron describes herself as being shy at first and did not talk the first day of class. She also did not say anything in class on three other occasions. She described herself as a person who

studies a lot and this was supported by her submission of assignments on time and each one being typed. In my last monthly reflection poem I described Cameron in this stanza.

CREATIVE

“Welcome to the first day of class, Cameron is not talking and I wonder what race she is?”

That’s cool that she is really into music shows

She keeps representing for Seattle’s International District – that’s cool

She is on top of her homework

Headphones, flower-band in hair, black Keds

She keeps talking about her previous depression

Parents are strict

Private school in North Seattle

Buddism – I hadn’t heard that before today

“Cameron is so artistically talented! I hope she pursues a major that develops her talents.”

These students are the best!

Khalid

Khalid was 25 years old, African-American, and has lived in Seattle, Washington since 2000. He is a first-generation college student, junior college transfer student, criminal justice major who will graduate in May 2010. Khalid is a refugee who came from Somalia twelve years ago and whose parents died in the Somali civil war. After moving around the United States for many years, he finally came to live with his aunt in Seattle. Khalid described his journey to the United States as living in five cities before finally settling with his aunt in Seattle.

He is soft-spoken and often mentioned that he wished he was an education major and wants to work with his community. Khalid mentioned numerous times his wish to go back to Somalia to help his country when he is finished with his degree. Khalid often spoke of his financial concerns and enrolled in the course after speaking to my wife. His is Muslim and was married last year. Khalid is a TRiO student and also a Bill and Melinda Gates, College Success Scholarship recipient. He stated, “Nobody in my family has any education that I know of” (interview 1, line 138). He said his parents were of the lowest tribe in Somalia and never went to elementary school. However, Khalid describes his aunt as having a heavy influence on his educational aspirations because she would not let him miss a day of school even when he was sick.

Education is a priority in his life, and he explained the reasons for being rejected by this large land-grant university when he applied out of high school.

Then I realized what school I went to...and I was talking to...a recruiter and I asked him, what’s the reason Cleveland people don’t make it to Washington State? They say Cleveland education system...is not the best education, and I always want to go to Ballard cause, if I went there to White school then, I would get accepted to any school I wanted to go to... (1, 465)

Khalid further expressed his understanding of how his identity is on the margins of society and specifically the university when attending summer orientation. He explained that the African students don’t go to some sessions because, “...they don’t have nobody to relate to” (interview 1, line 533). Khalid went on to talk about being a Muslim at the university and that the school, “They don’t even know about it,” (interview 1, line 800) when talking about Ramadan.

He continued to explain his feeling of marginality when wanting to ask a question about being Muslim on campus during the summer orientation session, “Cause as being, African-American you already feel as you’re outcast... Then you say you’re a Muslim, now you’re saying you’re close to Al-Quieda...” (interview 1, line 874).

I was excited that he stayed in the course even though he was a senior. He often came late to class and I tried to adjust the course format to make it more relevant for his status of being close to graduation. On the first day of class the participants were given a questionnaire that would give me insight into their thoughts about the University 101 course (Appendix I). One question was “If you could change 1-3 things about the Pullman/WSU community, what would it be and why?” and Khalid answered, “Student voice → Hear what students need change in and try to make adjustment.” This was ironic because the course had just begun and student voice was an area he would like to change about the campus community. I also greatly appreciated his openness about racial issues he faced in his life and this may have been impacted by his knowledge of my African-American wife. The stanza that I wrote during my final monthly poem reflected my thoughts about Khalid.

SUCCESS

“Welcome to the first day of class. Why is Khalid the only one sitting in the back and not talking?”

His parents died in the Somali civil war!

He’s graduating in May with a Criminal Justice degree – but he just said he wants to teach

He said he wants to be a teacher again – and again – and again

I need to make the class relevant to him as a senior

Did he just say he planned to drop the class after the first day? – I'm happy he didn't!

“So you wish you would've had more say in how the group project was presented?”

Amazing! These students are the best!

Matt

Matt was 18 years old, Caucasian, and from Spokane, Washington. He is a first-generation college student who received an academic scholarship from Washington State University. He is a freshman and undecided on what major to pursue. Religion was mentioned, but he never declared which religion he practiced. Matt's mother and father are still married and he has two half-brothers; his mother is a nurse and his father works for the county. He described his dad's job as having a lot of power, with not very many people above him. Matt explained his situation as having parents who did not finish college, but many of his other family members had completed college and some had doctoral degrees.

Matt “...played in the band from fifth grade all the way to senior year,” (interview 1, line 295) and has been in a music group for two years in Spokane that has competed in various local competitions. This seemed to be a big component in his life as he often mentioned his music group and had me listen to their songs on youtube.com. Matt often seemed ambivalent in class and did not speak up much during the semester. He also did not take part in the first two interviews, but decided to partake in the final interview after I personally asked him. My final reflection poem summarizes my thoughts about having Matt in class.

AMBIVALENCE

“Welcome to the first day of class, Matt is from Spokane – cool.”

Why didn't he sign up for the interviews?

He got a academic scholarship – cool

How can I get him interested in the lessons – he is so ambivalent about everything

I would've never guessed he was in a popular Spokane band

He leaves so quickly he never fills out the after class assessment – I want to know his thoughts

He's really nice, but ambivalence is all I get

“His slides were done really well and he's finally gonna do an interview!”

These students are the best!

Mohammad

Mohammad was 32 years old, African (Black), and from Auburn, Washington. He is a first-generation college student, junior college transfer student, and psychology major with a speech and hearing sciences minor. Mohammad speaks and writes Arabic and practices the religion of Islam. He is a refugee from the Liberian civil war that began in 1990 and lasted 12-15 years. He described his reason for leaving Liberia as,

...when the civil war broke out I had to leave because... There was no school...and then I was worried about my education. And they would kill a lot of young people...telling

them...to go fight, and I didn't want to be part of that lifestyle so...I tried to get a scholarship to Egypt... (interview 1, line 131)

He is married and has a three year old son who lives with his wife in Egypt. His mother and father live in Liberia and he stated numerous times that his father has many wives and over 50 children. Mohammad often stated his wish to return to Liberia to help his family and country.

Mohammad often mentioned financial concerns throughout the semester; which he attributed to getting his financial aid forms in late. Towards the end of the semester, Mohammad had an issue with his wife's father passing away during the semester (her mother died a few months earlier). During this time he missed class and was trying to get the paperwork started to get his wife and son to be able to come to live with him. He often stayed after class to talk and also came to the "study group" hours regularly to discuss various topics outside of the class material. Our many discussions outside of class taught me a lot about working with students with an aim of transformation for both student and teacher. My final reflection poem expressed my thoughts about Mohammad.

ONE DAY AT A TIME

"Welcome to the first day of class, I hope Mohammad doesn't drop cause he's a JC transfer."

From Liberia, had to leave because of civil war

He likes the book!

This guy is exceptional...he's in 18 credits.

He brings the best topics to discuss during the 'study group'

He's on financial aid and he is starting a monetary system to give back to his family – amazing!

How was I lucky enough to get him in my class?

“Mohammad has changed me, and has given me hope for humanizing curriculum.”

These students are the best!

Riley

Riley was 19 years old, White, and from Port Orchard, Washington. He is a first-generation college student; however, both of his sisters went to Washington State University, and father went to community college and his mother went to Eastern Washington University for a short time. His father and mother are still married; his mother is a court reporter and his father is a land surveyor. Riley was a freshman who joined and lived in a fraternity house, and he was undecided on a major to pursue, but interested in being a firefighter. He described his mother as providing assistance in getting him into college.

Riley played football and wrestled in high school and often talked about his interest in sports. Throughout the semester Riley missed two consecutive classes in late September, and then did not miss another class until the final day; he emailed me to inform me he would miss the last day. When in class he was always ready to add to the discussion. However, compared to some of the other participants, Riley seemed to be less descriptive about his experiences in the course; during interviews he often did not have in-depth descriptions of his opinion about the course. He often stated how much he enjoyed the assessment and referred to this lesson when I asked probing questions about his answers. I appreciated the perspective he brought to the class and his personality reminded me of myself during my undergraduate years. My final monthly reflection poem outlined my thoughts about Riley.

JUST DOING HIS THANG

“Welcome to the first day of class, Riley is talking and sitting in the front – that’s cool.”

He feels very comfortable here at WSU – oh his sisters went here.

He likes his sports – high school football and wrestling

Why has he missed two class sessions in a row – I have to do something

Why are his interviews so short, I gotta do something to open him up

He’s enjoying his fraternity – fitting in well he tells me

His story seems so similar to my college story – I think there’s a reason for that.

Yes – He’s coming to class now!

He’s a good guy that has little to worry about

His perspective of college is just like mine – it’s all good cause I know I’m supposed to be here

“He’s helped me to critically analyze my undergrad years – what a blessing.”

These students are the best!

Research Results and Discussion

The results from this study produced five major themes. Within each theme are categories that break the results into subsections that describe how marginalized students respond to critical pedagogy in the college classroom. Although the first four results relate directly to the course design and instructional technique, the final theme emerged from students’ descriptions of their other courses. These results are integral to understanding these participants’ perspective regarding what does and does not work in the classroom. Connecting student response to specific

instructional techniques can provide greater insight into ways the classroom can be used to increase retention rates among marginalized populations (Tinto, 2006/2007).

When reviewing these results it is important to know that careful consideration has been put into showing student statements that run counter to the themes or categories being presented (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Another note is that the results include many participant quotes to maintain focus on their words to fully understand their response to critical pedagogy. I have also attempted to show feedback from multiple students for each category and theme. This method triangulates the data among participants demonstrating multiple perspectives supporting each category or theme. The categories outlined within each theme are in order from most mentioned to least mentioned (Appendix J). This allows for an understanding of which elements students stated most often.

Students' Response to the Course Design

Participants responded in a variety of ways to the use of critical pedagogy. Three of the seven categories that emerged were consistent with the main elements of critical pedagogy: student voice, critical analysis, and self-reflection. The other four categories included: class lessons, experience in education, class size, and relevant classroom material. Participants' response demonstrated that critical pedagogy's instructional techniques were witnessed by them. They understood this course was not like many of their other courses and stated that they enjoyed coming to class. A major theme throughout the data was how the course was based on discussion among participants and teacher.

Student Voice

Student voice was the most frequently mentioned component within the data. Participants' statements regarding this element demonstrated their capacity to articulate what

makes class enjoyable and what makes students want to attend class. Student knowledge of pedagogy is often much more developed than instructors may realize; students know what they want, how to get them motivated, and how to make the classroom a learning environment. Participants' statements indicated why instructors need to listen to students and after listening, implement student ideas. The imperative culminating from these results is for instructors to view students as equal partners in the quest for knowledge (Freire, 1970). Within student voice, two major sub-categories emerged: student input and opinion, and students' desire to learn/come to class.

All six participants described how student input and opinion was appreciated in the course. Examples such as the following statement from Matt were frequent among participants: "...I was happy, because it's not being a dictatorship, we're not being oppressed or our expressions being suppressed..." (interview 1, line 187). When asked why she thought the course was structured the way it was, Ashley replied, "...to keep it as 'us' as it could be...you tried to listen to us and what we wanted to do..." (interview 3, line 624).

These statements are testimony to the power of listening to student input and opinions. Participants noticed this aspect of critical pedagogy and appreciated this change from the traditional classroom structure. Understanding how participants appreciated their input or opinion being valued is further supported by what comes from being valued. Participants expressed that the inclusion of student voice increased their desire to learn and attend class. These statements indicated the effectiveness of critical pedagogy in keeping students engaged in classroom activities. The following statements show how knowledgeable the participants were about pedagogical techniques that work. Mohammad explained how the strategies I used got students intrinsically motivated, "You made the class very interesting to us. And the more people

feel interested about something, the more energy they have to work for that thing” (interview 3, line 200). When asked about what motivates people to come to class, Khalid answered, “...by making them participate...by involving them, by asking them what they want to see...So then, it’s 50/50, basically meeting each other halfway...There’s two people cooperating...” (interview 3, line 378).

Gaining insight into what intrinsically motivates students to want to attend class and want to learn is important because of the impact the curriculum design and instructional techniques have on retention (Tinto, 2006/2007). The participants’ ability to link student voice to gains in class attendance and learning was crucial. This link demonstrated that students know when a course includes and respects their perspective, and that doing so led to increased engagement with the university. These are extremely salient examples of student response to critical pedagogy and more specifically, marginalized students’ response. Two responses stood out because of the impact that an appreciation for student voice can have on marginalized students. The final quote from Ashley showed how astute students are at articulating methods for getting them involved in classroom dialogue.

The first statement was Mohammad’s response to the question, “How do you feel about being asked to express your own opinion during class?” and is focused on the impact race and country of origin has on student voice. I was astonished at his declaration of how much he appreciated his voice and opinion being not only included, but valued within the course. Furthermore, I was saddened, but not surprised that he does not always feel this way in other classes.

I feel like I was the king of Africa. Yes...because you know every person likes him or herself to be part of something important...We don't want to be humiliated...And if...everybody else is giving opinions but except you, nobody...asks you to say anything...you will feel that, okay, these people might not take me important. But this did not happen to me...That makes me feel great...So being able to voice my opinion in a class made me feel like I was the king of Africa.

I followed up with a question: "Has it happened to you other places?"

...This stereotype about a certain group of people still exists in every society today that this person is who he is because he is not part of us. And he ought to be isolated...Yes. If it happened in other places, yes...This is an African child. He probably does not know about what we're talking about in American life. This aspect of the American life, he probably does not know. You see what I'm saying?...he probably does not know, so let us just not bother to ask him. (interview 3, line 323)

Mohammad's words are piercing in the way they speak to injustice that occurs in many marginalized students' classroom experience. However, these statements also relay the message that something can be done to remedy this situation; critical pedagogy's transformative aim through student voice is an integral element undoing the dynamic of an oppressive classroom.

Another response related to the inclusion of student voice was made by Khalid during the second interview. Khalid's proclamation that he planned to drop the course, but remained enrolled because of the collaborative tone on the first day, was instrumental in understanding the influence of this instructional approach. These statements stemmed from the question, "So how comfortable do you feel sharing your opinions during the class?" After probing into Khalid's

answer he began to talk about how he had planned to drop the class. I asked why he decided not to drop the course and he responded:

... you talked about how everybody should participate...you gave us the chance to do whatever we wanted to do... because there were so many questions that you asked. And you asked the question of: what do you expect from a professor?...So that tells us that you wanted to do something not only for yourself but for the students...If you didn't ask those questions, then I would have said, "Oh, he talked the whole class time, and now I'm going to have to expect more of that every day...I'm done with it...Peace out"...by asking questions on, "What do you guys want from this course?" It was like, "Wow," so you have your own agenda, but then you asked: what do we want?...and then you wrote it down, and that shows that you really wanted to get to the students, meet them in there halfway...Because you take it into consideration instead of just saying, "Oh, I'm going to do this, and this will work," because that's your own view, but then when you have the students' view then you say, "Oh, that's what I had in mind and this is what they want. Let's add it together and let's make it better." So that made me stay. Other than that, I was just going to drop it the second day. (interview 2, line 550)

Khalid's statements demonstrate the effectiveness of changing the discourse, from teacher centered to student centered, from the beginning of the first class session. Shor (1996) explains this method as a way of instantly letting the students know that they are valued in the classroom by focusing on increasing student voice and decreasing teacher power. My observation journal from the first class substantiates Khalid's statements,

It was very interesting that out of the six students in the class, all but one sat close to the front...the student sitting in the back is an upper-class student [Khalid]... The two students that did not join the conversation about their expectations for the professor were Khalid and Cameron.

From my observation journal it was apparent that Khalid was not verbally engaged in the course during the first day, but extremely engaged in reading the course design and instructional technique. Both of these components are vital to student retention (Tinto, 2006/2007). This is an extremely important point for instructors to understand: although students may not be outwardly involved during class, they are constantly making observations and judgments about their acceptance or resistance to the course.

The final statement was important because of Ashley's ability to articulate a method for increasing student buy-in to the course. This idea stemmed from a question in the third interview, "...[Are] there other things you can think of that we could have done differently?" Ashley explained that she would have liked to have more conversations like the one we had outside (from the College of Education tour). I followed up by asking how an instructor could find a topic that is interesting to students. Ashley responded:

...I don't know if this would actually work, but write down things that concern us or something like that, or that we're thinking about, that are important to us...And, I mean, not just like anything, but in school...in our classes, like what concerns us in our classes or something like that...and like what we do to help...fix those things and stuff like that. I don't know. Something that everyone has in common, I guess. (interview 3, line 531)

While Ashley did not have the words to describe her suggestions, statements reflect the Freirian (1970) technique of locating generative themes in order to gain interest in a topic. These ideas demonstrate the necessity of listening to students. They know the methods that work and if instructors listen and follow their ideas student involvement and motivation is likely to increase. While some may be surprised that a first-year student explained, in a few phrases, the foundation of Freireian educational philosophy, I suggest that it is more surprising that this insight would typically be overlooked because instructors rarely ask students what they want and need.

Educators must value, listen, and respond to student voice. The knowledge that is gained from student insight is irreplaceable. These participants' words indicate that critical pedagogy's inclusion of student voice can lead to increased student involvement and class attendance, raise up marginalized students whose race and country of origin can lead to oppressive classroom dynamics, and prevent students from dropping a course. All of these components are integral to college student retention (Tinto, 2006/2007).

Class Lessons

The next most frequently noted theme related to the classroom lessons. Different lessons had varying impact on each participant and this is witnessed in the results. Although there was a lesson every week in class, the participants noted their opinions about specific lessons such as: the STRONG Interest Inventory Assessment, guest speaker, the College of Education tour (students referred to this lesson as the outside conversation because the discussion took place outdoors), and critical deconstruction of their Facebook/MySpace web pages.

The STRONG assessment was taken online through the Center for Advising and Career Development. Each participant answered a number of questions regarding their appreciation for

certain occupational elements. The assessment was then calculated and a packet was given to each participant outlining what major or career choice may be of interest to them. The participants noted that they enjoyed this lesson and wished we would have done more with the assessment, or as they often referred to it, the “survey” or “test.” All six participants mentioned the assessment. Cameron’s statement reflected a common sentiment, “...I kind of like doing those tests and writing assignments where you make yourself think about yourself...just what different and unique aspects you could bring to your career, like it’ll help you overall later in life” (interview 2, line 386). The assessment was mentioned often during interviews and if I would have been listening more to the participants I would have used these assessment more. This was the first of many instances when I failed to listen to the students. This was an important note because it demonstrated how difficult it is to shed the dominant discourse that bombards the teacher with the idea that they know what is best for students. This dominant discourse is so powerful that in a course with a focus on following critical pedagogy’s aim to listen to students, I still failed to do so at times.

Another instance that I failed to listen to students was regarding the one guest speaker and their advocacy for more speakers to visit the class. Five out of the six students talked about the guest speaker. The following examples demonstrate the participants’ thoughts about guest speakers. Matt explains, “Well, we only really talked about kind of the psychology majors and briefly about some of the other ones...Maybe get a professor in here...And maybe kind of explore pros and cons of each major...” (interview 1, line 177). Cameron also expressed the idea that we should have had more guest speakers, “...I think we should have more people, like how we did yesterday, like talk about how they’ve kind of gone to their major and what their major entails...” (interview 2, line 355).

Having guest speakers come to class was not originally in the syllabus, but after hearing this idea during the course's action project, I had to make a change. I invited a guest speaker from the campus counseling center. After his visit I was hoping to have other speakers come to the class. However, we were near the end of the semester were out of time. It is apparent from the participants' comments that I needed to listen to them more, and follow through regarding this idea.

The College of Education tour and discussion was a lesson designed to get students out of the classroom and begin to critically analyze their school environment. From feedback on the after-class assessment, it was decided that we would have the discussion outside. During the tour participants recorded notes as we visited different offices within the College of Education. After visiting support staff offices, a professor's office, and the Dean's office, we discussed the participants' notes. The discussion focused on how the assets each participant could bring to the work place. We discussed what characteristics are considered "right" in the work place, and who constructs the rules regarding what is "right." Three of the six participants mentioned this lesson. For example Ashley spoke about her feelings regarding the lesson, "...the one day when we were talking outside...that was a really big one for me. Like, I liked that conversation and stuff, and it made me -- I was like, 'Whoa'" (interview 3, line 440). Ashley later wrote in her after-class assessment, "Liked having class outside. great [sic] conversations. great [sic] questions – really got me thinking – like taking the tour we should do stuff more like this," and Cameron followed this by writing, "I really like having the discussion today and esp [sic] having it outside."

The final lesson that was mentioned by the participants was the critical deconstruction of their Facebook/MySpace web page. The class went to the library and the participants were asked to get on a computer and investigate their personal web page. This lesson, along with the college

tour lesson, focused on critical thought. During this lesson the class analyzed their website to self-reflect on how they portray their self, why they portray their self in this fashion, if the way they portray their self is influenced by outside forces, and examine these questions in regard to the major or career they may be interested in pursuing. Statements from participants indicated their appreciation of this lesson. Three participants mentioned this lesson, and Cameron explained how critical analysis was prevalent in the lesson, "...when we looked at our Facebooks or MySpace, like you wouldn't really get to think about that, unless you were very critical of everything you do" (interview 3, line 80).

Participants' statements regarding classroom lessons are important to knowing what motivates them. Out of the four lesson mentioned, two of them (college tour and Facebook/MySpace lesson) were designed to stimulate critical thinking and dialogue. Both of these lessons focused on making the ordinary extraordinary (Shor, 1996). Participants' statements regarding lessons that they enjoyed should be reviewed when designing future curriculum for this course.

Critical Analysis

Critical analysis is a main element in critical pedagogy; therefore, a goal of this course was to focus on being critical. The critical thought that was practiced tended to take ideas to the meta-theoretical level by asking questions in class such as, "Who determines what the good life is?" "Who determines what is considered right in the workplace?" "Who decides what is right regarding what you have on your Facebook/MySpace page?" and other similar questions. All six participants noticed that the course was focused on critical thought. Mohammad explained his appreciation for critical thought in the class, "It's great... You are encouraging us, asking us

critical questions that can advance critical thinking in a class...when you get after class, the end of the day, you can say, ‘Yes, I loved the discussion today’” (interview 2, line 351). Ashley talked about her previous experiences with critical thought, “...So I just think that I haven’t really had that deep thought into it before...they just didn’t push me to think about it that much” (interview 3, line 407). Ashley reinforced her appreciation for critical analysis in her after-class assessment on November 4, “...The things that it [Facebook/MySpace lesson] made me think about were very in between and it made me think about what is right & who decides that.”

Khalid also added his thoughts about critical analysis,

...I don’t usually just sit down and think about, “Oh, okay, you know I’m doing this and why am I doing it?” But having a professor to tell you to think about what you’re doing or how you’re doing things, it gives you a chance to observe and report of your own way of life or things that you do or things that you don’t do. (interview 2, line 403)

An appreciation for critical thought demonstrates that these participants wanted to be pushed to think on a deeper level. Critical thought within the course followed a path that attempts to deconstruct participants’ lives and society through a method that makes the ordinary extraordinary (Shor, 1996). Designing lessons that focus attention on participants’ everyday environments and routines and analyzing them to demonstrate that they are not “natural” environments or routines, but constructed by a power source begins the critical thinking process. Cameron described this approach eloquently in her after-class assessment on November 4, following the Facebook/MySpace lesson, “I really liked how today we looked at something we look at everyday but in a more critical way.”

An interesting component of critical thinking that took place throughout the semester was Mohammad's quest to become more critical. Mohammad would stay after class to discuss various topics that were on his mind. On September, 30, he stayed after class for 58 minutes and mentioned that he was trying to build his critical thinking skills, "...When I talk to you I learn more – I try to be a critical thinker..." (class session, 9/30). Mohammad also stayed after class on October, 14, for 29 minutes, as we talked about the book, *Wretched of the Earth*, that I gave him after our first interview. On November 4, he stayed after class and we talked for 10 minutes about our conversation during our last meeting at the study group time. He also stayed for 11 minutes on December 9, as we talked about the presentation that the students gave. Mohammad stayed and talked with me after class often enough that he made this statement after class on October 14, "I'm gonna spend time with you on Thursday [at the study group in Starbucks] man. When I start talkin' to you I miss my class...two times now I missed my class" (class session, 10/14).

During our after class chat on November 4, Mohammad once again focused on critical thinking as we were talking about our discussion at the last study group time:

And because you are critical thinker you engage the class in critical thinking, why?

Critical thinkers always gonna ask question like that, why you think like this...because they want to get you to think critically. You see not only what I tell you is good but look at it from your own perspective. (class session, 11/4)

On top of Mohammad staying after class often, he was the only student to regularly attend the study group time. He came to the study group on October 8 for two hours in which we talked about his classes, his home country of Liberia, and social inequalities and the state of

Black people in the United States and Africa. Mohammad attended three more study group sessions: October 15, for 1:30 minutes when we discussed his family's situation in Liberia; October 22, for 1:31 minutes when we talked about the social inequalities Black people face; December 3, for 56 minutes when we talked about his presentation slides for the class project.

After the final interview protocol was complete I asked Mohammad, "What are your thoughts about our discussions?" This was in reference to why he stayed after class and came to the study group time to talk with me. I asked this question to check my assumptions regarding why he took time to converse with me outside of class. His statement was profound and the following excerpt demonstrates his thoughts:

I thought you were a critical thinker, because you always ask, "Why? Why this is what it is? Why this happened the way that it happened? Why do you say I'm a good man?" And I have to give reasons for everything I say to you...I learn from you when I have conversations with you...You see, all of those were factors that encouraged me, drive me to be with you at Starbucks...the favorite discussions we had was when you gave me a book to read...I could see you getting into my mind, because the book...was about what are happening to my people...And you went into that book and discussed a couple of sections with me, and I saw it in you, you were a totally different man to me. (interview 3, line 463)

Mohammad's mention of the book I introduced to him was astounding to me because I did not know it had such an impact on him. This was a prime example of the impact critical pedagogy has on both the student and the teacher. The promotion of critical thought led Mohammad to want to look into the book, and the influence of Dewey (1916) on critical

pedagogy's philosophy that all social interaction is a learning situation prompted me to introduce the book to Mohammad. Without knowing the works of Dewey (1916) I would have been too nervous to give *Wretched of the Earth* to him. This is witnessed by my observation notes from after Mohammad's third interview on December 10, "...I was hesitant to give him the book, but thinking of Dewey and knowing that all social interaction is learning gave me the confidence...I remember thinking...whatever comes from giving him the book will be a learning experience for me."

Mohammad's response to critical pedagogy demonstrated that a focus on critical analysis is important when working with marginalized students. To gain further insight into critical conversations between Mohammad and me, I included an example of one dialogue we had in chapter seven. This example provides a better representation of how critical thought may be promoted in and outside the classroom. Mohammad's quest for critical thought needed to be acknowledged because, as demonstrated, his staying after class and attendance at the study group time indicated a much stronger interest than other participants. His response to critical pedagogy's element of critical analysis was motivating for me and his comments, combined with the other participants' words, led to the conclusion that students are ready and eager for high level thinking about topics that pertain to their lives.

Self-Reflection

Another major component emerging from the data was about self-reflection. Self-reflection about the relationship of self and the world is crucial to students' understanding of how they have been constructed by the world and is a step to becoming a subject with agency to promote social change (Freire, 1970). Five of the participants recognized self-reflection within

the course. Riley demonstrated an appreciation for self-reflection, "...just learning about yourself is pretty interesting. I kind of liked doing that. I've never had a class like that before" (interview 3, line 160). Ashley explained her interest in self-reflection when it is connected to an ordinary component in her life, "...the most interesting thing is how much you get us to think about us... just like the Facebook thing...you wouldn't really think that it would make you think about you, but it really ended up making that happen" (interview 3, line 386). Matt expressed his thoughts about self-reflection:

...I think you probably did it to get us thinking sometimes...about ourselves, because that's what we talked a lot about in class... "How does this apply to you?"...it made me think... "Okay, well, if I were in this situation, and with these surroundings, I'd probably be doing this, this, and this, or I'd probably be thinking this, this, or this, or wanting this, this, and this. (interview, 1, line 221)

Cameron also stated her thoughts about the course and self-reflection "...you get to learn more about yourself, and probably the main reason, like, it's not like a lecture class. It's more focused on you..." (interview 2, line 54).

Participants' appreciation of the focus on self-reflection demonstrates that students are interested in reflecting back on themselves, which goes along with critical pedagogy's focus on the students' lived experience as the foundation of the class (Freire, 1970). Maintaining attention on the student decreases the power of the instructor and explicitly demonstrates that marginalized student life experiences and identities are valuable and needed in the classroom. This instructional technique is based on a Freireian (1970) idea asking students and teacher to reflect upon self and the world in order to change it.

Experience in Education

Experience in education stems from Dewey's (1916) ideas regarding the learning process being a process of trial and error; learning then becomes not an experience one gets out of a book or something with an end point, but instead a process that requires students and teacher to explore a topic and learn through an inquiry process. Participants' statements regarding this idea were seen throughout the data and usually stemmed from the action research project, in which the participants interviewed peers in an attempt to add marginalized student voice to the course curriculum. All six participants expressed the process of learning through experience. Ashley expressed how the action research project had helped the class learn,

...I think trying to change it and make it better is helping us learn better...So I like that part of it, too, because I think it helps us more than just like, "Oh, here's a class that's perfect and this is what"...And not trying to change anything about it, it wouldn't really do as much help for us. (interview 3, line 171)

Mohammad explained the learning process that he experienced within the course,

...it's a place -- is an environment for learning. We all make mistakes...but that's the appropriate environment for learning...because when you make mistakes, teachers will give you some feedback. And as you get feedback from your errors, you'll be able to develop from that...and know what can you do differently next time. (interview 2, line 421)

The participants' statements once again touch on an example of an aim of critical pedagogy; students gaining the ability to view the educational process as an experience to learn from. Furthermore, the classroom is understood as a vehicle to demonstrate how an experience in

education takes learning to another level; learning about the subject matter, but also seeing the classroom as a training ground for applying trial and error to other aspects of students' lives.

Small Class Size

Class size was a recurring topic throughout the data. Participants vacillated between the idea that the University 101 course structure could be replicated in a course with more students and that it would not work with a large class size. Some participants stated that it was possible, and not possible during different interviews. However, from the participant responses, one thing remained constant: class size was an issue that would need to be thought about when implementing critical pedagogy. All six participants expressed opinions about class size; Riley and Matt offered particularly relevant comments on this issue. Riley explained that the course structure could still work in a larger class, "...But even with a bigger class...it'd still be comfortable...if we got to know each other how we did at the beginning" (interview 3, line 228). Matt explained his thoughts about the size of the class, "...it was very informal...because there's six of us, so it's kind of an intimate setting...unlike a class that has 300 to 500 people in it..." (interview 3, line 513). Cameron expressed her appreciation for the small class size in her after-class assessment on September 9, "For some reason I just like the small class size and noticed it more today..."

As these statements demonstrated the class size was a crucial component to how the participants envisioned a course like this being transposed to other classes. Large class sizes are probably unavoidable when attending a large land-grant university. However, it must be noted that of the six participants enrolled, three spoke about their financial concerns; with college attendance being a large financial expenditure these participants may only have the opportunity

to attend Washington State University as compared to an expensive smaller private university where class size is more similar to their University 101 experience (Shor, 1996). Small class size has been shown to increase critical thinking (Garside, 1996), which can be used to challenge the status quo. Therefore, large land-grant universities with large class sizes may be a component of reinforcing of the status quo, and the type of institution can have an impact on students' ability to be exposed to a style of instruction such as critical pedagogy.

Relevant Material

The importance of making the classroom curriculum relevant to participants' lives also emerged when analyzing the data. Four of the participants talked about both how the course involved material relevant to their lives and also offered suggestions for how to make the course relevant. Ashley explained the participants' ideas regarding the relevancy of course material when she described her belief about why the "outside conversation" was well-received, "...it turned into a topic that everyone had a really big opinion about...or that they just had something they really wanted to say...things that are important to everyone... So the topic I think is really important to that" (interview 3, line 513). When talking about school testing and standards, Matt commented,

And then they [school administrators] said, "Okay, well, we need to improve math, writing, and reading." So then, they focus on that and other things that other students might find important kind of fall by the wayside. And I think by asking students what they want to learn in a class, it helps give them a more rounded education, make them more prepared for life outside of class...I mean, like, "Do I just continue going to school for the rest of my life, because that's all I know how to do? Or do I try to find some way

to incorporate these skills into a real-world application?" And I think the kids that a more well-rounded education will be able to -- will have an easier time finding some way to contribute to society than just test-taking and reading. (interview 1, line 63)

Designing the course curriculum around topics that are relevant to students' lives is difficult. However, Freire's (1970) idea of developing generative themes from student ideas makes this process less difficult and empowers students by having them contribute to each lesson. Generative themes allow teacher and student to build lessons and knowledge together in a quest to find curiosities to intrinsically motivate learning (Freire, 1998). Throughout the course I believe I could have done better at working with participants to locate their curiosities. However, through the self-reflection assignments, class discussions, and individual interviews I was able to focus attention on what mattered to the class, and alter the curriculum to incorporate their life experiences.

Students' Response to the Action Research Project

Another major theme that emerged during data analysis was students' response to the action research project. This element of action within critical pedagogy allows theory to be interconnected to practice (Freire, 1970). The action research project was the action component, or praxis that must be implemented in order for critical pedagogy to be complete; therefore, it was imperative for a social action project be included in the course. The action project was designed to demonstrate the agency students have in producing social change. Furthermore, the action project aims to reject the idea of students as objects without the ability to produce change, and promote students as subjects with unlimited opportunity to act upon the world (Freire, 1970). As part of the course, a research project that explored ways to include student voice in the

development of course curriculum was included. This assignment proved essential to promoting agency among the participants. The research process was designed in a manner consistent with the participatory action research cycle: plan, act, reflect, re-act (Herr & Anderson, 2005; McIntyre, 2008; Stringer, 2007).

The action research project was conducted by the participants in an attempt to bring other TRiO students' voice into the University 101 curriculum. The participants interviewed two TRiO students each (Ashley only interviewed one TRiO student), to gain insight into other marginalized students' perspectives on how to make University 101 better. After the interviews were completed, the participants and instructor compiled the data and presented the findings to university faculty and staff.

The participants responded favorably to the action research project and more importantly being able to be involved in the development of the curriculum was appreciated. This component of the course contributed to participants' statements regarding being valuable to the course. Data related to the action research project demonstrated four categories related to this theme. Participants noted the importance of making the course better, helping others, engaging in a learning experience, and wondering if the course was new. The last category was extremely interesting because from the participants' statements it seemed as if they concluded that University 101 must be a new course.

Making Course Better

Participants voiced their opinions about the action research project's importance in making the course better in the future. This aspect of the course seemed to be important in demonstrating that the participants' ideas were valued. All six participants expressed

appreciation for opportunities to make the course better; this attitude can lead to an increased sense of agency to enact social change. Cameron stated her appreciation, “It was pretty cool, because other courses you don’t get to help mold part of the curriculum” (interview 3, line 44).

Matt also expressed his feelings of being involved in making the course better,

...whenever you’re at the start of something...you kind of feel...honored...you’ve been asking us how we can improve the class, and I think it’s really smart of you and the department people to ask the students what they want in the class... (interview 1, line 34)

Although it will be discussed later, it is important to note that Matt’s statement reinforced his thought that the course was in its beginning stages.

Participants’ appreciation for making the course better is a vital element of critical pedagogy because it is taking action upon the world in order to make positive social change (Freire, 1970). The agency that students develop when working towards positive social change provides hope that a better future is possible; furthermore, that students can be an active participant in the change process.

Helping Others

The action research project as a vehicle to help future students emerged as a main element within participants’ responses. The possibility of helping future students added to participants’ appreciation of the project and the course. Four participants commented on their quest to help others. I was especially taken-a-back by Mohammad’s explanation of how the project was appreciated in a manner that supported his collectivist approach to living; he mentioned its ability to push against “Western individualism.” His description of this reflected elements of capitalistic culture. Mohammad’s idea follows the theory of critical pedagogy which

aims to be inclusive of all cultural viewpoints and furthermore to resist the omnipresent influence of capitalism (McLaren, 2003).

I want to be somebody who's helping others to succeed in their goals. I am from Africa...in a developed country like America, people tend to be individualistic. I believe in collectivist culture. I believe that everyone should succeed, and not only me...It's not only self, self, self, me, me, me, me. But let me look around and see if somebody's around and suffering, if somebody's around and needs helps, let me pay attention to others' needs and let me try to help them. Not only me want to be the person, but I may help others so that we all can succeed together. And that's the most important part of collectivist cultures...you see, versus individualistic culture where I only have the mind of, okay, I want to be the best...I want it all for me. You know, that's totally different. So I love helping people. (interview 2, line 326)

Participants' statements regarding their enjoyment in helping future students through developing course curriculum was inspiring. Their comments highlighted the altruistic feelings of the participants. Often college students are viewed as being extremely individualistic and all about self (Twenge, 2006), but these participants demonstrated their appreciation of helping others. Seeing students as too focused on the self may be a derivative of not designing course material that interests the class, does not include them in course design and instruction, or that tend to focus only on them and their performance.

It is important to note that due to time constraints this research project was conceptualized by the instructor and not the participants. A true participatory research project includes the participants in all aspects of the project (McIntyre, 2008). Participants would

determine the issue they feel is of concern, plan a strategy to address this issue, act on their plan, reflect on their action, and determine what needs to change within the process in order to re-act on the issue. Therefore, the project is situated within the participants' lives, and is a more meaningful experience. With positive participant response to a project conceptualized by the instructor, one can only imagine the impact a project conceptualized by the participants would have on their learning process, and the feeling that they were helping others.

Wondering about the “New” Course

Another important point that became salient in the data was three participants' inquiry about when University 101 was developed. Their statements included thoughts about the course being new, and also asking how long it had been offered. Riley's statement paints a portrait of participants' thoughts about the newness of the course, “Like us doing the interviews and stuff? I like being involved in that, like making it, because it really wasn't much of a class before, was it?” (interview 3, line 79). Matt expressed his thoughts about the course being new, “When I enrolled in the class, I thought it was, you know, an established thing. But once, you know, getting into it, you figure out that...this is one of the first times it's offered” (interview 1, line 26). Ashley also questioned whether the course was new, “...you might think that just because it's -- I don't know how many classes -- is this the first class of it there's ever been?” (interview 3, line 164).

The statements by the participants outline a peculiar issue regarding their thoughts about being included in course development. Participants seemed to believe their input was solicited only because the course was just being formed. This is an extremely important point. Participants' comments reflect an assumption that student input on curriculum would not be

included in a course that was already in place for many years. Ironically University 101 was not a new course. Participants' comments provide a glimpse into the way the current socio-historical climate in education implicitly reinforces the idea that courses are static and complete.

Traditional methods that do not solicit student input may have led these participants to conclude that though a school would not ask their opinion unless the course was in its infancy.

The participants reacted positively to the project in the manner in which they stated that it would make the course better in the future, and it was helping future students. The results emerging about the influence of the action research project demonstrates that this approach could be utilized in many courses to increase student engagement. Action research, in this case, is a method of constantly improving the course and including students in the process; in this way it is helping both instructor and student. The approach of implementing an action research project focused on improving the curriculum through student voice is a method that can be integrated into almost any curriculum. Participants' statements reflected the belief that they were making a difference.

This experience in learning is designed to promote a learning environment that can be transposed to any future endeavor that interests the students (Dewey, 1916). It is important to note the participants' ideas regarding the action research project being implemented by university administrators. During the final class meeting only Cameron and Khalid were in attendance; an interesting conclusion to the course, which will be examined later in this chapter. During this class session I asked if they felt any of the classes' suggestions would be followed by the host departments. Khalid explained, "No...They already have a set of plans so that means they according to their plan, do whatever they want to do. Everybody else opinion doesn't matter" (class session, 12/16). Cameron responded, "I think that they'll at least try to like

advertise it more because like most of the people didn't even know about it..." (class session, 12/16).

Students' Response to Knowing Classmates

The data included many examples of the emphasis participants placed on the importance of knowing their classmates; more specifically how knowing their classmates contributed to being comfortable to express their opinions during class discussions. I had not anticipated how important this would be to the students. Participants expressed the importance of being comfortable with their classmates, and also their appreciation of having different cultures represented in the class. This point further progresses the ideas regarding how to be successful in implementing critical pedagogy.

Being Comfortable

Participants' statements regarding their comfort level with their classmates demonstrates a strong rationale for taking time during the first weeks of class for students to get acquainted with each other on a personal level. This approach will lay the foundation for positive classroom interaction and involvement. Four participants made statements about the importance of being comfortable. The quotes below seem to imply that the more comfortable a student is with their peers the more likely they are to engage in discussion. Riley's explanation of his comfort in class leading to more dialogue was typical of participant feedback, "...you feel more comfortable to get involved with class, like answer questions and stuff, instead of with a class where you don't know anybody" (interview 3, line 240).

The comfort level participants spoke about did not involve any specific lessons, and may have been a derivative of the small class size. As stated before, I was not aware of this

importance of this element when using critical pedagogy. However, it is apparent that future course design through the theory of critical pedagogy must include this component. Nowhere in the literature regarding critical pedagogy was this point explicated, but the participants indicated that this may assist in increasing student involvement throughout the semester. Facilitating comfort in the classroom could have major implications on the outcome of a course designed around the six tenets of critical pedagogy: decrease of power, student self-reflection, student voice, dialogue, critical analysis, and action (Freire, 1970, McLaren, 2003; Shor, 1996).

Appreciating Different Cultures

Participants also voiced their appreciation of different cultures. Participants' comments implied that the course was made better by valuing various cultures. Three participants mentioned their appreciation for different cultures in the class. Riley was particularly eloquent in providing insight into how the promotion of diverse viewpoints adds to the learning environment. In responding to the question, "What did you find most interesting about the course?," he explained:

I thought it was interesting the other people in class...like Khalid and Mohammad and stuff, I thought they were pretty interesting guys...I just thought it was cool how where they came from and how far they got and all that...coming from a different country and going through college and stuff...I think that's pretty cool. It was just interesting to me to hear about their stories and stuff. (interview 3, line 150)

The participants' comments seem to support critical pedagogy's inclusive aim. Participants indicated being surrounded by different cultures than one's own improved the class experience. One critical pedagogy objective is to be inclusive of all world views in order to

promote a more just society and to decrease the power that is embedded in a single understanding of the world (Darder et al., 2003). The participants' responses support the conclusion that this goal was met during this course.

Students' Response to Specific Instructor Attributes

Participants' mention of specific instructor attributes was a major finding within the data. The importance of instructor attributes has been highlighted by previous studies (Braxton, Bray et al., 2000; Braxton, Milem et al., 2000; McKay & Estrella, 2008; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Wilson & Corbett 2001). These studies concluded that it was important for the instructor to include active learning and/or be caring; however, the participants focused on more than just caring and pointed to the ability of the instructor to encourage discussions and participation, be available outside of class, and promote critical thought. Encouraging discussions and participation, as well as being challenged to critically think, are integral components of critical pedagogy and it is important to note that these participants appreciated these characteristics.

Encouraging Discussions and Participation

Encouraging discussions and participation was central to students' experience in the course. Participants expressed their appreciation with these efforts and, furthermore, suggested that this also influenced student attendance and punctuality. Mohammad explained:

...seeing the class, students coming to class every time during the course of this semester, we can probably predict that the professor was making the class engaged in discussions, there was a very good discussions going on in the class is why students would always come into class on time. (interview 3, line 227)

This is a critical statement because it relates to students' desire to be in class or engagement with the course which is a predictor of increased rates of retention.

Being Available

Participants also noted the importance of being available for students outside of the class time. Their comments about availability demonstrate a heightened focus on individual time with students, and explicitly showing them you are available to assist in any way. I began the semester with the traditional instructor office hours but, by listening to the participants' wishes the first day of class, I learned that Mohammad enjoyed classes that have a study group time outside of class. I finally settled on offering extra study group time once a week for an hour in the Starbucks Café in the Compton Union Building located in the center of campus. Four participants expressed appreciation of the instructor being available in and outside of class. Khalid's statement exemplified participants' appreciation for my availability,

... you're always ready and well-prepared to try to help every student in a way and meet with them, and you give your own spare time to sit at the Starbucks to wait for them to do or to help them with their school courses. (interview 2, line 267)

Critical pedagogy played a major role in my ability to be available to the participants. When designing the course I unknowingly reinforced the traditional course design by offering office hours by appointment and located in my campus office. By listening to the students the first day, I was able to use their idea to make a study group time in a neutral location. Furthermore, critical pedagogy's aim to decrease the power of the teacher prompted me to interrogate the power embedded in asking students to meet in my office. When meeting in a neutral location student-teacher power dynamic is shifted away from the plethora of books and

degrees decorating the instructor's office and moved to a site that offers a more balanced power dynamic such as a common meeting area. I would have never thought about this component being so important to the student-teacher relationship, but the results suggest that this is crucial to making the course holistically situated in the theory of critical pedagogy.

Being Challenged to Think Critically

The participants also expressed appreciation for being challenged to think more critically. They indicated they wanted to be engaged in critical conversations and appreciated an instructor that continually questioned the reasoning behind their thoughts. Four participants stated that critical thought was an important quality for instructors. Mohammad exemplified his appreciation of an instructor focused on critical thought, "...I see your critical thought...I want to get that from you. And the more I talk to you, I would try to incorporate some of this critical thinking, some of these critical thoughts" (interview 2, line 601). Ashley's expression was typical of many participants' views on this topic, "...like the questions that you asked and ask and stuff, I don't know, I think everyone can just tell that you're interested in it. So that -- I think it makes everyone want to share with you" (interview 3, line S582).

The statements from the participants seemed to demonstrate that students want to be challenged to think on a deeper level. Furthermore, participants indicated an increased appreciation for critical thought that went to a level of questioning why things are the way they are, and who made them that way. This is the level of critical analysis that takes students to often uncharted territories. I found this approach to critical thought most influential on Ashley and Mohammad, but participants' statements confirmed that most appreciated an instructor continually focused on critical thinking.

Students' Response to Other Courses

Another theme that emerged was participants' descriptions of their other courses. It is important to note that none of the interview questions asked about other courses; however, as comparisons with other courses were mentioned, I asked probing questions to better understand participants' experiences in classes outside of University 101. This is an integral component because a study about marginalized students, retention, and pedagogy needs to report any results that can assist in making curriculum design and instruction more conducive to student success. This information is by no means being included to criticize other pedagogical styles, but rather to inform the reader regarding techniques that these participants described as being unfavorable and not engaging. There is also a segment of this theme that pertains to other courses that participants enjoyed. The salient categories pertaining to students' descriptions of other courses are: un-democratic/no voice, class size, and positive attributes.

Un-Democratic Structure

All six participants voiced concern regarding other courses that were un-democratic or suppressed their voice. The comments pertaining to this point are troubling, but not surprising. Traditional curriculum and instruction often promote what Dewey (1916) refers to as dualism or Freire (1970) defines as a banking method of education. Many classes can feel oppressive, especially for marginalized students, due to the dominance of a White middle-class, male perspective. Students from the dominant culture may sit through this style of instruction without difficulty because it is consistent with the values and social codes with which they are often familiar. This curriculum and style of instruction place emphasis on traditional knowledge as "correct" or the "only" perspective. This type of course design may be a factor within the

disproportional retention rates among marginalized populations. All six participants mentioned the un-democratic structure of courses in which they were enrolled. Cameron's description of her other courses was a good exemplar of the participants' thoughts, "...there's not a lot of opportunities or classes that allows you to do that [assist in curriculum design]. Like, all of my other classes are just like, 'Syllabus. Here.' But with this class...students help kind of structure it, and so it's just helpful..." (interview 2, line 267). Khalid backed this up by describing some of his other courses, "They just come and talk and talk and talk. They don't even get to know the students" (interview 2, line 631).

The participants' comments describing their other courses as un-democratic or ways in which voices are suppressed is important because it supports Shor's (1996) idea that students often feel as if they are just a pair of eyes and note-taking hand in the classroom. In addition, participants described many of their classroom environments as hostile or as a teacher-versus-student dynamic. These descriptions run counter to critical pedagogy's aim of building knowledge in a collaborative effort between students and teacher (Friere, 1998). Participants' statements seemed to imply that student input is not only left out of the class, but discouraged or viewed as a nuisance to the learning process. This is a devastating reality for marginalized students who are left out of the traditional curriculum and a sober reminder of the potential for faculty members' contribution to the limited success of this demographic.

Dislike of Large Classes

Class size once again emerged when analyzing students' comments regarding other courses in comparison to University 101. However, this time the three participants focused on

the extent to which large class sizes proved detrimental to their learning experience. Riley expressed concern with getting used to the class size,

...when I first got in a 150-kid class or whatever, you're not used to having that many kids in the class...I'm getting used to the big class size...and then having the professor just talk to the class. He's not talking to you individually, you know? So I'm just getting used to that. (interview 2, line 362)

Ashley stated the difficulty of having a course like University 101 with a large class size, "...I'm comparing to my biology class...there are so many people in that class that we can't just have a conversation...I feel like you can be engaged in a class like that...it's just on a different level" (interview 3, line 461).

Participants' ideas regarding the size of many of their other courses seem to demonstrate that they enjoy having a smaller class size. This leads to a call for increased focus on exploring students' response to critical pedagogy within different class sizes. Critical pedagogy may be applicable in any size course, but further research into this area would give better insight into the advantages and disadvantages of class size on this instructional stance. It may also lead to a heightened understanding of specific methods to be employed for various class sizes.

Positive Class Experiences

Within the data it was apparent that the participants had positive experiences in other courses. This is an important finding because their descriptions both align with the elements of critical pedagogy and provides new insight into class components that participants enjoyed. These ideas can be used to increase student engagement, and should be integrated into future course design and instruction. Three participants expressed feelings about other courses they

enjoyed. Khalid described a course where the professor made it a point to make it fun so people would enjoy the class,

...I had this math class...And the professor said, "...I'll make sure by the end of the semester you enjoy math more than you hate it." Then at the end of semester, he asked the same question...out of 74, at least 65 people said they enjoyed the math. (interview 2, line 645)

Ashley recalled a high school course that she enjoyed, "... I've been in classes...in high school...where we do things and we try to make them better...and by thinking about what will make it better, it's also helping us" (interview 3, line 161).

These positive class attributes are extremely important if listening to students is important. Participants' statements must be listened to and acted upon when designing and instructing future courses. Khalid also suggested doing a mid-term evaluation asking for only strengths and weaknesses; this was something I had never expected. This is an example of how difficult it was to remove myself from the dominant educational paradigm. When I gave a mid-term evaluation (Appendix K) I thought it was extremely outside the box; however, Khalid's comment demonstrated that I was still thinking traditionally. This was because he stated that my mid-term evaluation was too long and would not yield genuine student input due to its length. He explained his positive experience with another course that simply asked for instructor strengths and weaknesses; an approach that allowed students to give genuine feedback because it was short and to the point. Once again this is a great example of the power of the dominant teaching paradigm that influences us from an early age. Khalid's statement was made before the final

class session where class evaluations were distributed, and an adjustment was made to the final evaluation (Appendix L) to include his suggestion.

Contradictions to Students' Positive Response to Critical Pedagogy

Although all six participants' statements reflected a positive response to critical pedagogy, there were times throughout the study that participants' actions or statements ran counter to this conclusion. It is important to include this information in the results and discussion chapter to better understand a complete picture of participants' experiences. The two most salient contradictions to students' positive response to critical pedagogy were Matt and Riley's seemingly ambivalent attitude many times throughout the course. Although they both stated positive remarks about the class and its design and instructional techniques, I often recorded in my after class observation notes that their actions ran contrary to their statements. The following statements were written in my observation notes regarding Matt's ambivalent demeanor in class on September 30:

As we spoke Matt and Cameron entered the room. Both of them seemed their usual selves; Matt with a very pragmatic demeanor that seems to say, "I'm here, let's get things going." It seems as though he doesn't care too much about how the class is structured (such as the professor attempting to decrease classroom power structures), but is always there and ready to go through the game of school.

Riley participated in classroom discussion quite often, but throughout the semester it seemed as if the course was not as impactful to him, as compared to other participants. The final reflection poem highlighted this idea, but I also wrote about in my observation notes from Riley's second interview on October 29:

His [Riley's] word selection of, "It's cool," "It's going good," and "It's fun," plus "I don't know" before many of these statements, as well as his inability to further explain what these abstractions mean in the context of the course leads me to think this is just another course to him; although he states that he enjoys the course, I assume he doesn't understand why any of this is important because it's just a another college course and he may feel he hears his voice in much of the content of his other courses.

Although these conclusions may be incorrect, Matt and Riley's perceived ambivalence during many course lessons may be associated with the structure of schooling; as White males they may feel accepted and valued in most classes and, therefore, a course designed to bring value to their experiences is no different than their other courses. This assumption was calculated by analyzing their reactions to the course in comparison to the most marginalized participants such as Mohammad or Khalid; their stated excitement and appreciation of the course design and instructional method could be contributed to their less positive experiences in other classes.

The most interesting contradiction to students' positive response to critical pedagogy was during the final class session. The last class meeting was scheduled to be a celebration in which the class would have one last time to discuss their thoughts about the course while enjoying muffins and refreshments. Only two of the six participants were in attendance (Riley and Mohammad had contacted me to inform me of their absence). This element of the study was very important because of the insight it provided into students' response to critical pedagogy.

Before this class all six participants had been informed that they earned an "A" in the course. Therefore, there was no incentive to attend the final class except to celebrate and have one last discussion. Further enhancing this conclusion was that Cameron's final individual

interview was scheduled to take place after the last class; which may have contributed to her attendance. In a class where the hope was that participants attended class because the material promotes intrinsic motivation to participate, the low attendance demonstrated the power of the culture of schooling. The culture of schooling, which is focused on earning grades and not intrinsic motivation to learn, dominates our society's conception of the schooling process. The culture of schooling was so powerful that a course designed around the theory of critical pedagogy could not escape the implications of grade incentives.

There were multiple factors that could have contributed to low attendance on the final day: removal of the grade incentive (which was the main motivator for attendance), material which was no longer relevant to their lives, and participants were busy attempting to complete other courses based on grade incentives. Any of these factors and a plethora of others may have been the reason for the low attendance, but it was important to add this contradiction to the conclusion that students responded positively to critical pedagogy. In my final reflection poem I expressed my opinion regarding the lack of attendance during the final session:

STUDENT REFLECTION

“Welcome to the last day of class – we won't be staying the entire hour.”

Only two students came – damn, but I completely understand.

“Do you think any of the suggestions from the research project will be implemented?”

“Khalid you don't think so, huh.”

Cameron thinks only the marketing component will be listened to.

Neither of them have any suggestions to make the project better next time.

It is the final week of classes – what did I expect?

Remember to do the reflection component before the last week

If I was them I wouldn't want to be here either.

Plan, Act, Reflect, Re-act – that's what life's about!

I'll learn

These students were simply the best!

This was a powerful testimony to students' response to critical pedagogy. Although the participants often stated their positive reaction to the course, it was still a course in which it seemed they had to play the game of school in order to be successful. The lack of attendance on the last day of class was understandable, and further evidence that the structure of schooling must be completely upended to allow for students to have genuine intrinsic motivation to want to learn. This was by no means an indication of the participants' lack of motivation to learn, but rather a clear picture of how the current educational structure is based on earning high grades, which moves the focus away from learning.

Students' Response to Critical Pedagogy

The results of this study demonstrated that at least these six marginalized students responded in largely positive ways. Participants' response to the six elements of critical pedagogy can be seen in the major themes that emerged from the data: Student Response to the Course Design; Students' Response to the Action Research Project; Students' Response to Knowing Classmates; Students' Response to Specific Instructor Attributes; Students' Response to Other Courses. The results from these five themes can be summarized as participant appreciation of being involved in all aspects of the course from asking for student input on the first day, critical dialogue throughout the semester, to the action research project aimed at changing the curriculum. Participants also appreciated an instructor who was available to assist

them, encouraged discussions, and pushed them to think critically. Furthermore, the importance of knowing their classmates can lead to a comfortable environment for critical discussions. Finally, participants expressed concern regarding the manner in which other courses were taught and this insight must be followed when designing future courses.

The participants' generally positive response to critical pedagogy was most obvious in comments that demonstrated feelings that the structure of the course contributed to students' engagement and that it did work for everybody. Mohammad expressed his feelings regarding the course and student attendance,

So it is not really a difficult course. So I say if you did not make it interesting, that really gets students to be excited in the topics of the discussion that was going on, I would think that most students would have quit the class and skipped most of the days...But I did not see that happening. (interview 3, line 253)

When responding to the question, "Why do you think I organized the course the way I did?," Khalid made this statement reinforcing that the course did work, "That's your way of teaching. That's your style. Or that's the way that you wanted to do or a way to see if that works for everybody, which it did" (interview 3, line 355). This statement pointed to attributes of the instructor, which are important to note, and certainly do have an impact on the course; therefore, Khalid's statement could also be interpreted as being impacted by the personality of the instructor. However, these statements may also summarize participant feeling about a course taught through the theory of critical pedagogy. Concluding that this instructional method worked for these participants begins the process of exploring this topic further to continue to work collaboratively with marginalized students to increase retention.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter outlines the conclusions and implications of the study. The conclusions and implications stemming from each theme are presented, as well as comparisons with other similar research results. Furthermore, the importance of the results on educational theory will be discussed. These ideas relate the results to a larger spectrum of education in which social reproduction is posited as being alive at institutions of higher education.

Results from this study indicated that marginalized students generally respond positively to critical pedagogy. However, the results must be taken a step further to address the problem of disproportional retention rates for this demographic. Retention literature calls for research regarding the impact of course design and instruction on student retention (Tinto, 2006/2007). The classroom has become a focal point in the quest to better understand strategies that will increase student retention, and more specifically marginalized student retention (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Therefore, this study served as a preliminary stage to gain insight into the impact of critical pedagogy on marginalized student retention. The students involved in this project generally responded positively to this instructional technique. These results suggest a need for further exploration into the interconnectedness between critical pedagogy and retention.

Positive Response to Critical Pedagogy

The results demonstrated critical pedagogy's success in valuing marginalized students' experiences. Although critical pedagogy has not been heavily researched in the higher education classroom, other instructional methods (e.g., active learning, service learning) have been shown to be successful in increasing student engagement (Braxton, Bray et al., 2000; McKay & Estrella,

2008; Seidman & Brown, 2006; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). The results from this study differ from studies focused on active and service learning. However, these instructional strategies share similarities with critical pedagogy; active learning and service learning can be components of critical pedagogy. The results of the previous studies on instructional methods in higher education, as well as this study, implied that there are ways to design and instruct a course that increases marginalized student engagement, a component of student retention (Tinto, 1993). Therefore, it can be concluded that understanding ways to increase marginalized retention is not new. This conclusion poses a serious question for institutions of higher education: Why haven't these instructional techniques been mainstreamed? I suggest an answer to this question later in this chapter.

The conclusions and implications of this study are important for gaining a better understanding of this topic and knowing where to take future research. The results also pointed to possible classroom strategies that could stand alone, or be added to first year experience programs, including the TRiO program. The literature stated that institution specific retention programs aimed at marginalized students do have a positive impact (Jamelske, 2009), but it also stated that there was minimal increases in national retention rates (Heiman, 2010). Combining these statements with the understanding that students responded positively to critical pedagogy led to the conclusion that there may be a place for the theory of critical pedagogy within first year experience programs, including TRiO programs. This study indicated that this instructional theory may work to increase the classroom engagement of marginalized students and may be appropriate to assist in the retention strategy aimed at first year experience programs such as the TRiO program.

The five themes emerging from the data must be further examined to draw conclusions and suggest implications for instructional methods in higher education, as well as future research directions. The five themes were: Students' Response to Course Design; Students' Response to the Action Research Project; Students' Response to Knowing Classmates; Students' Response to Specific Instructor Attributes; Students' Response to Other Courses.

Students' Response to Course Design

Conclusions

The conclusion from this theme came from participants' statements regarding the course design contributing to the likelihood of students attending class and being interested in the course. Concluding that the participants had a positive response to the course design allows for the connection to be made that critical pedagogy may be used to increase marginalized student engagement. This was an important result because engagement (i.e., academic and social integration) is a major component in student retention (Tinto, 1993).

A positive response to the course design also took the results of this study a step past the ideas of active learning and service learning to include the other elements of critical pedagogy. Previous research (Braxton, Milem et al., 2000; McKay & Estrella, 2008; Seidman & Brown, 2006; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005) did not mention the importance of knowing your classmates, student voice, critical analysis, class size, self-reflection, experience in education, making the class better, and helping others. These were all components stemming from a direct focus on the six elements of critical pedagogy, and can be further explored to gain insight into making the classroom inclusive of marginalized student experiences.

Implications

Further research regarding marginalized students' response to the course design will need to address the impact of a variety of class sizes, in various college settings (e.g., public, private, land-grant, highly selective, etc.), among specific marginalized demographics, and in different educational disciplines. By gaining increased insight into students' response to class design within these various components, advocates of critical pedagogy can connect future research to student engagement outcomes. Future studies of this nature could reveal a wealth of knowledge regarding critical pedagogy's impact on retention rates.

Another call for research into this theme reinforced the literature's (McKay & Estrella, 2008; Seidman & Brown, 2006; Tinto, 2006/2007; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005) solicitation of further studies into different pedagogies that increase engagement. This study's focus on critical pedagogy was a step forward from active and service learning; further research needs to locate the next phase of inclusive pedagogical theory. Critical pedagogy is certainly not utopia and the end-game for pedagogical theory, but it is posited as a step in the right direction. Finding a more inclusive pedagogy may further promote the success of marginalized students. I have concluded that a listening pedagogy may be the next step in this process.

Implications for higher education revolve around how to implement critical pedagogy into the classroom. Institutions need to locate mechanisms for moving curriculum design and instruction into practice; Tinto (2006/2007) referred to this as finding out "what works" (p. 5). Implementing the elements which made students respond positively to the course design will take time, money, and sustained effort on the part of university administrators. Strategies need to be developed to work within the current structure to push against the forces that lead

marginalized students to be disengaged. These strategies will need to focus on the pedagogical development of faculty members, reduction of class size, rethinking assessment strategies, and alternative incentives for faculty promotion.

Students' Response to the Action Research Project

Conclusions

The action research project produced interesting conclusions. Participants' positive response to this project was just the beginning of a wealth of information stemming from this theme. Statements regarding participants' belief that they learned from conducting the project indicated that the action component of critical pedagogy was essential to the learning process (Freire, 1970). Furthermore, participants' ideas that the action project assisted in making the course better and helping others demonstrated their appreciation for addressing a "real-world" issue. This was important because it showed students' appreciation for being involved in their education. Assisting in the development of curriculum can be done in any class and this study indicated that students appreciated being an active member in their educational journey.

Implications

The impact of the action research project produced new research directions. Inquiry into a complete participatory action project, in which marginalized college students are the major contributors to the entire project, could produce results that further inform student engagement and retention. Allowing students to guide the plan, act, reflect, and re-act components of participatory action research may produce impressive results because the project's aim will come from students. This may be difficult because of time constraints inherent in a college semester,

but proper planning could lead to extraordinary outcomes in regard to participatory action research and marginalized student engagement.

Higher education administrators need to design creative methods of implementing student led action research projects. These projects may substantially increase marginalized students' engagement in the classroom; a project developed through the students' experiences is relevant to their lives and will explore issues that matter to them. Furthermore, this approach is most inclusive to the experiences of marginalized students. Policies that call for mandatory action projects must include students' ideas or they could reinforce the marginalization of specific demographics (Swaminathan, 2007). Administrators must specifically focus on professional development opportunities for faculty to gain greater insight into the importance of listening to what matters to the students.

Students' Response to Knowing Classmates

Conclusions

Information from this theme concluded that critical pedagogy may not work without the comfort of students knowing their classmates. Participants' statements expressed the importance this theme had on their willingness to speak up during discussions. Without concerted effort on personal student to student connections the foundation of the theory of critical pedagogy, dialogue, would crumble. This conclusion was not mentioned in the literature and is imperative to the successful implementation and practice of this instructional theory. Maintaining intimate student to student connection throughout the semester may produce better outcomes in student engagement. Efforts at the beginning of the course to lay the groundwork for a comfortable class environment must be focused on to ensure the best outcome when practicing critical pedagogy.

Implications

Further research into this theme could look into how to best structure a course to ensure students have intimate connections with their classmates. These inquiries need to examine this idea in a variety of course sizes and majors. Exploration into what activities students feel have the most influence on their likelihood to be involved in dialogue must also be undertaken. Another avenue for future research into this theme is to design a course based solely on student to student connection that would be offered early in their collegiate career. This idea may lead to a better understanding of marginalized student engagement in the university if they have valuable connections with peers. Specific focus on this theme would be extremely interesting because it was not mentioned in any critical pedagogy literature; however obvious it may seem, this is an integral component of a democratic classroom.

Implications for higher education deal with how to implement a focus on intimate student to student connections within the classroom. Instructors often focus on the subject matter of the course and the need to jam as much “knowledge” into students’ heads as possible. Higher education administrators need to find ways to show the importance of student to student connections to engagement with the course content, and therefore improved learning possibilities. Living-Learning Communities are the closest type of retention program with this aim, but they are not solely based on getting to know one another; it is just one aspect of this strategy (Kurotsuchi Inkelas & Weisman, 2003). This may be a difficult undertaking, but this study indicated that student to student connections demonstrate an appreciation for the value marginalized students bring to the classroom.

Students' Response to Specific Instructor Attributes

Conclusions

Participants' appreciation of specific instructor attributes allowed for the conclusion to be made that the instructor and their approach to the course may be important to ensuring the success of critical pedagogy. Wilson and Corbett (2001) concluded that a caring, yet demanding instructor is important to students' learning. This study took Wilson and Corbett (2001) a step further and reported that other instructor attributes were appreciated by students: Encouraging Discussion and Participation; Being Available; Being Challenged to Critically Think. The importance of this conclusion was that without an engaged instructor promoting discussion and critical thinking, as well as making time to be available, critical pedagogy may not be successful.

Implications

Further research needs to be conducted to better understand marginalized students' response to instructor attributes. Inquiries need to be focused on what attributes are most appreciated and why. This theme emerged from the data and without a focus on this classroom element, it may be difficult to gain an in-depth understanding of marginalized students' thoughts regarding this topic. Studies must also look into students' response to instructors of a different race, gender, sexuality, or religion. Marginalized students may respond differently to teachers from different demographics and this data could introduce a wide variety of new findings about engagement.

The implications for higher education may be difficult to implement, but must be attempted. This difficulty stems from trying to change the demeanor of faculty members towards marginalized students. However, further studies could address how students' response to critical

pedagogy differs among a variety of faculty personalities. University administrators need to train faculty on the importance of practicing the instructor attributes marginalized students feel make a difference in their classroom engagement.

Students' Response to Other Courses

Conclusions

Conclusions from this theme outlined the idea that the participants did not experience this pedagogical style very often in their other courses. The importance of this conclusion was that it seemed as if marginalized students are not listened to in most classes. This highlighted a serious issue often overlooked in higher education; White middle-class male knowledge is preferred in the classroom. Marginalized students may be most impacted by this knowledge being mainstreamed. White male students are insidiously reified as embodying the “natural” knowledge base, and therefore, marginalized knowledge often remains unacknowledged. This complex issue tacitly influences the social hierarchy of the world and the students in the classroom.

Implications

Implications for more research into this theme revolved around both faculty and students. Research could examine marginalized students' understanding of this complex issue to better understand how it impacts their college experience. Further studies could explore students' perception regarding the classroom as a place that reinforces a specific knowledge base, and their thoughts about the impact of mainstreaming one form of knowledge. Faculty members could also be interviewed to gain insight into their acknowledgement of this issue. Once again, examining their perspective about the classroom being instructed in this manner; what are their thoughts

about this issue, and how would they proceed with course design and instruction after being exposed to this issue?

Higher education must move forward by acknowledging the dominant knowledge base universities are founded upon. This acknowledgement would be the first step in moving toward a more equitable classroom and campus. The institution could adopt a policy that examines various epistemologies during students first few years; doing so would expose students to the idea that different forms of knowledge exist, and how has the use of a specific knowledge base helped or hindered their progress in education. Conversations such as these would bring perspective to all students regarding systemic practices which impact students, and may lead to further discussions about systemic advantages and disadvantages within the university.

Power and the Higher Education Classroom

Retention of marginalized students in higher education is a significant issue for institutions as well as society. This study began with a problem that has plagued higher education for decades: disproportionate numbers of marginalized students being retained in college (Tinto, 2006/2007). The implications of this problem are far reaching. Disproportionate retention rates among marginalized students promote a mono-cultural knowledge base that becomes reinforced as “natural.” A failure to retain marginalized students is also a disadvantage to all students by maintaining a homogeneous classroom where dominant world views are seldom challenged. More importantly, this problem leads to lower marginalized student graduation rates. College can only become a vehicle for social mobility if students graduate. Furthermore, lower graduation rates reinforce the dominant discourse of meritocracy. When marginalized students are accepted into college, but do not graduate, the dominant ideology can seep into their understanding, and

others' understanding, of the reasons for their attrition: not working hard enough. In this case, the influence of meritocratic ideology can be worse than before entering higher education because marginalized students may feel that they had every opportunity to succeed.

The purpose of this study was to explore marginalized students' response to critical pedagogy. My goal was to push against the dominant ideology and demonstrate what can be done in the classroom to increase retention. The theory of critical pedagogy works to deconstruct the deficit model and show methods of instruction which view marginalized students' experiences as a contribution to the classroom. The larger issue that arises from marginalized students' response to critical pedagogy is that a democratic collegiate classroom can develop a critical student who believes in the possibilities of a more just world. This transformation occurs through acknowledging and valuing multiple perspectives in the classroom. Using the six elements of critical pedagogy has been shown to have a positive impact on marginalized students, leading to increased classroom engagement. The overall impact of this study was the acknowledgement that there are instructional methods that seem to increase student engagement, a key element in student retention (Tinto, 1993). With this understanding it is important to interrogate why the theory of critical pedagogy has not been mainstreamed in higher education.

The power of the institutional structure is omnipotent, but insidious in the way power is produced and inflicted on students. Concluding that marginalized students respond positively to critical pedagogy illuminates the power dynamic embedded in higher education. Although not certain, participants' statements that this was not a typical course could be due to how the power of who produces knowledge and whose knowledge is preferred is reified in college course design and instruction. This maintenance of a Western White middle-class male knowledge paradigm

perpetuates the socially constructed hierarchy of the world. When students' perspectives are not valued and embraced it is detrimental to all, but specifically to marginalized identities.

The exclusion of multiple knowledge paradigms and student voice socializes students into thinking their perspective is less than, not important, or deficient; this insidious structuring of knowledge may contribute to a disproportionately low retention rate for marginalized students. Furthermore, it indoctrinates students into believing the dominant knowledge paradigm is “correct” or “naturally occurring.” Students are socialized into complacency and do not challenge the status quo. Complacency leads to uninspired students who do not seek further knowledge outside of the classroom, maintaining their status as objects with no agency to change the current structure (Freire, 1970). Marginalized students are impacted the most by an educational system designed to maintain the current power structure; taking a deeper look into the power relationship within higher education calls for a dialectical analysis of student and institution.

Analyzing marginalized students and the institution through a dialectical relationship provides insight into the role the institution has on individual success or failure. Furthermore, dialectical analysis explores the interconnectedness of the students' impact on the university, which is seen in the agency of the individual to enact change within the institution. This analysis technique establishes the college environment as a relationship between student and institution, and posits change as only occurring through the interplay of these two entities. Without an inclusive classroom embracing marginalized students' perspectives, the power of student success is too heavily dependent on the institution. The power dynamic needs to be balanced to ensure both student and institution have equal opportunity to make all students successful. Freireian

(1970) philosophy calls for challenging institutional power by working with students to locate a critical consciousness to liberate all students and teachers.

Participants' response to critical pedagogy seems to support the idea that higher education is not fully democratic and rooted in power and privilege. Suppressing marginalized student voice in the classroom limits the ability to locate a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970). The impact of this limiting force is that social reproduction seeps into higher education. Social reproduction in higher education is an extremely complex issue because of its non-direct reinforcement by administrators. Although the genuine goal of most administrators is to promote the success of all students, the influence of being situated within a capitalist economy mandates that universities are profit driven; therefore limiting options. Within this economic structure it is often difficult for administrators to do what needs to be done to ensure the success of all students. This study indicated a few elements that must be implemented to increase engagement: dialogue, lower class size, instructor availability, student to student connection, and others. These are difficult elements to implement when administrators must maintain efficiency, which leads to increased profit. Exacerbating this issue is that these elements may lead to engagement, but are difficult to assess, which is a key word when looking for any sort of governmental funding. Non-maliciously, higher education then becomes another arena for social reproduction, and this may only end when the success of all students overcomes profit as the incentive for administrators. Changing incentives may then lead higher education to become the vehicle to end social reproduction, but this will not be the case until retention rates for marginalized students are proportional to their counterparts.

Despite the large amount of money being put into retention programs for marginalized students, retention rates have not changed significantly (Heiman, 2010). The results of this study

suggest that the structure of more traditional classrooms in higher education with a banking-model (Freire, 1970) of instruction may inhibit student retention among marginalized groups. Therefore, the institution must work within the present economic system to reduce the power it holds and include all students' perspectives in the classroom. A first step towards this process may be to implement the theory of critical pedagogy in the classroom. Implementing this teaching technique begins the process of sharing power between the university and student, and asks the institution, teacher, and student to challenge the status quo and believe in the possibilities of a world which values all people.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESEARCHER REFLECTION

A research project grounded in a Deweyian and Freireian theoretical framework should not stray from the fundamental tenets of their philosophies. To fully commit to the theory of critical pedagogy it must become a part of the teacher; embodying this theory is the only way that theory can genuinely be put into practice. Without fully immersing oneself in the ideas of Dewey and Freire, teaching becomes a façade aiming to collaborate with students in the learning process, but is really another avenue to add to one's individual accomplishments. In this never-ending journey of becoming a critical pedagogue, the instructor must not only value student perspective, but know the class is incomplete without it. This study's aim was to better understand marginalized student response to critical pedagogy. Following this theory, which calls for critically reflecting on one's self and world in order to produce change (Freire, 1970); I must now focus on my own response to critical pedagogy.

This chapter outlines my reaction to teaching the course. Emphasis will be on my learning and transformation throughout the semester. The focus will be on the theory of critical pedagogy becoming a part of me, the extent to which critical pedagogy made teaching fun and challenging, and what direction I plan to take after this project. The aim is to demonstrate the ability of critical pedagogy to not only transform students, but also teachers in a way that leads the instructor to believe in the powerful ideas that come from students. The transformative experience helps the teacher to understand students are the most important asset in the room, and their duty is to continue to relate students' perspectives to the topic and promote a deeper thought process through connecting the dots of students' lives to content and society. The classroom then becomes a democratic environment that promotes a more just world.

Theory Becoming a Part of Me

The past year of my life has been a time of focused energy and thought on the theory of critical pedagogy. The beginning of this process called for the collaboration of student and teacher in the classroom. As I saw this theme throughout the literature I forced myself to believe that I would be a *collaborator* in the class. This idea started to seep into my mind as the semester began. Fighting against the dominant instructional paradigm was extremely difficult, and mentally I tried to believe that the participants were knowledgeable and assets to the course. However, as I began to follow the theory of critical pedagogy, a shift occurred from mentally believing this to embodying this idea. As the semester progressed, and I had more interaction with the participants, I began to view their experiences and knowledge as more important than what I brought to the course. As I worked with them to link their lives to society through dialectical analysis, I realized that without their experiences there could be no link.

When critical pedagogy becomes a part of one's being, it is understood that too much instructor intervention impedes the learning process. Part of critical pedagogy is instructing a lesson, but the larger scope of this theory is for students to realize they already obtain knowledge that can shape and change the world. In this instance, the classroom becomes a multi-faceted learning environment. Learning occurs through the lesson, the pedagogical approach, and in the teacher and students. The collaboration among teacher and students then becomes a vehicle for understanding one's role as an active participant in society.

As the semester concluded I realized the participants knew much more than I could have imagined. When given the opportunity, their comments were much more powerful than my statements; my role was to keep the focus on critical analysis combined with meta-theory. I realized that any regulation on my part kept their thinking inside my scope of reality, and the

way they expressed themselves could be better understood than my theoretical explanations. I now view the classroom as a bowling lane with bumpers; teachers must allow the students to throw the ball and simply act as the bumpers to maintain the focus of the discussion. As I allowed myself to embrace being a “bumper,” one element became clear: listening is the key to critical pedagogy. Therefore, the next step in teaching for a more just world may be a listening pedagogy.

Teaching as Fun and Challenging

Throughout the semester it became apparent that critical pedagogy also made teaching extremely fun and challenging. It was fun because the lesson never had a set start and finish point; unlike a lecture course where it is known what will happen in the classroom, critical pedagogy embraces the reality of not knowing where each lesson will go. This unknown is a sign that the students are collaborators in the lesson. In addition, the ambiguity reinforces that there is not a static Truth that the instructor wants students to memorize. Critical pedagogy calls for the teacher to find motivation in *not* knowing the direction a lesson will take. This ambiguity was nerve racking for me at the beginning of the course, but towards the middle of the semester I began to look forward to a lesson taking its own direction through interaction with the participants.

Within this uncertainty, is critical pedagogy’s aim to embrace difficult discussions regarding race, class, gender, and sexuality. As I began to embody this theory I stopped trying to avoid these discussions, and rather learned to welcome the uncomfortable feelings these topics raised; this environment is when learning about self in relation to the world can be most difficult, but most educational and humanizing. I found this to be most appreciated by the most marginalized participants because it seemed as if these difficult topics are often most relevant to

their lives. Looking forward to these situations is not a declaration that I was not nervous, but ideas from Dewey (1916) and Freire (Shor & Freire, 2003) helped me overcome any anxiety. Furthermore, they contributed heavily to my eager anticipation of these circumstances.

Most influential to calming my anxiety was Dewey's (1916) idea that all social interaction is learning. I cannot count how many times this assisted in my ability to move theory into practice. This is an extremely important component of practicing critical pedagogy, and is not often mentioned in the literature. Taking solace in knowing that the lesson and my approach to instruction was a learning exercise for me, initiated my motivation to act. From the simple elements of designing and instructing a course aimed to foster critical thought, to introducing *Wretched of the Earth* to Mohammad, Dewey allowed me to try things I may have never done. Believing that all social interaction is learning enabled me to understand my pedagogical approach as a lesson for me as well as the participants, in which I come to understand that even failure is growth. However, if successful I learned how to use a lesson again and add to it to make it better.

Freire's (Shor & Freire, 2003) idea that fear and anxiety are signs of praxis also encouraged me throughout the semester. I learned to view fear as a positive element that confirms one is acting critically upon the world in order to produce change. It is imperative for anyone attempting to transform theory into practice to know and believe this point. Without this idea I would have been stifled in many of the lessons that produced the greatest response from participants. As a life-long learner with students, corralling fear and anxiety and reformulating them as a springboard towards action instead of barrier is essential to successfully becoming a critical pedagogue.

Future Directions for Myself

This study was transformational for me; transforming me from *thinking* students were collaborators in the classroom to *embodying* this idea. All six elements of critical pedagogy are extremely important to a successful course. However, through this study it became apparent that, for me, listening to students is the key to student and teacher learning. This study prompted my future research interests, which are in pedagogy of listening. Other experiences I have had using critical pedagogy in teaching and presenting have demonstrated that this study's participants' statements are not unusual. I have found that students, especially marginalized students are hungry for discussions regarding the dialectical analysis of self and world. However, the best method of getting the most out of students' interest in this topic is to listen to their experiences and pose questions that lead them to understanding the answer through their own experiences. The following excerpt of a dialogue from after class on September 30 with Mohammad is an example of this approach.

Mohammad: ...Cause society I know there's no, no doubt that White person still got more chance than Black person...That's true! And you can't dispute that, with your educations and degree even though you not goin get same opportunity as him, but you still goin get something better to do...in America these stereotypes still exist...Today, if you checkin about the education's of Black people we still behind in America...and there's gonna be, it gonna take a long time actually. If we will get there but...and the White folks get to the class you see them they all open on computer...you know what I'm sayin? They doing their thing. Because they have the brain and the courage but we have with the stereotype that we basketball players...

Paul: So my question is...why do you think Black people are behind in US schools?

Mohammad: Because, because there's so many reasons but I can just give you a couple. First thing that we don't have access...to better information...You see and um, and I some of the things and and some of the reason is that we are not also serious. We have to go and take some blame too. Black people tend to want to have too much fun than White people....that's the truth!...we wanna have too much fun you see...I sit in class with 150 people and watch...to see how people do things. I see all these sittin around me, White people and I can see they're payin attention, not all of em, cause some on Facebook actually...

Paul: ...So does school have to be not fun?...Like you said Black people like to have too much fun.

Mohammad: We do.

Paul: What if we made school fun?

Mohammad: [laughs]

Paul: Then would Black people excel?...What I heard you say is Black people have more fun than White people.

Mohammad: Yes.

Paul: ...I understand – so what if we made school fun? Would Black people excel more than White people?

Mohammad: If you made school fun you will see a lot Black people integrated...They would join.

Paul: So why is school not fun?

Mohammad: ...we will not make school fun cause school does not go with too much fun.

Paul: Why not?

Mohammad: Well, we need too much time...

Paul: You've been told your whole life that school's not fun.

Mohammad: Yeah.

Paul: What if you made it fun?

Mohammad: The fact is we are not going to let that happen in school because...

Paul: Because then who would get ahead?...Tell me who would get ahead!

Mohammad: We would get ahead!...And you people would be behind us!...I got your point, I got your point!...You are thinking so big and different right now, and it's, I like the way you talkin'...When we flip the game you people would be the followers.

This dialogue was not unique when talking with Mohammad and other out of class discussions with him were just as transformative for me. I learned through his statements that these critical conversations were extremely important to Mohammad and me; as he was trying to gain critically thinking skills, I was challenged to become a better instructor. He was continually pushing me to grow my teaching abilities and determine new methods to challenge him. These moments were often the most nerve-racking, but simultaneously the most exhilarating for me. As an aspiring critical pedagogue, I now try to search out new situations to place myself in which I can challenge myself to overcome anxiety and push the limits of critical pedagogy. Each new endeavor becomes an exciting experience to learn from students and the world. Staying grounded

in a constructionist epistemology allows me to believe all things are possible; changing the mechanism of socialization of students and teachers through critical pedagogy is the beginning step to a more just world.

This dialogue with Mohammad exposes another issue that is ever present within education: the dominant discourse is a limiting entity that makes possibilities difficult for students to see. The dominant discourse continually reinforces that the educational structure as a “natural” entity that has not be constructed. The dialogue with Mohammad reveals the power of the dominant discourse in that he had never challenged the assumption that school does not have to be boring. Although this idea seems to be quite simple, the power of the dominant message overcomes the ability to see outside the current structure to the possibilities that arise when this message encounters a small shift, as in making education fun.

Mohammad’s statement at the end of this dialogue was extremely powerful to me because it seemed to open up the possibilities of a future where the world may be more equitable through a small, but genuinely impactful, shift in the current educational paradigm. The message from the dominant discourse is a large barrier to the use of critical pedagogy because students and teacher must work extremely hard to crack the mental cages that trap our ability to believe in the possibilities of a better tomorrow. However, this situation was also a motivating factor for me because the dialogue with Mohammad exemplifies the way teacher and students can collaborate to break through the dominant discourse to see possibilities that may have never been visible before entering a course designed around the theory of critical pedagogy.

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APPENDIX A

Poem: Transformation, March 2009

My head exploding
I sit and try to understand the deeper consciousness
Beginning to cry my head hurts
These thoughts are so powerful
Yet, so depressing.

My head exploding
I wake up and wonder
How the world and its people can be so mean.
Why can't everyone see what I can see now?
Or, can I even see it clearly?
Because the habits of a colonized mind
Continue to seep out in my subconscious thought.

My head exploding
I sit in despair
And yet I delight in the possibilities
The thoughts of a better tomorrow
For all people
But everything I now strive for is considered "bad"
Utopia, Communism or Community-ism, Historical Enlightenment

My head exploding
I try to leave the complex complicated
But this just leads to more questions
Am I learning to locate answers?
Or are there no answers
And that's the answer?

My head exploding
I must push onward to
Challenge the "common sense" ideas
Permeating society
Maybe not changing everyone instantly
But keeping the ideas alive
So traditional thought will be less traditional

My head exploding
The scattered pieces settle back into my brain
Somehow they don't fit together
As they did before
And for that I am pleased.

APPENDIX B

University 101 Syllabus

UNIV 101 College Majors and Career Choice Classroom TBA

Instructor: Paul Mencke, Graduate Student, Cultural Studies & Social Thought in Education
Dawn Shinew, Associate Professor, Department of Teaching & Learning

Office: CUB 320 **Please make an appointment**

Phone: 509-335-8446

Email: pmencke@wsu.edu

Course Overview

“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.” -Henry David Thoreau

This course provides the environment and resources for you to learn how to research majors and careers. It also covers the importance of becoming an effective decision maker. Learning about the process of decision making and the type of decision maker you are will build your decision making skills. This skill can then be applied to many areas of your life including assisting you with deciding upon a college major and eventually a career choice. The primary subject is YOU. We will utilize exercises and assignments in and outside of class that will assist you with researching majors and careers while also learning more about yourself. Self-knowledge helps you to form the foundation for becoming an effective educational and career decision maker.

The major focus for this course is learning how to research majors, careers, learning about the career development process and the importance of becoming an effective decision maker. The main themes covered in this course are: self assessment, critical thinking, strategies for choosing a major, the career development process, researching and evaluating majors and various career

options, conducting informational interviews, resume & cover letter development, and the concept of creating an e-portfolio.

Course Outcomes

It is our desire for you to enthusiastically and critically develop responses to the following questions:

- How can I best describe myself related to interests, skills, values, personal traits, motivations, opportunities, the environments in which I expect excel?
- How do I make effective educational decisions based upon what I know about myself?
- How do I effectively research potential majors, minors, and career options?
- How do my decisions about courses and a major impact potential career options?
- What will I learn here that can apply to career decision making throughout my life?
- What forces (economic, political, social) affect the ways I see myself and the choices that I make regarding my major and career?

Fall 2009 Course Syllabus

<i>Week & Date</i>	<i>Class Activities</i>	<i>Assignments Due</i>
Week 1	<p>Welcome, Introductions & Syllabus</p> <p>Explanation of Research Study being conducted (consent forms)</p> <p>Identity Reflection: Who am I? Why am I here? What do I like to do?</p> <p>Handouts: Strong Interest Inventory Instruction Sheet, Personal Information Sheet, Introduction to Majors Assignment</p> <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sign up for CareerLink at www.cacd.wsu.edu. Click on “WSU CareerLink” on the left-hand side and “New Users: Register” on the right-hand side of the screen. - Review “What Can I Do with This Major” website: http://placement.wsu.edu/content/careersmajors/majors/, and WSU’s website for academic majors: https://webapps.wsu.edu/ais/fieldsofstudy/. - Complete the Strong Interest Inventory online. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personal Information Sheet
Week 2	<p>Individual Purpose and Philosophy of Life</p> <p>Activity: Overview of class website and blog instructions (reflective journal)</p> <p>Activity: Process Introduction to Majors assignment</p> <p>Activity: Discussion on next assignments</p> <p>Handouts: Individual Purpose and Philosophy of Life Assignment, 7 Stories Assignment</p> <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete either the Individual Purpose and Philosophy of Life Assignment or the 7 Stories Assignment (Identity & Assumptions assignment). - _____ is the last day to complete the Strong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong Interest Inventory

Interest Inventory.

Week 3	Strong Interest Inventory Activity: The Party and Interpretation (Perceptions/Assumptions) Exercises Handouts: Strong Interest Inventory Report Homework: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Event Assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual Purpose and Philosophy of Life or the 7 Stories Assignments• 1st Extra Credit Opportunity (sign up for time)
Week 4	How to Use the Guide to Integrative and Critical Thinking (Rubric) Activity: Presentation by Mr. Theron DesRosier, CTLT Homework: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Review U-101 Sample Paper and “Guide to Integrative and Critical Thinking”- Overview of Research/Informational Interviews Assignment	
Week 5	Research Project/Informational Interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Overview<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Introduction to interview questions○ How to transcribe & find themes- Develop course curriculum through interviews<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Interview 1 classmate & 2 students outside of class○ Transcribe interview and find common themes based on students’ opinions	
Week 6	Career and Work Values Activity: Career and Work Values Card Sort and Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1st transcription and themes

	<p>Discussion</p> <p>Activity: International Work Values Article</p>	<p>from interview</p>
Week 7	<p>WSU Career Expo Week</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd transcription and themes from interview
Week 8	<p>Concrete and Transferable Work Skills</p> <p>Activity: Exploring Current and Future Work Skills</p> <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Major Decisions: How to Pick Your Major in College Article & Worksheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event Assignment • 3rd transcription and themes from interview
Week 9	<p>Research Project Continued</p> <p>In class coding of major themes from interviews</p> <p>Development of 1st draft of curriculum for college course</p>	
Week 10	<p>Making Effective Decisions, Strategies for Choosing a Major, How to Research a Major/Career</p> <p>Activity: Discussion on Major Decisions: How to Pick Your Major in College Article & Worksheet</p> <p>Activity: Review decision making styles</p> <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choosing a Major or Occupation Packet at www.career.fsu.edu/education/majors/choosing-a-major-guide.html 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Decisions: How to Pick Your Major in College Article & Worksheet • 2nd Extra Credit Opportunity
Week 11	<p>Researching, Evaluating, and Making Educational & Career Related Decisions</p> <p>Activity: Orientation to Center for Advising and Career Development, Lighty 180</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing a Major or Occupation Packet

	<p>Activity: Scavenger Hunt</p> <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research Presentation Assignment and sign-up - Resume – bring 2 copies of your First Draft of your Resume to the next class (added 2 copies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2nd Draft of Curriculum Development
Week 12	Fall Vacation????	
Week 13	<p>Resumes & Cover Letters</p> <p>Activity: Resume review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2 copies of First Draft of Resume & Cover Letter (2 copies added)
Week 14	Guest Speakers: Campus Involvement & The Center for Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Final Draft of Resume & Cover Letter
Week 15	<p>Research Presentations on</p> <p>Final Curriculum Model</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PowerPoint Handout of Research Presentation ● 3rd Extra Credit Opportunity (week 15-16)
Week 16	Research Presentations continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PowerPoint Handout of Research Presentation
Week 17	Research Presentation to Career Advising & Career Development Department and Student Support Services Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Room to be determined

This syllabus is subject to change.

Academic Integrity

Please make sure that you understand the WSU standard of conduct relating to academic integrity. This is both a protection to you and a way to assure that you are achieving the maximum learning from your educational experiences. This standard makes you fully responsible for the content and integrity of the academic work that you submit. In addition, in order for everyone to have an environment in which they may learn, there will be no use of cell phones or sending text messages. So, please turn off your cell phones during class. Laptops may be used to take notes, but do not utilize it to surf the web while in class.

You will be evaluated on your attendance and contributions in class as well as your written assignments. We will further discuss in class the evaluation and feedback criteria utilizing the *Guide to Rating Integrative & Critical Thinking* provided by the WSU Center for Teaching and Learning. Your work will be reviewed based on your ability to think in integrated and critical ways, with special attention to your progress over the course of the semester.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will be dealt with on a case by case basis in accordance with the Washington State University's policy on academic integrity. For more information on plagiarism, please visit <http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/plagiarism/>

Students with Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the DRC (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist.

If you have any questions, please contact Rosie Pavlov at pavlovr@wsu.edu or 509-335-3417.
Distance Degree Program (DDP) Statement

Attendance, Etc.

Because so much of the learning takes place within the class, your attendance is very important. Contributions within the class includes actively being involved in the small group interactions, critiquing peer papers and providing comments and feedback, effective listening, making clear

points, asking insightful questions, and demonstrating your attention to the topics through your written work. In addition, this class meets once a week, therefore **more than 3 unexcused absences will result in a failure of the course. You must communicate with me in advance if you will not be able to attend class. If you are not able to contact me ahead of time, you will need to communicate with me thereafter.**

Excused Absences

Excused absences are unforeseen circumstances such as illness, personal crises, mandated court appearances, parental responsibilities, and the like. The student must contact the class instructor or faculty as soon as possible either prior to the class, if possible or after the absence and provide any documentation available when he/she attends the next class.

Note: No emailed assignments! Please drop off assignments at Campus Involvement and Leadership Programs– CUB 320 & email msg. that you dropped off your assignment.

Assignments dropped off by 5 pm the day they are due will be considered on time.

Assignments dropped off the next day or thereafter will have points deducted for each day not received.

All written assignments should be **typed double spaced with your name on top. No need for putting student ID number.**

You are required to complete the following assignments:

- **Class Participation** (5%)
- **Peer-to-Peer Critiques** (5%)
- **Individual Purpose/Philosophy of Life or 7 Stories** (5%)
- **Major Decisions ... Article & Worksheet** (5%)
- **Strong Interest Inventory (mandatory)** (5%)
- **Informational Interviews** (20%)
- **Research Presentation** (20%)
- **Resume & Cover Letter** (20%)
- **Event Attendance/Reflection Paper** (15%)

Total Percentage (based on participation and core assignments):

100%

Grading distribution:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	60-69
F	<59

APPENDIX C

Assignments Collected

- Facebook/MySpace reflection paper (25 points)
- Individual Purpose or Seven Stories paper (25 points)
- Major Decisions: internet research regarding majors/careers (25 points)
- STRONG Interest Inventory assessment (25 points)
- Interview observation notes (5 points)

Other class projects that contributed to student grades:

- Class participation (25 points)
- Informational interviews of peers (100 points)
- Research presentation (100 points)
- Extra credit 1 (10 points)
- Extra credit 2 (10 points)
- Extra credit 3 (10 points)

APPENDIX D

IRB Approval

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dawn Shinew and Paul Mencke,

FROM: Patrick Conner, Office of Research Assurances (3005)

DATE: 8/14/2009

SUBJECT: Certification of Exemption, IRB Number 10998

Based on the Exemption Determination Application submitted for the study titled "Retention of Marginalized College Students Through the Development of Critical Thought," and assigned IRB # 10998, the WSU Institutional Review Board has determined that the study satisfies the criteria for Exempt Research at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(1).

This study may be conducted according to the protocol described in the Application without further review by the IRB.

It is important to note that certification of exemption is NOT approval by the IRB. You may not include the statement that the WSU IRB has reviewed and approved the study for human subject participation. Remove all statements of IRB Approval and IRB contact information from study materials that will be disseminated to participants.

This certification is valid only for the study protocol as it was submitted to the IRB. Studies certified as Exempt are not subject to continuing review (this Certification does not expire). If any changes are made to the study protocol, you must submit the changes to the IRB for determination that the study remains Exempt before implementing the changes (The Request for Amendment form is available online at http://www.irb.wsu.edu/documents/forms/rtf/Amendment_Request.rtf).

Exempt certification does NOT relieve the investigator from the responsibility of providing continuing attention to protection of human subjects participating in the study and adherence to ethical standards for research involving human participants.

In accordance with WSU Business Policies and Procedures Manual (BPPM), this Certification of Exemption, a copy of the Exemption Determination Application identified by this certification and all materials related to data collection, analysis or reporting must be retained by the Principal Investigator for THREE (3) years following completion of the project (BPPM 90.01).

Washington State University is covered under Human Subjects Assurance Number FWA00002946 which is on file with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP).

Review Type: New

Review Category: Exempt
Date Received: 8/13/2009
Exemption Category: 45 CFR 46.101 (b)(1)
OGRD No.: N/A
Funding Agency: N/A

APPENDIX E

Departmental Consent Forms

Attention: Director, Center for Academic and Career Development
Senior Student Affairs Advisor/Counselor, Center for Academic and Career Development

Date: August 24, 2009

Re: Explanation of University 101, Section 3 Research Project
Study Titled: Retention of marginalized college students through the development of critical thought
IRB Certificate of Exemption: IRB #10998

From: Dawn Shinew, Associate Professor, Principle Investigator
Paul Mencke, Graduate Student, Co-Principle Investigator

This letter is regarding the research project that Dawn Shinew, PhD and Paul Mencke will be conducting through the Center for Advising and Career Development with student participants from the department of Student Support Services at Washington State University (WSU). We are asking your consent to conduct this research as certified as exempt by the WSU institutional review board, number 10998; this qualifies the research as having the lowest possible risk to the participants. The purpose of the research project is to observe the effects of critical thought on the ability for students to be retained at WSU.

The project will be conducted during fall 2009 and spring 2010. During the fall 2009, data will be collected during the facilitation of the University 101, section 3 course. All students will be given a sheet outlining the description of the research and a consent form will be collected on the first day of class. Any student not giving consent will not be used in the research project. It will be explicitly stated that anyone not consenting to the research project will not be penalized and that non-participation will not affect the individual's grade. Students consenting to the study will be informed that they may discontinue their involvement at any time.

Each weekly class session will be recorded and individual interviews will be conducted on the third, tenth, and fifteenth/sixteenth week of the semester. The course will follow the traditional University 101 curriculum except for the informational interview. The informational interview will be altered to allow the participants to video interview three students similar in demographic to themselves to determine students' perspectives regarding lessons to be included in future University 101 courses and what it means to be a good student in college. Inclusion of students' perspectives will allow for their life experiences to be viewed as assets to the development of university curriculum. During the final week of classes the students will present their curriculum recommendations to staff from the Center for Advising and Career Development and Student Support Services. Further interviews will be conducted in February and March of the spring 2010 semester with student consent.

Participant confidentiality is of utmost importance to the project; therefore, students' names will be coded to ensure autonomy throughout the study and into any publications that may come from the data. Benefits to the participants may include understanding their life experience as an asset to the university. Benefits to society may include a better understanding of how critical thinking may be used to improve retention rates of students from marginalized populations. Although the research project is considered low risk, any psychological effects that become problematic to the participants will be referred to the appropriate WSU department(s).

Please review this form and contact Paul Mencke (pmencke@wsu.edu) if you have any questions or concerns regarding the research project. After review please sign and date the bottom line to acknowledge that you understand and have approved the research project in collaboration with your department.

Sincerely,

Paul Mencke _____ Date _____

Departmental Staff _____ Date _____

Attention: Director, Student Support Services

Date: August 24, 2009

Re: Explanation of University 101, Section 3 Research Project
Study Titled: Retention of marginalized college students through the development of critical thought
IRB Certificate of Exemption: IRB #10998

From: Dawn Shinew, Associate Professor, Principle Investigator
Paul Mencke, Graduate Student, Co-Principle Investigator

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research project is considered low risk, any psychological effects that become problematic to the participants will be referred to the appropriate WSU department(s).

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Sincerely,

Paul Mencke _____ Date _____

Departmental Staff _____ Date _____

APPDENIX F

Participant Consent Form

Attention: Study Participant

Date: August 24, 2009

Re: Explanation of University 101, Section 3 Research Project
Study Titled: Retention of marginalized college students through the development of critical thought

IRB Certificate of Exemption: IRB #10998

From: Dawn Shinew, Associate Professor, Principle Investigator
Paul Mencke, Graduate Student, Co-Principle Investigator

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Participant confidentiality is of utmost importance to the project; therefore, students' names will be coded to ensure autonomy throughout the study and into any publications that may come from the data. Benefits to the participants may include understanding their life experience as an asset

to the university. Benefits to society may include a better understanding of how critical thinking may be used to improve retention rates of students from marginalized populations. Although the research project is considered low risk, any psychological effects that become problematic to the participants will be referred to the appropriate WSU department(s).

Please review this form and contact Paul Mencke (pmencke@wsu.edu) if you have any questions or concerns regarding the research project. After review circle the bullets below that you consent to and then sign and date the bottom line to acknowledge that you understand and give consent to the research project.

I consent to having information collected from:

- Audio recordings of class sessions.
- Audio recordings of individual interviews.

Researcher _____ Date _____

Participant _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G

Interview Protocol

Research Problem:

Marginalized college students are being retained at disproportionate rates as compared to students in the center of the college environment. Research has shown that viewing marginalized college students as assets to the university will increase retention rates among this population.

Research Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to better understand marginalized student response to critical pedagogy.

Research Questions:

- 1- What are students' responses to assisting in the development of classroom curriculum?
- 2- What are students' responses to the inclusion of critical thought in the course?
- 3- How do students respond to their perspective/opinion/voice being the focus of the class?

Interview Questions:

1st Individual Interview (Background of student)

- Describe yourself and your background.
- Tell me a little bit about how you ended up at WSU.
- Describe your personal qualities that you bring to the college environment.
- Describe your high school experience.
- Describe the most difficult part of applying to college.
- What characteristics do you think it takes to make it in college?
- Describe your concerns about coming to college.
- What do you think will have the greatest impact on your ability to graduate?

2nd Individual Interview (Reflecting on experience)

- Describe your experiences in the U101 course.(1, 2, 3)
- How would you describe the course to another student? (1, 2, 3)
- What are your thoughts about being included in the development of classroom curriculum? (1)
- How do you feel about the focus on critical thought throughout the course? (2)
- How are your opinions appreciated within the classroom? (3)
- What is your overall reaction to the way the course is being taught? (1, 2, 3)

3rd Individual Interview (Making meaning of your experience)

- What does it mean to you to be able to assist in the development of the U101 curriculum? (1)
- Describe what you think it means to be a critical thinker in the context of this course? (2)
- What meaning does it have for your perspective/opinion to be included in the classroom? (3)
- What is the meaning of a class structured like U101? (1, 2, 3)

4th Individual Interview: (Member checking)

- Validating results with each participant

Appendix H

Final Monthly Reflection Poem

Monthly Reflection Poem, 12.18.09

JOY

Data collection is almost over, thank god
I see the light at the end of the tunnel, bout time
This has been fun!
These students are the best!
I'm gonna miss them...I hope they stay in touch
I could do this again
I kinda like this research thing

PRIDE

“Good to see you, you ready to do this presentation?”
They are all doing such a GREAT job!
This is even better than I could have asked for!
These students are the best!
Why was I anxious about this? I knew they were gonna do great!
I'm amazed at the ability of these students!
I am so proud of them!
“See you all next week for our celebration.”

ONE DAY AT A TIME

“Welcome to the first day of class, I hope Mohammad doesn't drop cause he's a JC transfer.”
From Liberia, had to leave because of civil war
He likes the book!
This guy is exceptional...he's in 18 credits.
He brings the best topics to discuss during the 'study group'
He's on financial aid and he is starting a monetary system to give back to his family – amazing!
How was I lucky enough to get him in my class?
“Mohammad has changed me, and has given me hope for humanizing curriculum.”
These students are the best!

JUST DOING HIS THANG

“Welcome to the first day of class, Riley is talking and sitting in the front – that's cool.”
He feels very comfortable here at WSU – oh his sisters went here.
He likes his sports – high school football and wrestling
Why has he missed two class sessions in a row – I have to do something
Why are his interviews so short, I gotta do something to open him up
He's enjoying his fraternity – fitting in well he tells me
His story seems so similar to my college story – I think there's a reason for that.
Yes – He's coming to class now!
He's a good guy that has little to worry about
His perspective of college is just like mine – it's all good cause I know I'm supposed to be here

“He’s helped me to critically analyze my undergrad years – what a blessing.”
These students are the best!

AMBIVALENCE

“Welcome to the first day of class, Matt is from Spokane – cool.”
Why didn’t he sign up for the interviews?
He got a academic scholarship – cool
How can I get him interested in the lessons – he is so ambivalent about everything
I would’ve never guessed he was in a popular Spokane band
He leaves so quickly he never fills out the after class assessment – I want to know his thoughts
He’s really nice, but ambivalence is all I get
“He’s slides were done really well and he’s finally gonna do an interview!”
These students are the best!

CREATIVE

“Welcome to the first day of class, Cameron is not talking and I wonder what race she is?”
That’s cool that she is really into music shows
She keeps representing for Seattle’s International District – that’s cool
She is on top of her homework
Headphones, flower-band in hair, black Keds
She keeps talking about her previous depression
Parents are strict
Private school in North Seattle
Buddism – I hadn’t heard that before today
“Cameron is so artistically talented! I hope she pursues a major that develops her talents.”
These students are the best!

LEARNING THE ROPES

“Welcome to the first day of class. Ashley seems nice and she’s talking – can’t beat that.”
Dad’s a truck driver – hardest working man she knows
Why is she not coming to class? What can I do to make her want to come to class?
She joined a sorority. I’m sure she’s fitting in well, she seems pretty cool.
That’s cool – she stayed after to chat about her struggle in school and is nervous about retaining
her financial aid
She’s not missing class anymore...I’m so relieved.
She really liked the outside conversation; she wants to be mentally challenged
Great job in the presentation
“Ashley has made me realize students like to be challenged mentally.”
These students are the best!

SUCCESS

“Welcome to the first day of class. Why is Khalid the only one sitting in the back and not
talking?”
His parents died in the Somali civil war!
He’s graduating in May with a Criminal Justice degree – but he just said he wants to teach

He said he wants to be a teacher again – and again – and again
I need to make the class relevant to him as a senior
Did he just say he planned to drop the class after the first day? – I’m happy he didn’t!
“So you wish you would’ve had more say in how the group project was presented?”
Amazing! These students are the best!

STUDENT REFLECTION

“Welcome to the last day of class – we won’t be staying the entire hour.”
Only two students came – damn, but I completely understand.
“Do you think any of the suggestions from the research project will be implemented?”
“Khalid you don’t think so, huh.”
Cameron thinks only the marketing component will be listened to.
Neither of them have any suggestions to make the project better next time.
It is the final week of classes – what did I expect?
Remember to do the reflection component before the last week
If I was them I wouldn’t want to be here either.
Plan, Act, Reflect, Re-act – that’s what life’s about!
I’ll learn
These students were simply the best!

Appendix J

Table of Students' Response to Critical Pedagogy

This table is representative of the number of times each category was mentioned throughout the data.

Theme 1: Students' Response to Course Design

Student Voice	Class Lessons	Critical Analysis	Self-Reflection	Experience in Education	Small Class Size	Relevant Material
105	53	41	38	18	17	9

Theme 2: Students' Response to Action Research Project

Making Course Better	Helping Others	Wondering About the "New" Course
12	9	4

Theme 3: Students' Response to Knowing Classmates

Being Comfortable	Appreciation for Different Cultures
10	7

Theme 4: Students' Response to Specific Instructor Attributes

Encouraging Discussion and Participation	Being Available	Being Challenged to Critically Think
11	9	4

Theme 5: Students' Response to Other Courses

Un-Democratic Structure	Dislike of Large Classes	Positive Class Experiences
16	11	4

Appendix K

Mid-Term Instructor Evaluation

U101 Mid-Term Evaluation of Instructor – This week I must submit mid-term grades for each of the students in the class; therefore, I think it is crucial and fair for the student to submit a mid-term grade for me during this week. Please read the following statements and answer them to the best of your ability.

- Describe how the instructor has fulfilled/not fulfilled the expectations outlined by the students on the first day of class (see below for list of student expectations).
 - “Make class fun.”

 - “Understands and listens to what you have to say”.

 - “Be willing to back track” to help students comprehend the material.

 - “Be well prepared for class”; know the subject being taught.

 - “Don’t go around a question”; admit that you don’t know an answer.

 - “See students in a positive way.”

 - “Professor should encourage study groups.”

 - “Don’t call on people if they don’t want to talk.”

- Describe how you feel your opinion is valued/not valued by the instructor in the course.
 - Describe a situation when the instructor prompted you to critically think.

- Describe what the instructor could do to make the class better for you.

- Describe what, if anything, the instructor has done to make the class beneficial to you.

- Please grade the instructor (circle one): A+ / A / A- / B+ / B / B- / C+ / C / C- / D+ / D / D- / F

