

The Challenge of Critical Pedagogy as a Social Studies Teacher Educator

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the evolution of my understanding of critical pedagogy as I work alongside my students to co-construct the curriculum in our social studies teacher education course. As a critical pedagogue, I seek to challenge traditional structures of power and control in the classroom and problematize the ideas and discourses that define our ability to act (and be acted upon) within the context of higher education. I embrace Paulo Freire's vision of education as dialogue between *students-teachers* and *teacher-student*.

Yet, my pedagogy is not enacted in a vacuum. My classes are bound within the institutional mandates of higher education and governed by state standards concerning teacher certification. Teachers and students are caught up in the context of schooling and the normative power that represents. My attempts to redefine asymmetrical classroom power relations are challenged by Foucault's argument that individuals assume responsibility for the constraints of power and become the principle of their own subjugation. Herein lies the crux of my dilemma as a critical social studies teacher educator: inhabiting the space between my commitment to Freirean critical pedagogy and my recognition of Foucauldian power relations.

This study uses an autoethnographic lens to examine my evolution as a critical social studies teacher educator. I employ creative nonfiction and narrative vignettes to invite the reader to share in my experiences as a teacher educator and engage in a dialogue about the implications of the text. Teacher educators, teachers, and students grapple with issues of classroom power and control on a daily basis. This study opens a space for these readers to rethink their own

pedagogical commitments and furthers the discussion of what it means to be a critical pedagogue.

My understanding of authority and my conception of what it means to be a teacher educator continue to evolve as I work alongside students in a co-constructed social studies teacher education course. My discomfort with my institutional authority has given way to an acceptance of the authority that emerges from knowledge itself. I have come to recognize a difference between authoritarian pedagogy and pedagogical authority. These understandings continue to develop, for I am (and will always be) in my beginnings as a teacher educator.

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DEDICATION

*For Jill,
in anticipation of our next adventure,
wherever it may take us*

Chapter One – Introduction

Vignette – Making Change for a Paradigm

“What’s this I hear about you teaching a course with no syllabus?”

I look up from my desk, peering over the scattered books and papers, to see Ben standing in the doorway to my office. He smiles as he enters, crossing the small office to the chair opposite my desk. “How did you convince them to let you do that?”

I push the stack of essays I am grading to one side and reach across the desk to shake his hand. Ben and I are both teaching summer classes, but our schedules have been such that we are rarely in the office at the same time. We haven’t spoken in weeks, but I’m not surprised that he has heard about my course. My plan for the upcoming semester, co-constructing a syllabus with the students enrolled in my class, is a significant departure from the norm.

“I didn’t need to convince anyone,” I say, feigning indignation. “Co-construction of course content is well supported in the literature.”

Ben says, “So it’s true then? I thought it had to be a joke!” He sits across from me, leaning back in the chair and crossing his legs. “Got time to chat or are you busy?” Grateful for the break, I jump at the opportunity to escape my windowless office and stack of ungraded essays.

“I would love to. Let’s get coffee,” I suggest, placing the essays in a folder and grabbing my notebook as we head for the door.

If I were to make a list of *Things I’ve Learned in Grad School*, “always take a notebook to Starbucks” would be near the top. Some of the most intellectually challenging conversations of my academic career have taken place in the coffee shop on the first floor of our building. The

notebook I carry is full of ideas and questions born from fruitful discussions with colleagues over double espressos, soy lattes, and caramel macchiatos.

As we walk down the hall, I explain to Ben how the course came about. “Earlier this summer, the Program Coordinator approached me about the possibility of leading the social studies teacher education course during the fall semester.”

“The action research class. We took that class together, right? What was it, three years ago?” Ben asks.

“That’s the one,” I reply, “but it doesn’t have to be about action research. The only direction in the handbook is that the course should explore issues, challenges, and new frontiers in social studies teacher education.”

“Well *that’s* specific. So what’s your plan?”

“I want to get away from the idea of a traditional, instructor-led course,” I say. “It seems like every class I have taken or taught follows the same formula: assigned readings, class discussion, group projects, and individual research papers.”

“That’s how classes work,” Ben says.

“That’s how classes work because that’s the way instructors design them,” I say. “We ask teachers to become students when they enter our classrooms, as if there is a switch that can be set to either ‘teacher’ or ‘student,’ but never both at the same time. It creates an artificial separation between the ideas we talk about in the university and the reality our students experience in their own classrooms.”

“And you have an alternative?” Ben asks.

“Yes. Shared curricular decision making between instructors and students. We create an opportunity for both students and instructor to experience a democratic curriculum as it

organically grows from their dialogue. The theme, focus, and direction of the course would be determined through discourse guided by the broad themes in the course description.

“The students in my class are all experienced teachers in their own right. Rather than limit them through arbitrary, preconceived notions about how the class should proceed, why not work with students as equals and create an agreed-upon goal for the course? Why should I be the one who directs the flow of the class?”

“Easy,” Ben says, “because you’re the one getting paid for it.”

“I’m serious. I want to foster a community of scholars in which we contribute equally to our shared growth as educators. I want to create a course framed by Paulo Freire’s (1970/2005) vision of pedagogical dialogue; there is no teacher-of-the-students or students-of-the-teacher, only a *teacher-student* with *students-teachers*.”

“I’m sorry,” Ben takes on a more serious tone. “I’m not trying to make light of your idea, but I think I make a valid point. The students pay to enroll in your course. They enter the classroom expecting to learn from you. Your vision ignores the institutional nature of the school and points to a simplistic understanding of power itself (Johnston, 1999). After all, even if you share in the creation of curriculum, you still have the power to assign grades. Didn’t Freire himself say that it would be disingenuous for teachers to ignore this fact (Freire & Macedo, 1995)? Presumably, you have something to teach them or you wouldn’t have been asked to lead the course. That’s education, not oppression.”

Our conversation is briefly interrupted as we reach the coffee shop. I’m thankful for the break in conversation, because I need a few seconds to collect my thoughts before responding. His critique is one that I have anticipated, but not fully developed an answer to. By the time we

place our orders (caff  Americano for me, cappuccino for Ben) and grab the only empty table, I'm ready to respond.

“I don't dispute the fact that the nature of the academic institution creates a power imbalance between instructors and students, but the literature shows that a negotiated curriculum can serve to counteract that imbalance (Brubaker, 2009; Milhans, Long, & Felten, 2008; Hudd, 2003; Holt & Willard-Holt, 1995). And you're right, Freire did say that teachers who call themselves facilitators are distorting reality; but he also said teachers should involve students in the planning of their own education, rather than expecting them to blindly follow directions (Freire & Macedo, 1995).

“Look,” I continue, “we both know that much of modern teacher education is no more than training designed to help teachers improve students' scores on standardized tests (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Aren't you concerned that as these technical skills replace democratic agency, students become governed by norms of control instead of norms of freedom (McKnight & Chandler, 2009)?”

“Yes,” Ben concedes. “Teachers often come to teacher education classes with limited conceptualizations of education and democracy (Helfenbein & Shudak, 2009). But I'm not convinced that the solution to that problem is to abandon the traditional classroom structure altogether. In fact, I'm not convinced that abandoning that structure is even possible. You aren't challenging the layout of classroom furniture; you're challenging the very nature of the university. Think about it from your students' perspective, if you're not there to teach them something, why are you there?”

My initial response, *to learn from my students*, stops at the tip of my tongue. While I learn from my students every semester, ultimately I am there to *teach* them something. I like to

imagine that I am always both student and teacher, but I wonder if I too succumb to a binary understanding of those roles. Given Ben's argument about the trappings of university authority, can one act as both teacher and student?

As Ben takes a sip of his cappuccino, I wonder if the process of co-constructing the course curriculum will balance my authoritative role as a teacher with a cooperative role as a fellow learner. How will I navigate the space between *directing* the course and *guiding* my students' learning? Is that navigation plausible, or will I find that the promise of critical pedagogy is merely a theoretical dream, unfeasible in the preparation of social studies educators. With these thoughts swirling in my mind, I open my notebook and write the question: *How does my understanding of critical pedagogy evolve as I attempt to enact those ideals within the context of a social studies teacher education course?*

Problem Statement

As illustrated in the previous vignette, the implementation of a critical approach to social studies teacher education is not simply a matter of changing the curricular focus. The present episode in teacher education focuses on "empirical evidence about the value teacher preparation adds to pupils' scores on tests and on cost-benefit analyses of how to invest finite human and fiscal resources" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 298). Schools of education tend to focus primarily on state content standards, which work "to ensure that an extremely limited conception of social studies and citizenship will be represented in teacher education programs" (Stanley & Longwell, 2004, p. 219). As a result, the growth of positivist educational research "has marginalized subjugated knowledges and done material harm at all levels of education" (St. Pierre, 2004, p. 286).

These trends demonstrate the need for teacher education that raises questions about power and control and challenges the pedagogical visions put forth by traditional professional programs (Kincheloe, 2008). If I expect to do more than simply reify the status quo as a teacher educator, I must avoid perpetuating the “relations of domination” in my classroom (Ellsworth, 1989). As a critical social studies teacher educator, I want my students to seek answers to the problems of teaching – “to learn from practice (and from their colleagues) as well as to learn for practice” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 305). My goal is to develop students’ knowledge and skills to “advance the possibilities for generating curricula, classroom social practices, and organizational arrangements based on... a democratic and ethically based community” (Giroux & McLaren, 1986, p 223).

My pedagogy seeks to challenge traditional structures of power and control, the ideas and discourses that define our ability to act (and be acted upon) within society. The courses I facilitate draw on the writings of critical pedagogues like Freire, Giroux, and Kincheloe, and my lessons aim to empower new teachers (and their students) to critique the status quo and affect social and educational change. At the same time, these courses are bound within the institutional mandates of higher education and governed by state standards concerning teacher certification. These competing (if not irreconcilable) goals create an educational space pulled in opposite directions.

Cochran-Smith (2003) wrote, “Obviously if we are to have teachers who are change agents, we must also have teacher educators who are prepared to be the same” (p. 25). Yet, research on how teacher educators come to see themselves agents of change is virtually nonexistent. Though I am engaged with a research community focused on social studies teacher education, I have found the transition from secondary educator to teacher educator to be a

solitary act. Despite the growing attention teacher education has received over the past thirty years, an exploration of what it means to be a teacher educator is largely absent (Kosnik, et al., 2011). There are very few studies that examine teacher educators' entry into the field (Murray & Male, 2005). The little research that does exist emphasizes demographics and teaching methods rather than addressing what teacher educators need to know or how they learn to teach teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2003).

To address this gap in the research, a growing number of researchers are adopting a self-study methodology and taking their own programs, courses, and learning communities as research sites (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Self-study represents more than a reporting of tips and tricks for teacher education; it is focused instead on examining problems “that challenge the researcher to think about practice differently” (Bullock & Ritter, 2011, p. 178). While rethinking practice is an important aspect of challenging techno-rational conceptions of teacher education, most self-study research does not go beyond what a good teacher thinks and does to explore the process of becoming a teacher educator. We need new concepts to further challenge positivistic research models aimed at transcendent rationality and objectivity (St. Pierre, 2004).

One possibility for challenging positivistic models exists in the emerging field autoethnographic research. Autoethnography is a type of self-narrative that seeks to locate the self within a social context (Burdell & Swadener, 1999). The approach opens a space for the researcher to explore aspects of classroom culture while also looking inward to better understand the “vulnerable self that is moved, refracted, and resisted during the process” (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008, p. 22). Autoethnography is a process of self-cultivation that allows the researcher to reflect upon her or his growth as both an individual and a social being.

Autoethnographic studies of becoming a teacher educator have examined the Canadian (Granger,

2011) and United Kingdom (Hayler, 2011) contexts, but there are no autoethnographic studies of becoming a teacher educator in the United States, nor are their autoethnographic studies in the field of social studies teacher education.

This study furthers the discussion about the process of becoming a critical social studies teacher educator. I illustrate the challenges and opportunities that arise when I destabilize traditional classroom and pedagogical structures as a social studies teacher educator. In an attempt to enact a critical pedagogy, I facilitate a teacher education course in which the students and I work together to co-construct the curriculum. This study documents the im/possibilities that exist within my attempt to challenge the educational status quo and work alongside students as equals to develop and deliver a course on social studies teacher education. It contributes to the literature on becoming a teacher educator through an autoethnographic exploration of my attempt to enact the ideals of critical pedagogy in my classroom.

Research Questions

While there is a significant amount of research in teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2003; 2004; 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2001), there is only a small niche of research in social studies teacher education (Dinkelman, et al., 2012). Even in the field of teacher education as a whole, very little research has been conducted on the development of teacher educators (Murray & Male, 2005). Of the research that does exist, most focuses on “the development of pedagogical practices and, in particular... recognizing that a pedagogy of working with K-12 students is not the same as a pedagogy of teacher education” (Bullock & Ritter, 2011, p. 172). In addition, most of the research on teacher educators has been conducted by experienced professors, leaving a gap in the extant literature concerning “how or why these social studies teacher educators learned or developed as they did” (Ritter, 2010).

This study explores my development as a critical social studies teacher educator through the facilitation of a course co-constructed by teacher and students. I will document the im/possibilities of enacting a critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970/2005; Kincheloe, 2008) as I negotiate relations of power (Foucault, 1977) that are defined by, challenged, and reconstituted with each pedagogical decision. These topics will be explored through the following question:

- How does my understanding of critical pedagogy evolve as I attempt to enact those ideals within the context of a social studies teacher education course?

Theoretical Framework and Definitions of Key Concepts

As a critical pedagogue, my approach to curriculum and teaching is, in broad strokes, “grounded on a social and educational vision of justice and equality... constructed on the belief that education is inherently political... [and] dedicated to the alleviation of human suffering” (Kincheloe, 2008). I recognize, however, that my pedagogy is not enacted in a vacuum. In his reflection on the limitations of critical pedagogy, Johnston (1999) noted that although students “can be given more responsibility for their own learning... [and] can take part in the design of their own courses... teachers still retain authority in the classroom” (p. 560). I recognize that even the idea of emancipatory authority, as Ellsworth (1989) noted, implies “a teacher who knows the object of study ‘better’ than do the students” (p. 308).

I am drawn to Paulo Freire’s (1970/2005) conception of education as a dialogue between students-teachers and teacher-student, as it challenges the asymmetrical power relationships between teacher and students. His is a vision of democratic education. Viewed through a critical lens, the classroom is a democratic public sphere dedicated to self- and social empowerment (Giroux & McLaren, 1986). Linking critical pedagogy and democratization allows people “to question what it is they have become within existing institutional and social formations, and to

give some thought to what it might mean to transform existing relations of subordination and oppression” (Giroux, 2004, p. 35). Defined in this way, the classroom becomes not a place in which knowledge is transferred from teacher to student, but a place wherein students challenge oppressive social and educational norms.

Yet, I find Freire’s ideals challenged by the work of Michel Foucault (1977), who suggested that individuals assume responsibility for the constraints of power and become the principle of their own subjugation. This study draws on the work of both Freire and Foucault to elucidate the challenges of implementing critical pedagogy as a social studies teacher educator. Together, these two authors provide a lens through which I can examine my pedagogy as an act of both liberation and limitation.

In the sections that follow, I first define critical pedagogy and explain Paulo Freire’s role in its development. I then employ the writings of Michel Foucault to problematize Freire’s descriptions of knowledge and power. Finally, I construct a theoretical framework through the intersection of these two philosophies. This framework provides the lens through which I will reflexively analyze my evolution as a critical pedagogue and social studies teacher educator.

A critical approach to education.

Teachers who view their pedagogy through a critical lens seek to transform oppressive social conditions (Escobar, Fernandez, Guevara-Niebla, & Freire, 1994). They recognize that classrooms are sites of struggles “waged in the name of developing a more just, humane, and equitable social order, both within and outside schools” (Giroux, 2009, p. 443). Critical pedagogues aim to do more than provide students with the knowledge and skills to be productive citizens; they work alongside students to construct a society based upon social justice (McLaren,

2009). Education, for critical pedagogues, challenges the status quo and seeks to empower the powerless.

The critical approach to education emerges from the ideas of scholars from the Frankfurt School, who were committed to the notion that both theory and practice must inform the work of those who seek to address oppressive conditions in the world (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). Adorno, Benjamin, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, are among the scholars commonly associated with the Frankfurt School (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2008). These scholars began with a tradition of German social and philosophical thought, but later expanded upon Marxist orthodoxy to include the changing nature of capitalism and the new forms of domination that accompanied these changes (Kincheloe, 2008).

While critical pedagogues agree on the importance of education for social justice, there is often disagreement about what that curriculum should include. Kincheloe (2008) noted that “critical pedagogy has been associated with everything from simply the rearrangement of classroom furniture to ‘feel good’ teaching directed at improving students’ self-esteem” (p. 9). True critical pedagogy goes much further than simply making students feel good about themselves; it develops students’ democratic consciousness and creates “modes of making meaning that detect indoctrination and social regulation” (p.4). Leonardo (2004) wrote that this type of education cultivates “students’ ability to question, deconstruct, and then reconstruct knowledge in the interest of emancipation” (p. 12). A critical approach to education oriented toward resistance demonstrates the political nature of teaching and the need for radical thought to inform social action (Stanley, 1992).

Freirean critical pedagogy.

As one of the founders of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire has had an enormous influence on its development (Giroux, 2010). Freire's ideas were developed through his experiences fighting illiteracy in a Brazil, a society struggling with the legacy of Portuguese colonialism (Irwin, 2012). His arguments, however, transcend the situation from which they arose and call for a larger analysis of education and power. He believed that educators should not simply "insert themselves as a stimulus toward a taking of power that stops at the taking of power, but rather a taking of power that is extended into the reinvention of the power taken" (Freire, 2007, p. 65).

Freire believed that it was not possible to think about education without also thinking about power. The educational system, he argued, seeks to reproduce the status quo, while the critical pedagogue must act as "its antagonistic opposite" – what Freire called "a revolutionary task" (Escobar et al., 1994, p. 31). While there are those who would argue for a neutral education, neutrality in fact represents support of the existing power structure (Horton & Freire, 1990). Critical pedagogues do not support the idea of giving equal time to all arguments; they believe that "any worthwhile theory of schooling *must be partisan*" (McLaren, 2009, p. 62). Freire cautioned, however, that educators must never force their beliefs on their students. Though all education is directive, it cannot interfere with students' capacity for critical thought, lest it become manipulative or authoritarian (Freire, 2004).

In his landmark work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970/2005) explained that schools were suffering from narration sickness. He described classrooms in which teachers lectured to students about topics unrelated to their lives and struggles. Freire called this type of instruction the *banking model* of education, in which teachers deposit knowledge into their

students, and the students passively accept these deposits from their teachers. Freire (1970/2005) challenged this model and argued that education should focus on identifying and problematizing *limit situations*, which he defined as “obstacles to their liberation... situations [that] stand out in relief from the background, revealing their true nature as concrete historical dimensions of a given reality” (p. 99). He called this process *conscientization* – the act of seeing contradictions and taking action against oppressive conditions in society (Irwin, 2012).

The educator’s role in Freire’s philosophy is to “unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be” (Freire, 2004, p. 3). Education represents an opportunity to critically examine the mechanisms of oppression, “to further the process in which the weakness of the oppressed turns into a strength capable of converting the oppressors’ strength into a weakness” (p. 108). Freire saw schools not as simply a reproducer of capitalist technology, but also a place where that reproduction could be challenged (Giroux, 1985). Though the effort to improve humanity was utopian, Freire argued that improvement was indeed possible (Irwin, 2012).

Oppression, according to Freire, is not insurmountable and can be challenged through dialogue (Irwin, 2012). Freire did not see individuals as agentless beings immobilized by language effects; instead, he argued that they were accountable for their language practices and that their agency was immanent (McLaren, 1994). Dialogue therefore, is not a tactic to engage students, but a part of the very process of knowing; it is not an end in itself, but a means to knowing. In short, dialogue serves to make us more fully human (Freire, 1970/2005).

Freire (1970/2005) called for dialogue that recognized and challenged oppressive social, political, and economic elements. He wrote that it was the role of the educator “to develop work methods that allow the oppressed to, little by little, reveal their own reality” (Freire, 2007, p.3). Freire (1970/2005) cautioned that through their resistance, the oppressed must be wary of

becoming oppressors themselves, and should instead focus on restoring the humanity of both groups. He believed that “reality is really a process” (p. 75), and that thinking about this reality “does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication” (p. 77).

There are some who question the applicability of Freire’s work outside of the context within which it was developed. It is important to recognize that Freire’s pedagogical vision was not a method of instruction, but a new epistemology (Irwin, 2012). His work does not offer “radical recipes for instant forms of critical pedagogy,” but a “series of theoretical signposts that need to be decoded and critically appropriated within the specific contexts in which they might be useful” (Giroux, 1985, p. xviii). Freire’s work challenges students, even those who come from privilege, to rethink educational paradigms previously accepted without question. Though not stated directly, “there is an implied pedagogy *for* the oppressor in critical pedagogy discourse” (Allen & Rossatto, 2009, p. 170). Through critical pedagogy, students from oppressor groups learn to problematize their own ideological and pedagogical stances.

His vision of pedagogical dialogue challenged the model of education in which students are passive receptacles for knowledge provided by the teacher. In Freire’s (1970/2005) pedagogical model, “the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (p. 80). This dialogue mediates the teacher’s authority as she learns alongside her students.

While discussions of Freire’s philosophy are often limited to his critique of the banking model of education, his work continued to evolve over the course of his lifetime. His early writing in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* drew on Marxist ideas to discuss the inevitability of the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed (Irwin, 2012). Yet, his discussion of power and pedagogy was much broader than any one specific discourse like classical Marxism (Giroux,

1985). In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire (2004) argued that social class does not explain everything, taking a seemingly poststructuralist position that class struggle was but one of many movers of history.

Though Freire is rarely mentioned in discussions of poststructural and/or postmodern theories of education, he did address (and to a certain extent adopt) these orientations in his later work. McLaren (1994) noted, “while [Freire’s] corpus of writing does not easily fall under the rubric of poststructuralism, his emphasis on the relationship among language, experience, power, and identity certainly give weight to certain poststructuralist assumptions” (p. xvi-xvii). While his work is typically regarded as a kind of “modernist emancipatory approach” to education (Irwin, 2012, p. 6), in *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire (2004) repudiated modern and modernistic positions and argued, “Instead, let us be postmodern: radical and utopian” (p. 40).

The progressive postmodernism embraced by Freire (2004) rejected what he called “conservative, neoliberal postmodernity” (p. 4). Freire’s approach, in his own words, was “indisputably progressive, much more postmodern, as I understand postmodernity, than modern, let alone ‘modernizing’” (p. 67). Teaching, from a progressive postmodern point of view, is not simply transmitting knowledge to students but teaching them how to learn. It allows the oppressed to learn how society functions, and understand the role of popular movements (Freire, 2004).

One cannot speak of postmodern and/or poststructural analyses of power without confronting the work of Michel Foucault. Upon first glance, the philosophies of Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault appear to be incongruent. The former describes oppressive structures that one comes to recognize and challenge through education (Freire, 1970/2005), while the latter argues that one’s knowledge and understandings are defined and shaped by those very structures

(Foucault, 1977). Although their differences are pronounced, there are instances of congruence that allow their texts to speak to one another across the divide. Before addressing the intersection of their ideas, I will begin with a brief overview of Foucault's work as it relates to the topic at hand.

Michel Foucault and the situation of power.

In many ways, attempting to describe the essentials of Michel Foucault's philosophy is an absurd proposition. Foucault did not provide a set of definitive theories about power and knowledge, nor was that his intent. He did not believe in absolute truth, and was skeptical of any definitive answer to political questions. This is not because truth does not exist or because it is a shifting opinion; rather, Foucault believed instead that many truths exist simultaneously (McHoul and Grace, 1993). He believed that we know differently at different times because knowledge is defined in and by our practices. One cannot know something outside of the practices that make it up, because that would require "a view from nowhere... [and] that is precisely what Foucault's perspective precludes" (May, 2006, p 20).

Foucault sought to answer the question, "Who are we?" or more precisely, "Who are we *today*?" (McHoul & Grace, 1993). To explore these questions, he provided us with a genealogy of the present, examining power relations by tracing the origins of modern mechanisms of discipline and control (Foucault, 1997). He understood history as a temporal movement, one that determined who we are, but one that could have resulted in a different outcome. According to Foucault, history is not controlled by an essential force; it may progress, circle, or repeat, but "this is because of particular local conditions that have arisen, not because it lies in the character of history itself to do so" (May, 2006, p. 15).

Our history does, however, influence our perception of the world. Foucault believed that “most of our comportment is already built into our bodies in ways that we do not and perhaps cannot attend to explicitly” (Hoy, 2004, p. 57). Understanding our historical inheritance is not a matter of finding its essence, but “looking at the unfolding, the evolution and the interaction of particular practices” (May, 2006, p. 19). In one example of this evolution, Foucault (1977) demonstrated that the techniques initially used to control prisoners quickly spread to other institutions. In his description of panoptic institutions like prisons, hospitals, factories, and schools, Foucault (1977) argued that the individual, “assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (p. 202-203). His argument is not that individuals have no agency in this process, only that what it means to be an individual changes under this view (Hoy, 2004).

Individuals are controlled, Foucault believed, not by an all-powerful apparatus like the State, or even an individual despot, administrator, or supervisor. Rather, it is the “small acts of cunning... subtle arrangements, apparently innocent, but profoundly suspicious” (Foucault, 1977, p. 139) that discipline our behaviors. “Discipline,” he wrote, “is a political anatomy of detail” (p. 139). There is no single oppressor, no dominating class, no privileged us over them (Gutting, 2005). Discipline “differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes... In short, it normalizes” (Foucault, 1977, p. 183).

Foucault (1977) argued that disciplinary power is part of an integrated system, functioning as part of “a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally” (p. 176). He wrote that this power “is not possessed as a thing, or transferred as a property; it functions like a piece of machinery” (p. 177). It is at once

“absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert,” while at the same time being “absolutely ‘discreet’, for it functions permanently and largely in silence” (p. 177). Everyone, including both the controllers and the controlled, is subject to society’s disciplining effects (Jardine, 2005).

Foucault, however, was not a determinist; he consistently argued that the present could have turned out differently than it is today (McHoul & Grace, 1993). There is no essential reason why the world exists as it does. Foucault’s work demonstrated that “our history, and we ourselves, are much more malleable than previous thinkers have led us to believe” (May, 2006, p. 16). We are not trapped by power, for there are always possibilities for changing our situation. Without resistance, Foucault (1997a) wrote, “there would be no power relations... it would simply be a matter of obedience” (p. 167). His genealogy of the present showed that because things *have been* different, they *could be* different. Power is not repressive; for power does not prevent knowledge, power produces it (Jardine, 2005). Critical resistance, therefore, “flows from the realization that the present’s self-interpretation is only one among several others that have been viable, and that it should keep itself open to alternative interpretations” (Hoy, 2005, p. 72).

For Foucault, critique is a crucial condition of freedom, as it “amounts to dissolving fundamental beliefs about oneself, it opens up other possibilities and reshapes one’s sense of what can be done” (Hoy, 2005, p. 92). He believed that the marginalized are still a part of society, and have the ability to challenge mainstream notions of normalcy, ultimately transforming and enriching society as a whole (Gutting, 2007). Yet, Foucault merely suggested that alternatives are possible, he did not suggest how new ways of being might come to pass. His

genealogy of the present showed how we came to be, but did not direct us on how to become otherwise. Those determinations are left to the individual (May, 2006).

The intersection between Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault.

Elizabeth St. Pierre (2004) wrote, “one seldom reads Foucault in a vacuum but with, against, and through other scholars” (p. 325). In the section that follows, I read Michel Foucault with, against, and through Paulo Freire. The purpose of this amalgamation is to complicate Freire’s vision of oppression and resistance while simultaneously providing the liberatory direction only hinted at in the writing of Foucault. As these theories converge in the pedagogical space co-constructed by teacher and students, the im/possibilities of recognizing, challenging, and/or reconstituting structures of power becomes evident.

The intersection between the philosophies of Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault begin with the possibility of resistance. Though they describe it in different ways, both recognize that resistance is a part of the situation of power. Freire (1970/2005) believed that education could be instrumental in challenging oppressive social structures. Without the possibility of speaking about power, “there would be nothing to counteract power and power itself would not be known” (Escobar et al., 1994, p. 52). He believed education was the path for overcoming this oppression, and that we need not discuss what education can accomplish, but “discuss where it can, how it can, with whom it can, [and] when it can” (Freire, 2007, p. 64).

Though Foucault (1997a) believed that “there is no point at which you are free from all power relations” (p. 167), he sought to dissolve the belief “that there are no other ways to experience the phenomenon in question” (Hoy, 2004, p. 92). Foucault believed that power is the outcome of many uncoordinated causes (Gutting, 2005) and sought to understand how these causes shaped our present situation. He believed that this task was "directed at once towards our

present and towards our future” (May, 2006, p. 23). Both power and resistance, according to Foucault, are always in existence.

Foucault did not posit a pedagogical model, per se, but he did note that the relations of power affect what we learn (and therefore know). Freire believed the answer to oppressive power relations resided in education, and that through education we could achieve liberation leading to a fuller humanity. Unlike Freire, Foucault (1997c) questioned the notion of liberation for it risked furthering the idea that there exists an essential human nature that has been concealed by oppressive power relations. Thus, the analysis of power relations put forth by Michel Foucault serves to problematize to the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire.

Both Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault primarily addressed adult audiences. Though Freire (1970/2005) titled his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, some make the claim that his approach is more aptly named *andragogy* – education for adults (Knowles, 2011). Knowles (2011) argued that andragogy emphasizes “learner choice more than expert control” (p. 339) and aligns with Freire’s vision of critical consciousness. The concept of andragogy suggests that adult learners are unique and require individualized models of instruction (English & Mayo, 2012), but here andragogy meets a poststructural challenge to this regime of truth. While the learning needs of adult learners may be different in some ways from adolescent counterparts, from a Foucauldian perspective, there is no ideal adult archetype toward which we must direct our energy. Instead, “it is in tracing the lines of power, the acts of resistance, the circumstance of the learning... that one can challenge, in a grounded manner and through ethnographic data, such regimes of truth” (English & Mayo, 2012, p. 62). Thus, Foucauldian poststructuralism complicates the conception of adult learning, but does not foreclose the possibilities of the critical approach.

Freirean critical pedagogy seeks to develop students' critical consciousness and asserts that people can be liberated when they come to understand their situation (Freire, 1970/2005). Though it represents a significant departure from traditional educational approaches, critical pedagogy "remains part and parcel of the modern educational endeavor, both in terms of its aims and aspirations (emancipation, democracy, justice), and in terms of its means (demystification, ideology critique, critical reflection)" (Biesta, 2005, p. 146). The Foucauldian discourse problematizes these aspirations through the argument that one cannot understand the situation of power outside of its context. Foucault (1997a) wrote, "We are always in this kind of situation... we cannot jump *outside* the situation" (p. 167). This idea complicates Freire's critical pedagogy and challenges his belief in the possibility of resistance.

Foucault's analysis "doesn't result in a deeper or more true understanding of how power works – it only tries to unsettle what is taken-for-granted" (Biesta, 2008, p. 200). This opens a space for what Biesta (1998) calls a counter-practice, a transgression and illumination of limits that reveals other possibilities of power/knowledge. Reading Foucault into Freire's work opens a space to discuss the impossible, which "does not refer to what is *not* possible, but to what cannot be foreseen, predicted and calculated as a possibility" (Biesta, 2005, p. 147).

As I examine the evolution of my pedagogy as critical social studies educator, I will use this lens of *impossibility* to examine my practice. The course from which this study emerges is co-constructed between teacher and students; yet, I am vested both with institutional authority and with the authority of my knowledge and experience. We are caught up in the context of schooling and the normative power that represents. Herein lies the crux of my dilemma as a critical social studies teacher educator: inhabiting the space between my commitment to Freirean critical pedagogy and my recognition of Foucauldian power relations.

Significance

This study has important implications for the field of social studies teacher education, the larger context of ethnographic research, and my personal growth as an educator. From a pedagogical standpoint, this study's contribution to the field exists in the conversations it inspires (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), the thoughts and feelings it evokes (Ellis, 2000), and the possibilities it creates for "re-engagement, resistance, and reading ourselves into the process of educational and social change" (Burdell & Swadener, 1999, p. 26). It furthers the literature on becoming a critical social studies teacher educator and documents the im/possibilities that arise when working alongside students to co-construct course curriculum.

This study adds to the existing literature on becoming a critical social studies teacher educator by viewing the process through an autoethnographic lens. In judging the impact of ethnographic work, Richardson (2000a) asked us to consider the following questions: "Does this affect me? emotionally? intellectually? generate new questions? move me to write? move me to try new research practices? move me to action?" (p. 254). The significance of this story to the field of social studies teacher education is evidenced by the extent to which the reader answers yes to those questions.

From a research perspective, the significance of this research lies in its ability to "inspire conversation from the point of view of the readers, who enter from the perspective of their own lives" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 748). Much as I seek to co-construct curriculum with my students, I seek to co-construct meaning with the reader. The purpose of this research is not to explain a phenomenon or provide abstract understanding of generalizable concepts (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). Rather, I seek to "evoke perspective taking, compassion, and critique of prevailing 'common sense' assumptions and to problematize categories of difference" (Burdell

& Swadener, 1999, p. 25). My goal is to invite the reader to engage in a dialogue about the implications of the pedagogical ideas, perspectives, and issues represented in this text (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

When researchers of teacher education ask questions about how best to prepare new teachers, those questions are typically derived from their own practice (LaBoskey, 2004). The purpose of inwardly focused research methodologies like self-study and autoethnography is to situate the self in relation to one's practice or cultural context (Hamilton et al., 2008). Schulte (2001) noted that self-study not only informed her teaching and research, but also gave her a reason to share her teaching with colleagues and students. As I share my challenges in enacting a critical pedagogy as a social studies teacher educator, I open a space for teacher educators to challenge their own pedagogical commitments and further the discussion of what it means to be a critical teacher educator.

Burdell and Swadener (1999) argued that students of education often read stories about teaching, including accounts of urban education (Kozol, 1991), exemplars of practice (Ayers, 1993), and calls for educational reform (Anyon, 1997). To this list we could add stories to guide new teachers (Burant, Christensen, Dawson Salas, & Walters, 2010), stories of teachers' identity (Palmer, 2007), and even stories of research methodology (Ellis, 2004). One of the strengths of this approach is its "potential to fracture the artificial closure of discourse in education related disciplines" (Burdell & Swadener, 1999, p. 25).

Autoethnography "refuses the impulse to abstract and explain" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744). The power of autoethnographic texts is in the journey, not the destination; it asks readers to "dwell in the flux of lived experience" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 431). Like all qualitative research, good autoethnography provides readers with enough detail to determine whether

findings could extend to similar situations; but unlike postpositivist research, there is no mandate for generalizations within autoethnography (Hughes et al., 2012).

In their reflections on personal narrative and autoethnography in education, Burdell and Swadener (1999) recommend readers practice a form of “hyper-listening,” in which they “read between the lines, listen carefully for the clues, and decode the subtexts for each story, in a postmodern fashion” (p. 22). Whereas realist ethnography claims a comprehensive portrayal of the subject, modern qualitative research is thought to be partial, “renderings done from within the standpoints of the life experience of the researcher” (Erickson, 2011, p. 54). This is especially true for autoethnography, which is “ultimately reliant on the connections that readers make to link the autoethnographic text to their own experiences” (Hughes et al., 2012, p. 241).

Finally, this research has important implications for my own growth as an educator. In chapter five, I situate autoethnographic research within the tradition of self-cultivation, drawing on a long history of thinkers including Plato, Michel de Montaigne, and Friedrich Nietzsche, among others. My theoretical framework for this research is based upon the writings of two scholars: Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault. As I “digested” their diverse visions of education and schooling, I cultivated my self – seeking not simply to understand their words, but to make their ideas a part of my being (Montaigne, 2004). For as Montaigne wrote in his essay on educating children, “the stomach has not done its job is, during concoction, it fails to change the substance and the form of what it is given” (p. 43). I take these scholars’ ideas not as ends in themselves, but as a lens through which I can reflect on my own experience in the classroom.

Tedlock (2011) wrote, “In a successful narrative ethnography, as the heroine is confronted with major decisions, dangerous threats, and emotionally powerful critiques from her family and society, we learn indirectly of her inner emotional life” (p. 335). That being said, my

autoethnographic research is not myopically focused on myself at the expense of social and cultural issues. Autoethnographic narratives “have always been about the Other; they have always involved critical engagement, social problems, and social action, although the authors may not say so explicitly” (Ellis, 2002, p. 400-401). Thus, my cultivation of self is also a cultivation of my students, a point I further address in chapter five.

My discussion of Freire and Foucault in this study is not meant to serve as a treatise on their diverse philosophies, but rather to “de-mystify” theory (Burdell & Swadener, 1999) by using language accessible to audiences outside the critical discourse. After all, the emancipatory pedagogy Freire proposed “is centrally about empowering students as readers, writers, and thinkers” (Grossman, McDonald, Hammerness, and Ronfeldt, 2008, p. 244). Teacher educators, classroom teachers, and larger popular audiences grapple with issues of power and control on a daily basis. This study aims for those readers to reflect critically on their experiences (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 748) just as I critically reflected on my own.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

Vignette – The First Day of Class

Time is a mystery between semesters.

When the summer session ended, I envisioned spending the month-long break catching up on all the reading I've put off until now, walking in the park to get the exercise I'd been avoiding, even a saving minute here and there to respond to the emails that had piled up in my inbox. Yet, in the blink of an eye, those four weeks are gone. My "to read" list only marginally shorter, my waistline unchanged, my inbox still overflowing.

Time, however, comes to a standstill just before the first class of a semester. Sitting in my office, impatiently watching the minutes tick by, I feel like 7:00 will never arrive. I've completed all the tasks I usually only engage in when procrastinating – cleaning out my desk, straightening my bookshelves, organizing my filing cabinet – leaving only my nerves to keep me occupied.

I look over my syllabus for what seems like the hundredth time and wonder what challenges this semester will bring. The document in my hand is a syllabus in name only, as there are no lists of assigned readings, no descriptions of papers for students to write, and no outlines of projects for them to complete. Aside from our university-mandated statements on accommodations, plagiarism, and religious holidays, the only substantive information is found in the course objectives:

This semester we have a unique opportunity to build a student-centered classroom based on the interests of those enrolled in the course. Rather than present you with a predefined, static syllabus, I invite you to join me in co-constructing the curriculum for this course.

The academic catalogue explains that this course will focus on “Issues, challenges, and new frontiers in teacher education in the social studies.” That description will serve as our departure point and frame our journey this semester. Yet, as Paulo Freire (Horton & Freire, 1990) wrote, “even though we need to have some outline, I am sure that we make the road by walking” (p. 6). This semester we will make that road together, in a spirit of shared inquiry.

I love the simple eloquence of the phrase “we make the road by walking.” Though Freire’s ideas were developed during his work with illiterate farmers struggling to overcome social, political, and economic oppression, they are also valuable for my students – who largely come from positions of privilege and wealth. It is my hope that through the co-construction of the course curriculum, my students will develop a better understanding of the power relations that exist in every classroom. Freirean critical pedagogy is not only for the oppressed, but also for the oppressor, as the latter comes to understand how schools reproduce inequality through institutional processes (Allen & Rossatto, 2009).

This approach will not come as a surprise to the students enrolled in the course. Two weeks ago, I emailed a copy of this document to the class so they would know what the course would entail. I wanted students to have the opportunity to think about whether or not they would be comfortable co-constructing the curriculum, and have time to choose another class if they decided they were not.

I had mentally composed my response to the students concerns about the course, but none were forthcoming. A handful of students dropped the course after the email, but I have no way of knowing if that was a result of the syllabus, a scheduling conflict, or some other reason. The

lack of student response (positive *or* negative) to my initial email has only added to my nervousness. I take comfort in the advice given to me by my mentor, just before my leading my first class as a student teacher: “If you ever find yourself without butterflies before the first day of school, it’s time to leave the profession.” Based on his logic, I’m still in the correct field.

I look at the clock and, fortunately, time has resumed its normal pace. As I leave for class, locking the office door behind me, my cell phone rings. I had arranged for pizza to be delivered to our first class meeting and the delivery person has arrived with my order – perfect timing! If walking into class carrying an armload of pizza and sodas doesn’t win over a room full of graduate students, nothing will.

The students are sitting quietly when I arrive, busy reviewing class schedules or checking email. A few students seem to be engaged in conversation, but for the most part the room has an air of quiet anticipation. I only know a few of the students from previous classes and I am excited to meet the rest.

“Welcome back, I hope you all had a relaxing break,” I say. “I know it can be hard to transition back into academia, so we’ll take it slow. Grab some pizza and take the first part of class to mingle and get to know one another. We’ll start class in a while.” The students happily take paper plates and pull slices from the boxes on the table, while I do my best to be a good host. As I move about the room, introducing myself and talking with students, I have a hard time focusing on the conversations I am involved in. I keep scanning the room to see what everyone else is doing. Are people talking? Does this feel awkward? Has anyone left the room?

Eventually, I settle in and actually lose track of time. I am caught up in the moment, enjoying the conversation, along with everyone else. I am crossing the room to get another slice of pizza, when the door opens and a new student rushes into the room, head buried in his

schedule. Upon seeing a room full of students standing around eating pizza, he comes to such an abrupt stop that I am surprised to not hear the sound of screeching tires. The room goes silent as everyone turns to look at him. “Is this research statistics?” he asks.

“I’m sorry,” I reply, pointing to the note taped to the chalkboard, “research statistics was moved to room 510.”

His face reddens and he quickly retreats into the hall. As the door closes behind him, a student from the other side of the room calls out, “You might as well stay, this class is *way* better than research statistics!” “Yeah,” says another student, holding a slice in the air, “I bet they don’t have pizza!” The laughter that follows is not the hesitant chuckle of strangers, nor the polite amusement reserved for professors’ canned jokes on the first day of class. It is the kind of rich outburst that erupts from groups of, if not friends, peers. Our classroom community has begun to take shape.

“On that note,” I say as the laughter dies down, “let’s get started.” The students find seats around one of the four tables in the room. Five chairs surround each table, a total of 20 seats for the 14 people enrolled in the class. Interestingly, as students settle in, one table is left completely empty. My experience has been that students will spread out as much as possible on the first day of the semester, only sitting directly next to someone that they know from a previous class, or when no other seats is available. Here, less than an hour into the semester, we have already bridged that gap.

“I think this is going to be an exciting class. As you know, this semester we’re going to be co-constructing the syllabus. We will work together to decide what topics are addressed, how those topics will be approached, and what we’ll do with what we learn. I’ll have a voice in this discussion, but my hope is that my voice carries no more weight than any of yours. I want us all

to have equal input in determining course content, delivering instruction, developing course assessments, and any other pedagogical decisions that arise throughout the semester.”

“Can I ask a quick question?” The class turns toward the student, his hand half-raised.

“Of course,” I reply. “But start out by telling everyone your name, I’m not sure everyone got the chance to meet each other over pizza.”

“Sure, I’m Jack.” he says, awkwardly waving at the class. Jack is the only student in class wearing a tie, though I know many have come directly from teaching their own classes. Teachers tend to dress very casually in this district, but given his youthful appearance, I’m guessing Jack’s apparel is meant to help distinguish him from his students.

“Have you taught a class like this before?” he asks.

“That is a great question,” I say. “One I’m sure everyone else is thinking, so thanks for getting it out there. To be honest, no, I haven’t.” I notice a few raised eyebrows, so I add, “But a few other people have and the results were positive, for the most part. There have been studies that describe the approach with both undergraduates (Brubaker, 2009) and graduates (Holt & Willard-Holt, 1995). There are even studies that explore horizontal pedagogy through the Occupy movement, with the goal of facilitating non-hierarchy and consensus in education (Beery, Fischer, Greenberg, & Polendo, 2013).”

Having prepared a literature review as part of my course proposal, I am quite familiar with the research on co-constructed curriculum. Eager to put the students at ease (and hopefully convince them of my competence), I continue to recite the scholarship.

“An early study of negotiated authority in graduate education courses found that students enrolled in student-designed courses were more involved and felt a greater sense of accomplishment than their peers in instructor-designed courses (Holt & Willard-Holt, 1995).

Students' feelings about negotiating the course content were mixed, but for the most part they reported favorable opinions of the exercise (Holt & Willard-Holt, 1995). We'll be taking a slightly different approach than they did though. The students in that study were forced to navigate some institutional constraints, but there was little negotiation between professor and student concerning the adopted syllabus (Holt & Willard-Holt, 1995).

“Our approach will be more similar to a class studied in 2008, where professors and education majors met to redesign an upper-level course on classroom management. That study found that the participants believed that the syllabus they produced together was better than what any of them could have created on their own (Milhans et al., 2008). Ultimately, the students involved in the course redesign reported new disciplinary knowledge, improved capacity to shape their own learning, and increased confidence in their educational expertise (Milhans et al., 2008).”

A woman in her early thirties raises her hand, “Were they students in that class, or were they designing a course for someone else? Sorry, my name is Sarah.”

“Hi, Sara,” I say. I’m not sure if her question is born of curiosity or distrust – perhaps equal measures of both. Sarah wears jeans, an olive green t-shirt, and black Converse sneakers. She is small in stature, but carries an air of confidence that implies she rarely backs away from a challenge. “The students involved in that study were not currently enrolled in the course, but they had taken it in the past.” I pause to gauge her reaction, and I am rewarded with what appears to be earnest interest. I continue, “There are, however, some studies where students develop curriculum for courses in which they are currently enrolled.

“In 2003, Suzanne Hudd gave her undergraduate sociology students a ‘skeleton’ syllabus that included class texts and topics for discussion, and asked them to determine the type, content,

timing, quantity, and weighting of the assessments. Her students discussed these options as a class and came to an agreement that was incorporated into the final syllabus. She found that her students felt more engaged in the course and reported increased class participation as a result of co-developing the course assessments (Hudd, 2003).

“Similarly, Nathan Brubaker (2009) studied the negotiation of authority between teacher and students in his observation of an education course on critical thinking. In that course, students were allowed to choose any combination of eleven possible assignments to make up their final grade. The day-to-day activities of the course were unplanned and student-directed, but the instructor did provide a syllabus that outlined the topics that would be covered in the course (Brubaker, 2009).”

“How did that one turn out?” Sarah asks, this time without raising her hand.

“Well,” I reply, “Brubaker (2009) was interested how classroom power was negotiated between teacher and students. He found that the power frequently shifted from students to teacher, with only fleeting moments of democratic negotiation in between (Brubaker, 2009). My hope is that in this class, we can make that negotiation central to our course and create something very valuable to our development as social studies teachers.”

“What made you decide to try this kind of approach?” The question comes from a middle-aged man in the back of the room. From our earlier discussion over pizza, I know his name is Marcus and that he is a veteran high school social studies teacher and department head. He earned his masters degree several years ago, and often works with student teachers in his classroom. As part of that work, the university awarded him tuition credits that he uses to, as he put it, “stay fresh.”

“After a few semesters preaching the importance of connecting the curriculum to students’ interests, I started to feel a bit hypocritical,” I say. “Here I am, standing in front of a room full of experienced educators, telling them what I think they need to know to be better teachers. I’ve never once asked, ‘What kinds of topics are you interested in learning about?’ or ‘What do you need to know to improve your pedagogy?’ I want to change that. I’m hopeful that this approach will better address your needs and give you more of a voice in your own education. That being said, this is a perfect time to open our discussion.”

Introduction to the Literature

The development of co-constructed curriculum discussed in the previous vignette creates a space for pedagogical dialogue and opens the possibility for Freire’s vision of a classroom composed of *teacher-student* and *students-teachers*. Though earlier educational philosophers did not use the same terms or approach pedagogy in the same manner as Paulo Freire, progressive educators have long championed the idea that curriculum should begin with students’ interests and experiences (Dewey, 1897), and that education should seek to counteract social injustice (Counts, 1932/1978).

Despite these lofty ideals, teacher education programs been largely silent concerning the role of the teacher as a transformative intellectual (Giroux, 2009), focusing instead on providing teachers with a body of "neutral" facts (Kincheloe, 2008). While some see “embers of hope” in teacher education that promotes a critical perspective (Ayers et al., 2004), others suggest teacher education programs are more concerned with teaching about elections and voting than about power and social change (Carr, 2008). Teacher education could be, and at times tries to be, a place for fostering critical perspectives (Hart, 2010), but often seeks only to improve students’

test scores and produce a qualified workforce that maintains the nation's position in the global economy (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

The goal of social studies education as articulated by The National Council for the Social Studies (2008) is to “prepare students to identify, understand, and work to solve the challenges facing our diverse nation.” Educators have historically disagreed about how best to meet this challenge (Evans, 2004; Hertzberg, 1981), with some favoring a focus on content and social transmission (Leming, 2003; Hirsch, 1987) and others calling for critique and social transformation (McLaren, Martin, Farahmandpur, & Jaramillo, 2004; Kincheloe, 2004). The present focus on cultural transmission through text-based, teacher-centered instruction (Au, 2009) belies a history of activist educators working to build a more just and equitable society (Counts, 1932/1978; Giroux, 1985).

Teacher education programs have the potential to both prepare educators for the act of teaching and expand their understanding of the teachers' role in society (Kirk, 1986). As a critical social studies teacher educator, I seek to problematize traditional structures of power and control, and work alongside my students to challenge the discourses that define our ability to act within society. This literature review synthesizes the existing research in two areas central to this goal: 1) the implementation of a critical lens in social studies teacher education, and 2) the process of becoming a teacher educator.

I begin with a review of the literature on critical social studies teacher education and highlight the three themes that emerge from this work: reflection, resistance, and the (re)formation of teachers' beliefs. While the literature is clear on both the promise and limitations of critical social studies teacher education, it is silent concerning how one comes to understand her or his role as a critical teacher educator. To address that gap, I turn to the

literature on becoming a teacher educator. The themes that emerged from a synthesis of this literature include: the importance of self-study, the difference between teaching and teacher education, and the role of time, dialogue, and research in becoming a teacher educator. I conclude the chapter with an overview of the ways in which this study addressed the absence of research on becoming a critical social studies teacher educator.

Critical Social Studies Teacher Education

Critical social studies teacher education moves beyond discipline specific knowledge and seeks to develop what Paulo Freire (1970/2005) called *conscientização*, or critical consciousness. This approach requires teacher-educators to do much more than simply deliver information to students, filling them with knowledge as if there were empty receptacles (Freire, 1970/2005). Rather, critical teacher education calls on prospective educators to critique traditional pedagogical practices, explore alternative possibilities (Goodman, 1986), and view society through the eyes of those with the least power (Apple, 2005).

Cochran-Smith (2001) called this approach to education “teaching against the grain” and argues for programs that encourage prospective teachers to work closely with “university and school-based mentors to develop critique, challenge common practices, and engage in inquiry intended to alter the life chances of children” (p. 3). Teacher education programs, however, “rarely encourage their students to take seriously the imperatives of social critique and social change as part of a wider emancipatory vision” (Giroux, 2009, p. 444). Instead, driven by the aforementioned focus on improving student achievement as evidenced by standardized test scores, schools of education tend to focus primarily on state content standards, which work “to ensure that an extremely limited conception of social studies and citizenship will be represented in teacher education programs” (Stanley & Longwell, 2004, p. 219).

Though shifts in the conceptualization of teacher education and debates about the field's research agenda are well documented (Cochran-Smith, 2001), research about the pedagogical approaches used in teacher preparation is primarily the result of researchers studying their own practice (Adler, 2008). In *Studying Teacher Education: The Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education*, Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) concluded that the diverse outcomes of this research "makes any form of meta-analysis or aggregation of results difficult if not impossible" (p. 19). This critique indicates the field's comfort with large scale, empirical studies – a problematic viewpoint that I challenge in chapter three. However, given the ubiquity of this belief, it is important to synthesize the traditional research on critical social studies teacher education along with studies that challenge existing research paradigms.

In the following sections, I outline the common ground within the experiences of critical teacher-educators who join their students "on a journey as 'becoming' teachers, and to encourage them... to remain skeptical, curious, and wide-awake along the way" (Ayers et al., 2004, p. 124). This synthesis of the literature on critical pedagogy in social studies teacher education reveals three recurring themes: a focus on critical reflection, a resistance to critical paradigms, and a (re)formation of teachers' approach to pedagogy.

Critical reflection.

A significant aspect of critical teacher education is the development of critical consciousness (Huber-Warring & Warring, 2006), or what Freire (1970/2005) called *conscientização*. Sleeter, Torres, and Laughlin (2004) described this as "a complex process of awakening, reflecting, learning from each other, and learning how to learn for oneself about issues of oppression" (p. 82). Though they did not refer to it as such, Segall and Gaudelli (2007)

discussed the development of *conscientização* within masters students who were asked to “reflect socially on social issues” in two social studies methods courses.

Segall and Gaudelli (2007) began by outlining the difference between “reflection *qua* reflection, or that of a myopic, self-contained variety,” (p. 78) and reflection that is critical and social. McLaren (2002) argued that the former was related only to students’ concrete circumstances, whereas the latter was concerned with students’ experiences *with* and *in* the world. Segall and Gaudelli (2007) sought to help preservice teachers “depart from this disconnected, atheoretical reflection that purports to be non-political by helping prospective teachers theorize and politicize that which is reflected upon” (p. 78).

The use of critical reflection to challenge the purported non-political nature of education is congruent with Freire’s (Freire & Macedo, 1995) argument that there is an “ethical duty” on the part of educators “to intervene in challenging students to critically engage with their world so they can act upon it” (p. 391). Giroux (2004) wrote that it is “crucial to recognize that pedagogy has less to do with the language of technique and methodology than it does with issues of politics and power” (p. 33). Teacher education, however, too often focuses on the practical, without “examining teachers’ own assumptions, values, and beliefs and how this ideological posture informs, often unconsciously, their perceptions and actions” (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 97). Critical pedagogy helps future teachers recognize oppressive educational norms that they may otherwise accept without question. The critical approach provides teachers with a language to discuss questions of power and control as they relate to the curriculum and the context of education itself.

In her study of four exemplary educators, Bartolomé (2004) found that successful critical pedagogues question dominant meritocratic ideologies. In order to develop this awareness, she

suggested that teacher education must be designed to help prospective educators critically examine their own ideologies and uncover the biases they may hold, along with the inequalities perpetuated by the school system and society as a whole. This focus allows teachers to develop their critical consciousness (Freire, 1970/2005) and exposes the social and political values present but unexamined in their practices (Segall & Gaudelli, 2007). Yet, not all prospective teachers are open to challenging existing power structures, as explained in the following section.

Resistance to critical paradigms.

When critical educators broach social issues of power (race, class, sexuality, gender, etc.), they often face opposition from students who refuse to critique their own values and beliefs and resist analyzing their own role in the perpetuation of social inequalities (Hatch & Groenke, 2009; Willingham, 2010). McKnight and Chandler (2009) wrote about an incident that occurred in a university social studies education class “guided by a critical, philosophical perspective, in which [the authors] attempt to teach students about the dialectical tension within the social studies” (p. 62). Despite reading, writing about, and discussing critical perspectives, students in this course continued to design lessons that reflected the dominant, traditional narrative of history as a “progressive march... led by ‘great’ White men” (p. 62).

The students’ privileged positions may have played a role in their difficulty with critical paradigms (Applebaum, 2009). As students come to recognize their situationality, some have difficulty with the notion that their views of teaching and learning are bound up in a system that privileges the knowledge and experiences of a few while devaluing that of others (Segall & Gaudelli, 2007). These students respond by denying that the oppression exists (Applebaum, 2007), and/or charging that attempts to prove otherwise represents education with a liberal bias (Applebaum, 2009). As Villegas (2007) pointed out, “Unexamined ideas, especially those that

are contradicted by new ideas about teaching introduced in teacher education courses... can act as stumbling blocks or barriers to learning on the part of teacher candidates” (p. 373-374).

Resistance to critical paradigms is not limited to students in privileged positions or those with unexamined understandings of the social order; resistance can also arise from those committed to liberatory pedagogy. In her well-known essay documenting her “Media and Anti-Racist Pedagogies” course at UW-Madison, Ellsworth (1989) found that the practices fundamental to the critical approach are themselves “repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination... [which] exacerbated the very conditions we were trying to work against” (p. 298). In an attempt to respond to racism in the university curriculum, Ellsworth found her belief in the “universally valid proposition” that all citizens had a right to be free from oppression to be in conflict with the “overwhelming evidence of the extent to which the myths of the ideal rational person and the ‘universality’ of propositions” have been used to oppress those outside the dominant culture (p. 304).

Ellsworth (1989) argued that the coded, political agenda of critical discourse failed to problematize the professor’s own interests of race, class, ethnicity, etc., and concluded that as educators, “critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change” (p. 310). Ultimately, she found that the literature on critical pedagogy failed to adequately address issues of identity and trust in the classroom, and therefore could not extricate students from their self-serving investments in unjust power relationships (Ellsworth, 1989).

Students often have difficulty examining their own role within the power relations of the classroom. In seeking to engage students in a critique of the anti-democratic social, political, and economic practices pervasive in the education system, Segall and Gaudelli (2007) found that students often had difficulty with the realization that “their views about teaching and learning are

necessarily bound up with their narrative and previous experiences” (p. 86). Yet, they were more optimistic than Ellsworth (1989) about the possibility for enacting a critical approach in the classroom. They found that a “critical pedagogy that *purposefully* and *continually* casts doubt on students’ epistemological, social, and political assumptions” (Segall & Gaudelli, 2007, p. 87) prevented a sense of false confidence that is quickly lost when the tips and tricks of traditional teacher education failed to motivate students. This suggests the possibility of (re)forming teachers as critical pedagogues, a possibility that is explored in the following section.

(Re)formation of teachers’ approach.

Segall wrote that though there is “little data to support the notion that what I do in my course changes student teachers’ understandings as teachers, the social, collective reflection we engage no doubt changes their understandings as students,” as evidenced by students ability to critically explore ideas through in-class reflections and assignments (Segall & Gaudelli, 2007, p. 84). Several other studies of critical approaches to social studies teacher education, however, *have* found that critical pedagogy has the potential to make teachers more attentive to issues of social justice (Manfra, 2009; Castro, 2010; Ukpokodu, 2009).

The literature suggests that students who are allowed space for critical inquiry tend to embrace more democratic and potentially emancipatory pedagogies. Following coursework that introduced critical ideals, both experienced educators (Manfra, 2009) and student teachers (Castro, 2010) have successfully implemented pedagogies that address injustice and create democratic classrooms. Though the critical teacher research addressed by Manfra (2009) and the critical multicultural citizenship addressed by Castro (2010) each has its own unique attributes, they both build upon the Freirean notion of developing critical consciousness. This approach “uncovers the hidden curriculum of schools, gives voice to marginalized students,” (Manfra,

2009, p. 159) and “encourages asking questions about persistent injustices that limit the full realization of democracy” (Castro, 2010, p.98).

Ukpokodu (2009) adopted a similar approach in her social studies methods course with the goal of developing “emancipated and empowered” educators who could transcend “the confines of a one-dimensional view of social studies” (p. 45). Her course aimed to engender reflective thinking by inviting students to become co-developers of the curriculum and by posing history as “unfinished and transformable” (p. 47). Like Manfra (2009) and Castro (2010) she found that an approach to social studies based on transformative pedagogy developed her students’ critical consciousness and redefined their roles and responsibilities as teachers and citizens.

If power relations are not interrogated, the school continues to reproduce oppressive ideologies and practices (Giroux, 1986). Yet, when teacher educators develop their students’ critical consciousness, it can help these new teachers (re)form their approach to pedagogy (Ukpokodu, 2009). There are many, however, who would see this activist teaching as imposition at best, and indoctrination at worst. By determining what represents critical consciousness, teacher educators may be substituting one set of political norms for another. The literature on critical social studies teacher education is largely silent about the ways in which teacher educators address this dilemma. This gap in the research is discussed further in the following section.

Gaps in the literature on critical social studies teacher education.

In an attempt to ensure that all students’ voices are heard, it could be argued that critical pedagogy silences the traditionally dominant narratives. Concerns have been raised about whether teaching for social justice is, in reality, anti-democratic (Freedman, 2007). Some argue

that the notion of equality between teacher-student and student-teacher, points to “an overly simplistic understanding of the nature of power itself,” noting that the institutional nature of the school insures that “teachers still retain authority” (Johnston, 1999). Ellsworth (1989) recognized this as a major weakness of the field, and argued “theorists of critical pedagogy have failed to launch any meaningful analysis of or program for reformulation the institutionalized power imbalances between themselves and their students” (p. 306). This authority, they fear, allows critical educators “to alter students’ ways of thinking to conform with a preconceived notion of what constitutes critical thought” (Freedman, 2007, p. 444).

The literature on critical social studies teacher education fails to address these concerns. Questions about power, imposition, and control on the part of the teacher educator – questions central to any discussion of critical pedagogy – are largely absent from the studies synthesized in the previous sections. There is little discussion of how critical social studies teacher educators come to understand their role in the classroom.

Both Bartolomé (2004) and Castro (2010) suggested that the teacher educator should encourage critical perspectives; yet, neither clarified how one determines when that encouragement becomes imposition. Bartolomé (2004) recommended teacher educators “expose prospective teachers to a variety of ideological postures so they can begin to... critically examine the damaging biases they may personally hold” (p. 116). She does not, however, discuss the power relationship between the teacher educator and the students. There is no examination of whether the act of exposing students’ “damaging biases” is in fact an imposition of the teacher educator’s point of view. Similarly, Castro (2010) argued that teacher educators must encourage students "to teach in ways that expand notions of citizenship and democratic instruction" (p.

107), but like Bartolomé (2004), he offered no indication of how one distinguishes between encouragement and imposition.

McKnight and Chandler (2009) took a different approach in their effort to teach students about the dialectical tension between revisionist perspectives and conservative perspectives in the field of social studies education. Drawing on the writings of George Counts (1932/1978), they decided to "begin with the assumption that education was a form of indoctrination" (McKnight & Chandler, 2009, p. 62) and required students to write a unit plan involving a historically marginalized group. They claimed that students came to the course "generally well indoctrinated in the traditional facts-based conservative perspective" (p. 62), but they did not discuss the moral/ethical/pedagogical dilemma of whether that fact justified their own attempts at imposition.

Manfra's (2009) study was also vague about the influence of the instructor. She mentioned that the instructor in her study "did not overtly favor critical or practical teacher research" (p. 161) and took a socially constructivist approach to teaching, but she provided little additional insight into his practice. Manfra explained that though the teachers were afforded latitude in selecting their topics, the instructor offered "consistent guidance and feedback" (p. 160) on their work. Yet, neither the content of the instructor's direction, nor the thought process behind his instructional decisions was examined in her study.

There were, however, two studies (Ukpokodu, 2010; Segall & Gaudelli, 2007) that explored the decision making process of the teacher educator. Ukpokodu (2010) focused primarily on those enrolled in her course rather than her own views as the instructor, yet she did reflect upon her choices with regard to empowering her students. Her goal was for teachers to understand their practice as an art rather than a skill and "to engage in transformation as a

prerequisite for good teaching" (p. 45). To that end, her students "were *required* to construct a transformative interdisciplinary / integrated thematic unit... integrating crucial multiple perspectives into curriculum areas" (p. 58, emphasis added). Ukpokodu hinted at the dilemma this represented, and wondered if the change in students' comments reflected true changes in their conservative values or merely a "desire to perform well on assignments" (p. 62). Though she concluded that a transformative approach to her pedagogy moved her "away from the 'sage on the stage' authoritarian teaching role to one of facilitation and power sharing" (p. 61), she still wondered if she shared power as it should have been shared.

Of the papers synthesized in this study, Segall and Gaudelli (2007) provided the greatest insight into their decision making as teacher educators. However, as the both authors were in their sixth year of tenure-stream appointments at the time they wrote the article, the result is a portrait of experts rather than novices. They explained:

Like many other teacher educators, we began our careers by designing tightly-knit syllabi with pre-designed topics and activities accompanied by a long reading list of journal articles and book chapters that we hoped would help students explore education the way we thought it ought to be explored - that is, from a critical perspective that strives to make education and, as a consequence, society in general more democratic, open, equitable, and just. (p. 79)

Over time, their courses became less directive and more open-ended. Gaudelli, in particular, noted that he was originally uncomfortable with the uncertainty, but has "come to revel in the creativity that this ambiguity allows" (p. 85).

Both Segall and Gaudelli (2007), however, go on to describe directive lessons in which they expose students to postcolonial readings of US history or challenge students' beliefs about "proper" English in order to open their minds to critical and/or dialogical understandings. The authors are comfortable in knowing when, how, and to what extent to challenge the status quo. Presumably these are questions they answered early in their careers, but these issues are not addressed in their study.

Though the research synthesized in the previous sections represent varied amounts of influence on the part of the critical teacher educator, none systematically describe how pedagogical decisions were made or what factors were considered in developing their curricula. To better understand how teacher educators address the challenges they face in implementing their pedagogies, I turn to the research on teacher education. The limited amount of research in this area is synthesized in the following section.

Becoming a Teacher Educator

The research on teacher education is driven by a market approach that focuses primarily on policy, evidence, and outcomes (Cochran-Smith, 2005). Very little of that research focuses on how one becomes a teacher educator. Despite the intense focus in recent years on reforming teacher education, the work of teacher educators themselves has largely been overlooked (Murray & Kosnik, 2011).

Several explanations have been proffered for the dearth of research on the development of teacher educators. Murray and Male (2005) found that some teacher educators "had no clear sense of how research and teaching might be inter-related and symbiotic as activities in academic life" (p. 138). Another possible explanation is that research may not be a part of the teacher educator's agenda. Cochran-Smith (2003) found that many teacher educators, especially at those

at research institutions, are part-time, adjunct, or clinical faculty who are not “‘regular’ higher education faculty members, or what is referred to in the literature as the ‘teacher education professoriate’” (p. 22).

Perhaps these individuals are not driven by the same need to “publish or perish” as their professorial counterparts; or, perhaps there is simply no time for teacher educators to focus on research. Dinkelman (2011) noted the audit culture pervasive in the public school discourse has found its way to higher education, leading teacher educators to “find more and more of their energy and attention directed towards standards development, teacher assessment systems and programme accreditation” (p. 315). In addition, teacher educators at research universities are often encouraged to direct their focus to research *about* teacher education and away from the *doing of* teacher education. This results in research focused largely on the development of prospective teachers, largely ignoring those who are tasked with the development.

A review of the four teacher education handbooks published between 1990 and 2008 found at most one chapter and/or commentary on teacher educators in each volume (Kosnik, et al., 2011). This finding indicated that while “teacher education was finally being recognized as a discipline... an articulation of what it means to be a teacher educator was absent” (p. 351). Very few studies have looked at the professional experiences of teacher educators as they take on new roles in institutions of higher education (Murray & Male, 2005). As a result, “teacher educators in general remain an under researched and poorly understood occupational group” (Murray & Kosnik, 2011, p. 243).

The field of social studies teacher education has also been largely overlooked. While there is a dedicated group of social studies teacher education researchers, “that niche is not particularly large or dominant” (Dinkelman, et al., 2012, p. 178). Ritter (2010) identified an

emerging stream of literature on the development of social studies teacher educators authored by veteran professors. Missing from the literature, however, “is a solid understanding of how or why these social studies educators learned or developed as they did” (Ritter, 2010, p. 546).

Despite the aforementioned challenges, a small but growing number of teacher educators are contributing to our understanding of the field. One promising trend of research in this regard is the growing field of self-study of teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Outside of one qualitative study of 28 new teacher educators undertaken by Murray and Male (2005), the vast majority of the research synthesized of this study utilized either self-study (Berry, 2007; Dinkelman, 2011; Zeichner, 2005; Ritter, 2010) or collaborative self-study methodologies (Bullock & Ritter, 2011; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Kosnik, et al., 2011; Dinkelman, et al., 2012).

Loughran (2011) recognized that “ideas, theories, research and practices are fundamental to the development of teacher educators’ professional knowledge, not least because how the teacher educators view their role influences not only what they do, but also how they do it” (p. 280). Thus, much greater attention is needed to the development of teacher educators. In the sections that follow, I synthesize the limited research that exists and describe the themes that emerge: the difference between teaching and teacher education, and the role of time, dialogue, and research in the process of becoming a teacher educator.

Teaching and teacher education are different pursuits.

Though there are “no fixed answers to what it means to *be* a teacher educator” (Dinkelman, 2011, p. 309), the research suggests that being a teacher educator is different from being a K-12 educator. It is often assumed that a successful teacher will become a successful teacher educator (Bullock & Ritter, 2011), but teaching adults and teaching children require different expertise (Zeichner, 2005). Most of the literature on becoming a teacher educator

focuses on the differences in these two pedagogies (Bullock & Ritter, 2011). Though some teacher educators report constancy in their sense of self as a teacher (Young & Erickson, 2011), most report a change in identity upon becoming a teacher educator (Murray & Male, 2005; Ritter, 2010).

Because most of the research on becoming a teacher educator is a result of self-study, it is not surprising that the findings are primarily centered on practice. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) noted that the primary focus is the on intersection of self, practice, and context – space “that serves to diminish the gap between theory and practice” (p. 104). Berry (2007) called self-study “a form of practitioner research whereby the context of the research is practice itself” (p. 160). Bullock and Ritter (2011) clarified that self-study research is more than simply describing effective techniques; rather, it is an exploration of the problems that “challenge the researcher to think about practice differently” (p. 178). Thus while self-study addresses both self and practice, the research in this field tends to privilege the latter.

In the existing literature, one is thought to become a teacher educator as she or he adopts the practices and pedagogies associated with the role. Berry (2007) identified this process as moving between various tensions in her role as a teacher educator including action and intent, telling and growth, and confidence and uncertainty, among others. For Berry (2007), her transition to teacher educator became evident as she learned to help prospective teachers “grow in ways that might be self-actualizing for themselves and their students” (p. 164). This meant moving beyond providing the “tips and tricks” of good teaching to allowing prospective teachers “to direct their own learning and development” (Berry, 2007, p. 155).

In documenting his own journey of becoming a teacher educator, Shawn Bullock (Bullock & Ritter, 2011) struggled with a similar dilemma. In a blog post collected as data for

the study, he wrote, “How will I avoid the trappings of ‘tips and tricks’ as I struggle to figure out what it means to keep up with research and service requirements?” (p. 176). Murray and Male (2005) also found that teacher educators faced challenges in two areas: developing pedagogy for higher education and becoming research active.

Ritter (2010) noted that these conceptions of teacher education “suggest a view of professional knowledge that resists assimilation to a technical model by acknowledging the influential role of teacher and student subjectivities in learning” (p. 547). Cochran-Smith (2003) saw this as the development of local knowledge – not *how* teacher educators do things, but how knowledge is *constructed* “as they are integrated with daily life in schools, programs, and classrooms and also connected to larger social and political agendas” (p. 24). As teacher educators construct this knowledge, they become better prepared to act decisively as transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1985).

Becoming a teacher educator requires time, dialogue, and research.

A common refrain in the research on becoming a teacher educator is that the process takes time. As Berry (2007) wrote, “Accepting the title of teacher educator does not bring with it knowledge of how to act in the role” (p. 164). Murray and Male (2005) found that it takes two to three years to develop one’s identity as a teacher educator. Cochran-Smith (2003) suggested that the process extends across one’s professional lifespan, rather than something that occurs at a fixed point in time. Even Young and Erickson (2011), who contended that one’s identity remains constant from teacher to teacher educator, recognized that “becoming a teacher is an ongoing process and that we have never arrived at a finished product” (p. 125).

Dinkelman (2011) explained, “my real sense of who I am as a teacher of teachers continues to develop as I continue to enact the role” (p. 312). Learning is slow to develop from

self-study (Berry, 2007), and knowledge about practice “is often experienced as a continuous and evolutionary process” (p. 160). Bullock and Ritter (2011) pointed out that the transition to teacher educator is not linear and unproblematic; though, according to the research by Murray and Male (2005) it does get easier over time.

Dialogue is an important part of easing this transition, be it with students or other teacher educators. In fact, the literature suggests that an opportunity to engage in inquiry as part of a learning community “may be a vital part of teachers’ and teacher educators’ ongoing education” (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 7). Berry (2007) contended that collaboration with students and colleagues opened up alternative perspectives and suggested new understandings as experiences were shared. Yet, spaces for dialogue are not always readily available, as much of teacher education takes place behind closed doors and is rarely examined in communities of practice (Dinkelman, 2011).

An example of this lack of dialogue is evident in the minimal training received by most doctoral students in preparation to become teacher educators (Zeichner, 2005). Bullock and Ritter (2011) noted that “graduate students often become teacher educators by default when they find themselves charged with the responsibility to teach in pre-service programs as part of their funding packages” (p. 172). In response to this lack of training, some graduate students have developed extracurricular organizations to provide a space to discuss the process of becoming a teacher educator. Kosnik, et al. (2011) reported that the strengths of their group initiative, *Becoming Teacher Educators*, included “the opportunity to develop knowledge of teacher education... the improvement of research skills, the influence on identity, and improvement in practices as beginning teacher educators” (p. 351).

The indication of the importance of research skills by Kosnik, et al. (2011) was shared across much of the literature. Zeichner (2005) contended that “self-study research and thinking more consciously about one’s role in educating teachers as a basic requirement for learning to become a teacher educator” (p. 122). Loughran (2011) called the transition from simply teaching to a focus on both teaching and researching “central to identity formation for a teacher educator” (p. 284). He believed that conducting research on one’s practice has the potential to raise the status of the field and challenge the techno-rationalist approach to education (Loughran, 2011). Research into one’s practice is key to the growth of teacher educators.

Gaps in the literature on becoming a teacher educator.

While the research synthesized in this review of the literature suggest several themes involved in becoming a teacher educator, they share no theoretical framework to explain the process (Ritter, 2010). In a themed issue of the journal *Studying Teacher Education*, Erickson, Young, and Pinnegar (2011) explained, “frameworks for discussing teacher educator identity... do not have discrete boundaries... [and] identity may be grounded in multiple frameworks simultaneously” (p. 215-216). Pinnegar and Murphy (2011) and Murphy and Pinnegar (2011) recognize multiple theories at work in the articles contained in the themed issue, including role theory and positioning theory, among others. Additional research is needed to help researchers communicate across (and through) these theories.

Though LaBoskey (2004) called for self-study to explore “beliefs about the nature of teaching, and moral, ethical, and political values regarding the means and ends of education” (p. 118), it seems that improved practice (rather than an exploration of self) is the goal of most self-study research. In fact, overt attention to the self seems to be looked down upon as a part of self-study, as evidenced by Cochran-Smith’s (2003) qualification that “taking an inquiry stance does

not mean making self-absorbed confessionals or baring one's soul to gain cathartic relief or public approval" (p. 13). Berry (2007) concurred, noting that "self-study is self-focused but not self-centered" and warning that "a danger emerges that the researcher becomes the focus of the research as new understandings of self are revealed" (p. 161).

Despite the hesitancy on the part of self-study researchers to fully examine issues of self, the literature in the field often hints at these issues. In her research, Berry (2007) asked how she could live her values more fully as a teacher educator. She noted that she sometimes became "trapped in the feelings of vulnerability and guilt that a sustained examination of one's teaching can quickly induce" (p. 161). She even went so far as to claim that self-understanding was a "prerequisite to helping others see themselves in ways that enable them to help themselves" (p. 163).

Other studies also approached, though never addressed issues of *self*. Bullock and Ritter (2011) asked, "Who am I? Who is dictating the terms?" in their self study of becoming teacher educators. Ritter (2011) expressed a fear of "selling out" to higher education as he reflected on his identity as a classroom teacher. The teachers in the study conducted by Murray and Male (2005) indicated the feeling of masquerading as a teacher educator. All of these examples indicate a struggle with becoming a teacher educator that goes beyond one's practice and pedagogy, but the self-study methodology does not permit an in-depth exploration of these types of issues. Additional research is needed that addresses issues of *becoming* without diverting attention to questions of practice.

Chapter Three – Research Methodology

Vignette – Reflections on Context

As I walk toward my office, I find my pace quickening in anticipation of putting my ideas on paper. I have colleagues who can take advantage of any free time to write – 10 minutes between appointments, 15 minutes until the next class – but I need time to ease into the process. With little more than two hours until my next meeting, I know I will need the entire time to work through my thoughts.

I weave in and out of the groups of people walking the halls, still finding myself unaccustomed to the schedule of the new semester. Judging by the number of students on their way to and from class, the social studies office will be awash with students asking questions, instructors making copies, and the general chaos that ensues whenever there is a break between classes. I will need to find somewhere else to write.

Retracing my steps, I pass a sign posted on a classroom door reading: *Do not alter the seating arrangement of this classroom!* Laughing at the apropos verbiage of the sign, given Ben's comment about rearranging the classroom furniture, I stop and look through the narrow window in the door. Inside, I see tables arranged into five parallel rows, the chairs facing a podium that sits in front of a whiteboard spanning the width of the classroom. Instructors usually fight for space in which to hold their classes, so I'm surprised to see that the room is still empty as the halls start to clear in preparation for class. Deciding to take advantage of the vacancy, I step inside and let the door close behind me, instantly muffling the noise of the hallway.

I move to a seat in the back of the room on autopilot. After a lifetime of classroom seating arrangements based on alphabetical order, I feel most comfortable in the back row. As I take in my surroundings, the word that first comes to mind is *sterile*. Like all the rooms at the university, the walls are painted off-white. The only points of color are two small signs posted on the front wall to either side of the whiteboard. The first, printed on yellow paper, provides step-by-step instructions for logging into the computer, turning on the projector, and controlling the sound system in classroom. The second, printed on bright red paper, reads: *No food or drink in this classroom*.

The temperature in the room is almost uncomfortably cold. To say that the air conditioning in the university is hit or miss would be an understatement. Some rooms have window units that are older than I am, while others are attached to the central air system controlled by thermostat. This room appears to fall into the latter category, and the temperature here is at least 15 degrees cooler than it is in the hallway. As I open my notebook and turn to the first blank page, I wonder if the temperature of this class actually as cold as it feels, or if am I picking up on the institutional vibe of the room.

Hoping that the frigid temperature coupled with the caffeine buzz from my coffee will kick-start my writing, I put pen to paper.

Does the lack of direction in my curriculum constitute a “deceitful discourse” with my students (Freire & Macedo, 1995)? Freire argued that when a teacher acts only as a facilitator and refuses to advocate for what he believes is just, his teaching serves only to further the existing power structure (Freire & Macedo, 1995). I agree that education can never be

neutral (Freire, 1970/2005), but if I impose my understandings of right and wrong on my students, am I not acting as an oppressor?

In terms of teacher education, do I have the right to tell in-service educators – experienced teachers in their own right – what they need in order to become more proficient in their practice? Are they not the experts on their own needs? If I create the curriculum without their input, am I silencing their voices in the classroom? Certainly my knowledge and experiences will add value to the educational community that we create, but will it be enough to justify the fact that my participation in this course is compensated while others are paying tuition to be involved?

Will the students join me on this journey? How will I know if they are buying into the curriculum, or if they are simply going along with it because they believe that I'm in charge? If they resist, are they resisting the change to a co-constructed curriculum, or simply resisting change itself? How will I be able to tell the difference?

I'm writing as fast as I can, trying to capture the questions as soon as the thoughts enter my mind. By the end of the third paragraph, my handwriting is nearly illegible. I drop my pen and sit back in my chair, thinking about my conversation with Ben and wondering if this experiment is doomed to fail from the very beginning. Students and teachers may not *like* the educational status quo, but they have come to *expect* it. Perhaps those expectations will be too much to overcome; after all, even unpleasant activities become comfortable if we persist in them long enough. As Dewey (1902) observed, "Familiarity breeds contempt, but it also breeds

something like affection. We get used to the chains we wear, and we miss them when removed” (p. 35).

Perhaps we have been too conditioned by our own educational histories to imagine alternatives. I recognize that I’ve been educated in (*by*) this room my entire life. Despite geographic and temporal differences, the classrooms I have been a part of are largely similar to the one in which I’m currently sitting; the names may change but the places remain the same (Jackson, 1990). My chosen seat in this classroom is case in point – I find myself once again in the back row, the same seat that I have occupied since grade school, a seat once assigned to me, now taken without thought.

Yet, the power exercised within this room is more insidious than the force of habit. The neat rows of tables facing the podium at the front of the class are organized so that the instructor can see each student. It is a familiar arrangement that harkens back to my elementary school days, in which each classroom included the requisite teachers’ desk, impossibly large at the front of the room. The poster listing the classroom rules is present here as well. In its current form it warns against eating in the classroom instead of running in the hallway, but its underlying message has not changed since elementary school: *monitor your behavior*.

It occurs to me that the room is almost comically Foucauldian, as if specifically designed to support Foucault’s (1977) argument that techniques used to control prisoners quickly spread to other institutions. The seating arrangement, an example of hierarchical observation (Foucault, 1977), ensures that the professor can monitor the behavior of everyone in the class, while they look to the professor as the source knowledge and understanding. The normalization of judgment (Foucault, 1977) is set, not only by the signs instructing students on how to behave, but

by the layout of the room itself. It defines good teaching by the tools provided for its enactment, that of the podium, the white board, and the projector.

Foucault (1977) wrote, “Discipline is a political anatomy of detail” (p. 139). We are controlled, not by an all-powerful apparatus like the State, or even an individual despot, administrator, or supervisor. Rather, it is the “small acts of cunning... subtle arrangements, apparently innocent, but profoundly suspicious” (Foucault, 1977, p. 139) that discipline our behaviors: the hierarchical arrangement of classroom seating, a sign prohibiting food and drink, a syllabus, outlining what topics to consider and, by exclusion, which to ignore.

Leaning forward in my seat, head down, I continue writing. The sound of the pen scratching across the paper seems exceptionally loud in the quiet room.

As I relinquish the power to direct the class and instead cooperatively develop course curriculum alongside my students, how will we reconstitute our roles in the classroom? How do we challenge power structures in a system in which power has no embodiment? If Foucault is correct, the course curriculum is not the locus of the instructor’s power; rather, power exists in all aspects of our relationships. According to Foucault, is impossible to escape this situation, or even understand it outside of its own effects (May, 2006).

I fear that students will resist this approach to the curriculum, as it asks them to challenge the classroom structure they have been a part of for their entire academic lives. By inviting students to participate in the co-construction of the course itself, I am not only redefining my role as a

teacher, I am upending the traditional understanding of what it means to be a student.

I pause to consider what I have written. Have students internalized this traditional understanding of their role in the classroom? If so, are they complicit in its maintenance? In his description of panoptic institutions like prisons, hospitals, factories, and schools, Foucault (1977) argued that the individual, “assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (p. 202-203). His argument is not that individuals have no agency in this process, only that what it means to be an individual changes under this view (Hoy, 2004). Has a good student come to be defined as one who receives knowledge from the teacher? If so, to what extent are students willing (or able) to challenge the power of this norm?

Some have argued that embracing the Foucauldian discourse betrays the more balanced perspective of Freire (Irwin, 2012). Freire believed that if individuals are being oppressed, there must be someone who is doing the oppressing. In explaining Freire’s decision to write a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* instead of a *Pedagogy of the Disenfranchised*, Macedo explained that the latter “dislodges the agent of the action while leaving in doubt who bears the responsibility for such action” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 392). Freire (1970/2005) called for educators to recognize and challenge oppressive social, political, and economic elements. He wrote that it was the role of the educator “to develop work methods that allow the oppressed to, little by little, reveal their own reality” (Freire, 2007, p.3).

Freire’s ideas were developed through his experiences fighting illiteracy in a Brazilian society struggling with the legacy of Portuguese colonialism (Irwin, 2012), but his arguments

transcend the situation from which they arose and call for a larger analysis of education and power. He believed that educators should not simply “insert themselves as a stimulus toward a taking of power that stops at the taking of power, but rather a taking of power that is extended into the reinvention of the power taken” (Freire, 2007, p. 65). In creating a space for *teacher-student* to work along side *students-teachers* through the co-construction of course curriculum, I hope to make possible that reinvention. Yet, I wonder if this Freirean approach is even possible within a Foucauldian structure of power.

This question is situated at the confluence of my academic and personal identities; it addresses issues of classroom pedagogy and issues of what it means to be an educator. This is critical work in many senses of the word: critical to my progress as an instructor, critical to my self-understanding as a scholar, and critical in the emancipatory goals of my pedagogy.

I hear the door to the classroom click quietly as it opens just enough for a young woman to peek inside. “Um, hello,” she says, “Are you scheduled to be in this room? I think our class is supposed to be in here right now.”

“Sure, no problem, I was just hiding out,” I say, packing up my notebook and heading for the door. As I enter the hallway, I see no fewer than fifteen students waiting to enter. Surprised, I say, “I’m sorry. You guys could have kicked me out, I didn’t know anyone needed the room.”

“We didn’t want to interrupt. You seemed like you were working on something,” she says.

As I walk away, I consider a power structure that hadn’t occurred to me until this point. In addition to the official regulations of the university system and the dictates of tradition to which we are beholden, we students have our own unwritten rules that we loyally uphold. We have created our own “infra-penalty,” a phrase Foucault (1977) used to describe that “area that

the laws had left empty... a mass of behavior that the relative indifference of the great systems of punishment had allowed to escape” (p. 178).

Sliding past those huddled in the hallway, the rule is clear: one does not interrupt a student working in a classroom. Based on this interaction, the infra-penalty we fashioned has the potential to supersede even *officially sanctioned* university regulations. An entire group of students, arriving for a class scheduled to take place in that room, chose to wait in the hallway so not to violate this norm.

I wonder what other norms will become evident over the course of the coming semester. Ben’s words from the coffee shop come back to me as I head back to my office, “*You aren’t challenging the layout of classroom furniture; you’re challenging the very nature of the university.*”

Overview of Methodology

The questions raised in the previous vignette suggest the methodological dilemmas I faced in developing this study. In addition to approaching my class as a teacher-student (Freire, 1970/2005), I approached this study as both a researcher and a research participant. In this chapter I demonstrate how autoethnography opens a space for me to analyze my evolution as a critical social studies teacher educator. This chapter also explains the rationale behind writing this text as a work of creative nonfiction, an approach that invites the reader to participate in dialogue with the author and aims to construct meanings that are not foreclosed by the text (Root & Steinberg, 2012). This study emerges from the under the larger umbrella of qualitative research and seeks to push against the boundaries of that genre in search of emotive truth (Ellis, 2004).

Qualitative research is a broad practice defined by “an effort to highlight the meanings people make and the actions they take, and to offer interpretations for how and why” (Luttrell, 2010, p. 3). Ethnography, one type of qualitative research, exists on a continuum between realist and interpretive approaches (Ellis, 2004). Though the boundaries on this continuum are blurred, the former tends to use “an authorial, omnipotent voice, using selected snippets of fieldwork data to represent participants’ stories” (Ellis, 2004, p. 29), while the latter “blends the practices and emphases of social science with the aesthetic sensibility and expressive forms of art... to tell stories that show bodily, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual experience” (Ellis, 2004, p. 30).

In their chapter in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Ellis and Bochner (2000) wrote that “social scientists recently have begun to view themselves as the phenomenon and to write evocative personal narratives specifically focused on their academic as well as their personal lives” (p. 742). Autoethnographic self-narrative locates the self within a social context (Burdell & Swadener, 1999). This writing can take many forms including poetry, novels, and short stories (Hamilton et al., 2008).

This autoethnography is written as a work of creative nonfiction, a form that represents “a story-like narrative arc with a beginning, middle, and end, as well as high and low points of dramatic development including moments of tension and revelation” (Tedlock, 2011, p. 335). Adopting an interpretive approach and presenting this research through creative nonfiction opens a space to explore aspects of classroom culture while also looking inward to better understand the ways in which the self is moved and challenged during the process (Hamilton et al., 2008). This research examines how my understanding of critical pedagogy is challenged over the course of a semester in a social studies teacher education class.

Research Design

Interpretive approaches like autoethnography began to arise during the postmodern and postexperimental moments of qualitative research, “defined in part by a concern for literary and rhetorical tropes and the narrative turn, a concern for storytelling, for composing ethnographies in new ways” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Autoethnography is commonly situated within the Seventh moment in qualitative social science research (Austin & Hickey, 2007; Hamilton et al., 2008), what Denzin and Lincoln (2011) called the “methodologically contested present” (p. 3). In the Seventh moment, autoethnography opens new forms of inquiry that challenge the traditional boundaries of truth and validity (Austin & Hickey, 2007; Hamilton et al., 2008).

Autoethnography also engages the Eighth moment through its “reconnection to social purposes through the interrogation of Self and the attendant connections this yields to agency, power, and voice as a ‘liberation methodology’” (Austin & Hickey, 2007, p. 2). This study will further autoethnography’s engagement with the Eighth moment, through an examination of the connections between Freirean (1970/2005) critical pedagogy and Foucauldian (1977) power structures.

Autoethnography is both a method and a text (Burdell & Swadener, 1999; Ellis et al., 2011). Given the questions that are at the heart of this research, autoethnography is an appropriate lens through which to analyze, problematize, and document my experience as I develop as a teacher educator over the course of a semester.

As a method, autoethnography questions the assumptions of empirical authority and challenges traditional constructions of subjectivity (Burdell & Swadener, 1999). Its focus on both researcher and researched “calls attention to the researcher as a reflexive participant, thereby forcing a critical examination of the act of conducting research of the self in relation to

one's community" (Hughes, Pennington, & Makris, 2012, p. 210). This approach is typical of ethnographic efforts along postmodern lines, in which "the adequacy and legitimacy of that researcher stance has been seriously challenged... the roles of 'researcher' and 'researched' have been blended in recent work" (Erickson, 2011, p. 54). In a class with blurred boundaries between *students-teachers* and *teacher-student* (Freire, 1970/2005), it is appropriate to blend the research boundaries as well (Chase, 2011).

As a text, writing this autoethnography as creative nonfiction serves the larger purpose of democratizing educational discourse. Though the critical discourse has permitted challenges to the educational status quo, the often "hyper-theoretical" language perpetuates "a colonizing or 'othering' discourse that serves to separate theory from classroom practice" (Burdell & Swadener, 1999, p. 22). Ellis and Bochner (2000) argued "the 'research text' is the story, complete (but open) in itself" and that it should be "largely free of academic jargon and abstracted theory" (p. 745). This text seeks to be accessible and readable by teacher educators, classroom teachers, and popular audiences outside the field of education (Erickson, 2011). Ultimately, the text seeks to reposition the reader "as a coparticipant in dialogue and thus rejects the orthodox view of the reader as passive receiver of knowledge" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744). Like the students who are invited to co-construct the course curriculum, the reader is invited to co-construct the meaning of this text.

Researcher subjectivity.

Foucault believed that knowledge could not be separated from the practices that make it up; he argued that one could not know something outside of its context (May, 2006). This idea has important implications concerning my subjectivity as a researcher. From one perspective, it suggests that the explication of my subjectivity is a prerequisite for the readers' understanding of

this text. How is the reader to interpret my writings on power and authority in the classroom absent a discussion of the position of privilege I inhabit as a heterosexual white male, the security that accompanies my upper-middle class socioeconomic status, or the perspective that results from my education. These subjectivities, among others, shape the way I perceive and exist in the world.

Yet, from another perspective, in identifying these subjectivities I risk essentializing what it means to be middle class, straight, white, and male – as if those identities are fixed and carry universal meaning. On the contrary, the meaning of these subjectivities is determined by the context in which they arise. In their chapter on the use of Foucault in qualitative research, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) wrote, “The social structures and processes that shape our are subjectivities are situated within discursive fields, where language, social institutions, subjectivity, and power exist, intersect, and produce competing ways of giving meaning to and constructing subjectivity” (p. 50). Therefore, my subjectivity must be examined in light of the specific context from which it emerges, that of a teacher-student in a critical social studies teacher education classroom.

Freire recognized that all education involved some form of manipulation (Escobar et al., 1994). He understood that the teacher is still vested with the authority of her position, and may call on that authority at any time (Freire & Macedo, 1995). Though I seek to destabilize the authority I bring to the classroom as an instructor, I recognize that the institution I represent and the context of the course itself empower me in ways that I may be unable to challenge. Destabilizing the authority of this position, Freire (2004) wrote, lies “in the difficult exercise of the virtues of humility, of consistency, of tolerance, on the part of the progressive intellectual”(p.

67). My goal in this research is to embody these values as critical social studies teacher educator.

As I attempt to enact these Freirean ideals, I am cognizant of Foucault's (1997a) argument that we cannot jump outside our situation and that there is no point at which we are free from the effects of power. Throughout this research, I engaged in reflexive self-examination in an attempt to uncover the ways in which I unwittingly reconstituted the traditional roles of teacher and student. Yet, I recognize that I am bound up in the very relation of power that I seek to problematize. These relations of power shape my understanding of and response to the situations I encounter in the classroom.

Qualitative methodology demands that researchers develop strategies to limit personal bias in their data collection and analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), but my position as both researcher and researched means that what I see in the classroom is very closely aligned with (if not indistinguishable from) what I feel, infer, or interpret. In situations where the researcher's representation blends with the subjective voice, "the rigorous practice of separating subjective data from objective data is almost a moot point" (Chang, 2008 p. 96). As such, I seek to present a description of the evolution of my pedagogical beliefs in which subjective and objective data become inseparable and the lens of the researcher and researched become indistinguishable.

Few qualitative researchers would disagree that the narratives they produce are authored and constructed; yet, when that authorship becomes the focus of the study itself, charges of self-indulgence and narcissism are often leveled at the researcher (Holt, 2003). I challenge those critiques with a story that does not seek to "mirror the facts of [my] life" or "recover already constituted meanings" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 745), but rather "displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). As I

develop the themes described in this manuscript, I strive to embody my lived experience in the text and provide a credible account of the real.

Context and participant selection.

The context from which the proposed study will emerge is a social studies teacher education class in a university in the northeastern United States. The course is offered to both masters' students and doctoral students, and has the stated mission of exploring issues, challenges, and new frontiers in teacher education in social studies. In its original iteration, this course primarily focused on action research and was structured as a traditional, instructor-led research seminar in which students were given a syllabus that outlined course readings and student expectations, including group projects and individual research papers.

When I was asked to teach this course, I proposed that it undertake an ambitious approach to shared authority and create an opportunity for both students and instructor to experience a democratic curriculum as it organically grows from their shared interests. I envisioned a syllabus that would consist of topics, activities, and assessments co-developed by students and instructor. The theme, focus, and direction of the course would be determined through democratic discourse guided by the broad themes in the course description. Rather than limit students through preconceived notions about how the class should proceed, I would work with students as equals and negotiate an agreed upon goal for the course.

The proposal for the course was accepted and the course was added to the schedule. After that initial semester, I taught the course twice more in subsequent years. I collected data for this study during the latter two courses. In chapter four, I refer to the two years I collected autoethnographic data for this research as *Year 1* and *Year 2*, but it is also important to reference what I learned (or did not learn) during *Year 0*, my first attempt at co-construction.

To a certain extent, the lessons learned in *Year 0* are unidentifiable because I did not document my thoughts and feelings as the course progressed. That is not to say I learned nothing, or that what I did learn has been lost; rather, my understanding of how I felt *in that moment* is inaccessible. I have memories of the experience and impressions of how I felt at the time, but those thoughts are filtered through the lens of my present self – a self that has facilitated the course multiple times and evolved over the course of three years.

Situating this research within a course that I was teaching for the second and third time presented both challenges and opportunities. While I cannot point to specific moments in *Year 0* that challenged my understanding of critical pedagogy, I can say that the self-reflexivity required for autoethnographic research led me to be much more attentive to my pedagogical decision making in *Year 1* and *Year 2*. Though my initial attempt at curricular co-construction helped me refine my research questions and better understand the obstacles I would face in *Year 1* and *Year 2*, it have also gave me certain expectations concerning the direction the course would take. As a result, this study gives particular attention to my own role within the curricular and pedagogical decision-making process. I was especially cognizant of my own tendencies to impose a direction on the course based on my previous experiences in co-constructing curriculum.

In the other courses I taught during those years (social studies methods and student teaching seminar), the syllabi were planned in advance without students' input. Though I based those classes on the same Freirean approach to critical pedagogy, the dialogic aspect of the co-constructed class was missing. These more traditional courses did not resort to the banking model of education (Freire, 1970/2005), but were developed with a specific beginning and end in mind.

While one can never be sure the path a course will take, the possibilities are much more narrow with a predesigned syllabus. There is an expectation that students will abide by the terms of the syllabus and that the direction of the course will follow the instructor's plan. In a co-constructed course, there is a greater degree of freedom, as every pedagogical decision is open for discussion and my voice as instructor is but one of many. This context of the co-constructed course forced me to interrogate and justify my pedagogical practices in a way that my other courses did not.

As described earlier in this section, the students enrolled in this course were primarily master's students, though there were a few doctoral students who enroll each semester. While the vast majority of students were current or former social studies teachers, that was not always the case. The course was open to students from all disciplines and each semester one or two students from other departments joined the class. Despite the relative homogeneity in content area, the students' years of experience differed greatly both within each class and across the two semesters in which I conducted this study. Students ranged from having virtually no teaching experience, to having well over 15 years of classroom experience.

I invited all of the students enrolled in the course to participate in the research to help ensure there was no perceived benefit to participating in the study. I also informed students that there was no minimum number of students required to undertake the study, so that they would not feel unreasonable pressure to participate. In each of the two semesters I conducted this study, five students chose to participate in the reflexive, dyadic interviews (explained in the following section). The students involved in the study represented a diverse range of classroom experience, research interests, and teaching philosophies.

Protocol for data collection.

While a solid research design is vital to qualitative research, decisions must be made throughout the study based on the researcher's individual judgment (Luttrell, 2010). In autoethnography, these decisions are especially important when balancing the emphasis on "the research process (*graphy*), on culture (*ethnos*), and on self (*auto*)" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 740). Exemplars can be found along the continuum of these axes (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) leading to questions about what methods make for sound autoethnographic research (Charmaz, 2006). Some subscribe to analytic autoethnography, an approach in which the researcher is a full member of the group studied, visible as such in the text, and committed to broad theoretical understandings (Anderson, 2006) – an approach that harkens back to realist ethnography of the past (Denzin, 2006). Others argue for evocative autoethnography, focused on intimate engagement and a commitment to aesthetics, connecting more with arts and humanities than claims of Truth and science (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). Denzin (2006) accurately pointed out that ethnographers who focus on creative analytical practices (including creative nonfiction) have little in common with the analytic autoethnographer. This autoethnography will be situated toward the interpretive end of the ethnographic spectrum.

Autoethnographic data is collected in numerous ways including note taking, observation, memory work, interview, and narrative writing (Hamilton et al., 2008). Though these approaches are far from standardized in the genre (Charmaz, 2006), there are research methods that represent sound autoethnographic practice. The methods that will be used to collect data for this research are systematic introspection (Ellis, 1991), narrative writing and observation (Ellis et al., 2011), and reflexive, dyadic interviews (Ellis & Berger, 2003).

Self-introspection.

Throughout the semester I practiced self-introspection, drawing on what Ellis (1991) identified as “conscious awareness of awareness or self-examination” (p. 23). This process is accomplished “in dialogues with self, and represented in the form of field notes, or narratives” (p. 32). To ensure that I studied my experience *facilitating* the course, not the experience of *watching* the course, I did not audio or video record the class proceedings. The self-introspective data for this study came from written reflections of my thoughts and feelings, documented throughout the semester.

Introspection is “a systematic sociological technique” that allows researchers to “examine emotion as a product of the individual process of meaning as well as socially shared cognitions” (Ellis, 1991). While my responses to becoming a teacher educator are not as emotionally profound as those described by Ellis (1991) in response to the death of her longtime partner, teacher education is indeed an emotional process. I was attentive to my thoughts and feelings throughout the process of co-constructing the course curriculum and discussing pedagogical challenges. While it was easier to be introspective when I found myself conflicted about the direction of the course, I aimed to keep the same level of self-awareness even when I agreed with the students’ choices. This helped me critically analyze my own conceptions of what it means to be a critical teacher educator and how I enacted those understandings in the classroom.

During and immediately following each class, I wrote field notes as a form of “dialogue with self” (p. 32). These field notes represented what I was thinking and feeling in regard to becoming a teacher educator and what that becoming meant to me (Ellis, 1991). I used these notes as an opportunity to reflect upon my lived experience in the classroom through the lens of

my theoretical framework. By systematically reflecting on my practice, I was able to document my thoughts and feelings as I evolved as a teacher educator over the course of the semester.

Narrative writing and observation.

In addition to keeping introspective field notes, I practiced narrative writing over the course of the semester (Ellis, et al., 2011). This writing drew on the autoethnographic concept of “epiphanies – remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person’s life, times of existential crises that forced a person to attend to and analyze lived experience” (p. 275). As I facilitated the co-constructed social studies teacher education class, I experienced epiphanies concerning my practice as a critical teacher educator. As these epiphanies occurred, I wrote narrative descriptions of my perceptions and developing understandings.

Throughout the semester, I wrote weekly narrative accounts of the significant moments in each class – moments in which I recognized elements of my theoretical framework, moments that made me reconsider my pedagogy, and/or moments that challenged my conception of teacher and student. The narrative accounts were not intended to serve as a complete recounting of the previous nights events, but to elucidate the specific experiences that led me to analyze my understanding of and commitment to critical pedagogy. The accounts served as a weekly snapshot of the challenges I faced as a teacher educator and allowed me to document the significant moments that (re)shaped my understandings of critical pedagogy.

Reflexive, dyadic interviews.

I conducted three semi-structured, group interviews with a subset of participating students about their own experiences in the course. My approach drew on the research of Ellis and Berger (2003) and their use of reflexive, dyadic interviews. Like traditional interviews,

reflexive, dyadic interviews involved the interviewer asking questions that were answered by the interviewee. However, in a reflexive, dyadic interview, the interviewer “shares personal experience with the topic at hand or reflects on the communicative process of the interview” (p. 162). The result was more of a conversation between equals than the typical hierarchical exchange between researcher and researched (Ellis & Berger, 2003).

As the participants in the interviews were also students in the class, this approach served to further the spirit of co-construction developed throughout the course. In keeping with this spirit, I audio recorded these interviews rather than taking notes. While a distinction between interviewer and interviewee still existed, I did not want to draw undue attention to this distinction by taking notes in our discussion. My participation in these interviews allowed me to include “the cognitive and emotional reflections of the researcher, which add context and layers to the story being told” (Ellis, 2003, p. 162).

The interviews took place near the beginning, middle, and end of each of the two semesters in which data was collected for this study. In the first interview, participants were asked to discuss their vision of social studies education, their understanding of what it means to be a social studies educator, and their feelings about co-constructing the curriculum. At the mid-point of the semester, participants were asked to discuss any pedagogical insights they had taken from the course and the extent to which it challenged their understanding of pedagogy. In the final interview, participants were asked if the co-construction of curriculum was appropriate for social studies courses and if it affected their understandings of the roles of student and teacher.

While this data cannot provide immutable truths, it can get to something *like* truth (Rosenblatt, 2003). In this case, it provided a better understanding of participants’ experiences in the co-construction of course curriculum. These stories created “the effect of reality, showing

characters embedded in the complexities of lived moments of struggle” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744). Richardson (2000b) argued that autoethnographic text should “[express] a reality... embody a fleshed out sense of lived experience... [and] seem true – a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the ‘real’” (p. 16). Thus, I sought to evoke in readers “a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751).

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was analyzed through the lens described in my theoretical framework and followed commonly accepted best practices for autoethnographic research. Throughout the process, I was cognizant of emerging themes and challenges to my pedagogy that arose from the facilitation of this course.

I began the process of data analysis by thoroughly immersing myself in the data, “reading, rereading, and reading through the data once more... to become intimate with the material” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 210). I reviewed my introspective field notes, read the weekly narrative reflections, and listened to the audio recordings of each interview multiple times over several weeks. Guided by my theoretical framework, I looked for the ways in which power relations were both challenged and (re)inscribed in the co-constructed social studies teacher education course.

Throughout the data analysis I wrote analytic memos to document my “thoughts about how the data are coming together in clusters, patterns, or themes” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 213). The memos helped me identify instances that challenged the traditional power relationship between instructor and students. Writing analytic memos provided a structured

method for thinking through the significant events of the semester and laid the groundwork for the data analysis in chapter five.

The process of analyzing the field notes was “not to help, change, or reach the unconscious... [but] to describe the conscious experience of both subject and researcher” (Ellis, 1991, p. 30). Ellis (1991) cautioned that the process of introspection is not just “listening to one voice arising along in one’s head; usually, it consists of interacting voices, which are products of social forces and roles” (p. 29). As I analyzed the data, I looked for that multi-phonic tonality in my understanding of critical pedagogy. I focused on the instances in which my approach was challenged and analyzed my response to those challenges.

In analyzing my weekly narratives following the completion of the course, I sought to draw out the thoughts, emotions, and actions (Ellis, et al., 2011) that provided insight into my evolution as a critical social studies teacher educator. The outcome of this analysis was not meant to represent a mere *telling* about the experience; rather is represented the use of “methodological tools and research literature to analyze experience... [and] use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience” (p. 276). In this way, the epiphanies I experienced were be situated within the larger field of teacher education (as seen in chapter five).

The data collected from the three reflexive dyadic interviews was analyzed in a similar fashion. Though reflexive dyadic interviews follow the traditional protocol of researcher questions and participant answers, in this approach “the interviewer shares personal experience with the topic and hand or reflects on the communicative process of the interview” (Ellis & Berger, 2003, p. 162). The interviews were recorded so that I could fully participate in the discussion without the distraction or barriers created by taking notes. One purpose of this approach to interviewing is to close the hierarchical gap between interviewer and interviewee

(Ellis & Berger, 2003), a purpose that is well aligned with the co-constructed approach to the course from which this study arises.

The analysis of interview data did not simply focus on outcomes, but sought to “examine the collaborative activities of interviewees from which these outcomes are produced” (Ellis & Berger, 2003, p. 159). As I played back the recorded interview following the completion of each course, I specifically listened for challenges in enacting the ideals of critical pedagogy as a teacher educator. The epiphanies that arose from this process were analyzed along with those from my narrative writing and my introspective field notes. This analysis provided insight into the im/possibilities of becoming a teacher educator in a co-constructed social studies teacher education course.

Data Representation

The data in this study is represented in the form of creative nonfiction, a style that has been dubbed “the fourth genre” of literature after poetry, fiction, and drama (Root & Steinberg, 2012). Creative nonfiction is a blend of portraiture, self-reflection, reportage, and critical analysis. It opens a space for the author to weave “narrative telling with fictional techniques such as scenes, characters, and dialogue” (p. xviii). Some approaches combine fictional elements like short stories with nonfictional elements of traditional research reports. These elements work together to create an authentic representation of human experience (Leavy, 2013).

The representation of data through creative nonfiction is a particularly good fit for autoethnographic studies. Autoethnography draws on aesthetic narratives to produce evocative accounts of the author’s cognitive and emotional experiences (Ellis, 2004). Creative nonfiction is one method of engaging with those experiences, as it allows the reader access to the thoughts of the author (Root & Steinberg, 2012). The approach is particularly appropriate for a study of

my understanding and commitment to critical pedagogy in a social studies teacher education course. Writers of creative nonfiction have used the approach to “explore and chronicle personal discoveries and changes, to examine personal conflicts, to interrogate their opinions, and to connect themselves to a larger heritage and community” (p. xvi). The incorporation of artistic elements into research narratives portrays the complexity of the experience, presents an opportunity for self-reflection, and can challenge previously held assumptions (Leavy, 2013).

As a teacher-student in a co-constructed social studies teacher education course, I sought to build relationships based on dialogue and challenge the traditional power relationships between instructor and student. I used creative nonfiction to develop the same sense of sense of dialogue through this research. Whereas academic research tends to be written with an authoritative tone, in creative nonfiction the author surrenders some of his authority and invites the reader to share the author’s experience (Root & Steinberg, 2012). This shift in authority allows the author to “extend *themselves* toward the reader and draw the reader closer” (p. xxviii). It represents congruence with both the methodology of autoethnographic research and the co-construction of course curriculum in the social studies classroom.

Leavy (2013) suggests that creative nonfiction can serve to challenge dominant ideologies and build readers’ critical consciousness by providing an opportunity for self-reflection or social critique. Though the line between truth and fiction is blurry, creative nonfiction is “firmly anchored in real experience” (Root & Steinberg, 2012, p. xxix). The meaning of that experience, however, is not foreclosed by the text. The creative elements of this research allow the readers to construct their own meanings as they reflect on their own experiences in relation to the text (Leavy, 2013). In addition, creative nonfiction allows the author to create an identity through the writing and “grants writers permission to explore without knowing where they’ll end

up” (Root & Steinberg, 2012, p. xxvi). Given the lack of research on becoming a teacher educator described in chapter two, this autoethnographic work of creative nonfiction will begin to address that gap.

The goal of autoethnography is not to provide generalizable understandings (Ellis & Bochner, 2006), but to evoke perspective taking and critique of prevailing assumptions (Burdell & Swadener, 1999). Representing the data through creative nonfiction accomplishes that goal by allowing the reader to experience the story described (Root & Steinberg, 2012). Just as I seek to co-construct the curriculum with my students as a critical pedagogue, I aim to move “beyond presentation into conversation” (p. xxviii) and co-construct meaning with the reader. As a work of autoethnographic creative nonfiction, this text meets each of those goals.

Given my commitment to transformation and the challenges to tradition represented by curricular co-construction, one might expect a dissertation that looks radically different from more empirical studies. Yet, just as my students’ understandings of curriculum are bound within the discourse of education, my understanding of this dissertation is bound within the discourse of research. Though I am cognizant (even critical) of these structures, I find that I conceptualize my study in terms of a literature review, theoretical framework, data analysis, and discussion. Though I challenge this structure through the use of narrative vignettes, I remain faithful to a traditional conception of what comprises a research dissertation. I inscribe the very relations of power I seek to challenge; I am the principle of my own subjugation (Foucault, 1977).

Human Subjects in Research and Teachers College Institutional Review Board

This study follows the guidelines for the protection of human subjects provided by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Teachers College, Columbia University. Though this study was primarily about my own evolution as a critical teacher educator, “autoethnography is never

solely about the author; it always includes relationships with other people” (Ellis, 2004, p. 257).

As this research took place during a course that I facilitated, all students enrolled in the class were informed of the research and invited to participate; however, participation was no way required, nor did it adversely affect the direction of the class. To minimize the impact of this research on the trajectory of the course, data analysis did not begin until the course was complete and all grades were submitted.

Though the formation of an in-group/out-group dynamic was possible in such a situation, I took precautions to prevent this from occurring. By the time interviews began in mid-October, students had over six weeks to form a classroom community. Students met for whole-class instruction once each week for 100 minutes, a total of 1500 minutes by the end of the semester. Those who chose to participate in the study only met three times for 60 minutes each, a total of 180 minutes by the end of the semester. Thus, the time participants met as part of the study was greatly exceeded by the amount of time students met for whole-class instruction, limiting the affect of an in-group/out-group dynamic as a result of students’ decision whether or not to participate.

In addition, part of each class session was be allocated to reflecting on building our relationship as an educational community, which is a challenge in social studies education and therefore one of the stated goals of the class. These reflections were a part of the planned curriculum of the course and served to minimize the in-group/out-group dynamic associated with group work.

Upon receiving IRB approval, I invited students to participate in the study, ensured that they were informed of all risks associated with participation, and that they knew participation in the study was not required for participation in the course. Throughout the study, I continued to

be conscious of the ethical risks associated with research in a class I am facilitating, and with the potential ethical dilemmas of autoethnography as a methodology (Ellis, 2004).

Limitations

Recognition of autoethnographic research has been growing over the past several years (Ellis, 2004), but the methodology is still a site of conflict, even from within (see Anderson, 2006). As such, I want to be cautious in pointing out its limitations – not to hide its shortcomings, but to avoid naming its strengths as its weaknesses. Many so-called limitations of empirical studies, “subjectivity, emotionality, and the researchers influence on research,” are acknowledged and accommodated by autoethnographers, “rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 274).

There is, however, a limitation arising from the context of the study. The students enrolled in this course were experienced educators with diverse reasons for taking the class. While some were planning to remain in the secondary classroom, others were preparing to become administrators, researchers, or curriculum developers. This diversity in aspirations added to the classroom dynamic, but complicated the definition of the class as a “teacher education course.” As I conducted this research, I was cognizant of the fact that not all of my students intend to be classroom teachers, and was alert for the ways in which that could impact my understanding of the course.

I also recognize that the limited time frame within which the study occurs could also be seen as a limitation. One’s understanding of teacher education is “a continuous process that occurs across the lifespan” (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 23); likewise, a sense of self is also something that develops over time (Dinkelman, 2011). This study is framed within the bounds of two semesters, and though growth will inevitably result from the facilitation of the course in

which this study is contextualized, my growth as a teacher educator will continue after the course comes to an end. Therefore, the discoveries from this research are tentative and temporary. While this may be a limitation for this particular study, it is also an opportunity for future studies as I continue my growth as a critical teacher educator.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the choices I made as both teacher educator and as researcher were power-laden decisions. As a teacher educator, I sought to work alongside my students in an effort to develop their critical consciousness; yet, I made this choice without student input. Even so, it was not a decision made absent the effects of power, as I still conformed to university expectations concerning my role as instructor (class location, duration, grading, etc.).

As a researcher, my choice to approach this research as an autoethnographic work of creative non-fiction was also a power-laden decision. Though the reader ultimately determines the meaning of the text, I limit the possibilities of that meaning through my construction of the narrative. These are not limitations one can overcome, because we cannot escape the effects of power (Foucault, 1997a). It is important to recognize that even a critical analysis of the relations of power is both a *challenge to* and a *reinstatement of* the power it examines.

Chapter 4 – Findings

Year One, Class One

“I would like you to work with the people at your table to respond to the following questions: *What pedagogical issues are you struggling with in your classroom? And how might a class dedicated to addressing those issues take shape?*” I speak haltingly as I simultaneously write the questions on the board. I step back to check the spelling of each word, a habit developed from teaching 9th graders who delighted in pointing out every typo. Satisfied, I give each table a large piece of butcher paper and box of markers. “Let’s take the next half hour or so to talk about this. Keep track of your thoughts on the butcher paper and we’ll share them with the class before we leave.”

The groups waste no time jumping into their discussions. The awkward silence that usually occurs as each group silently negotiates who will speak first is non-existent. I wonder if this is a result of the students’ engagement in the process or simply the camaraderie developed over pizza. Either way, I’m happy to see how well each table is working together and very pleased when each group comes up with a very comprehensive list of topics.

Written on the butcher paper in various colors and styles are phrases like *student engagement, classroom management, and parental involvement*. Students’ ideas for addressing these issues in class include *demonstration lessons, sharing tips and tricks, and readings about best practices*. As each table shares their list with the rest of the class, there are murmurs of consent and nodding heads throughout the room.

“You know what would be great?” Jack says, drawing the attention of the class, “There is a book called *Teach Like a Champion* (Lemov, 2010) that my administrator gave me in our professional development meetings this summer. I haven’t read the entire thing, but what I did

read was very good and I think it would address a lot of these issues. Maybe we could use something like that as a course text.”

“I just read an article about that book in the *New York Times* (Green, 2010),” Marcus adds, “I could send it to everyone, if you want.”

“That sounds great,” I say, looking at my phone to check the time. “Let’s read that article for next week. We’ve actually gone a few minutes past the end of class, so we’ll pick up here next time. Great start, everyone!”

The students quickly put away the markers and place the sheets of butcher paper in a stack on the table by the door. As they are exiting the room, I hear one student say, “If we cover half this stuff this semester, this is going to be a great class.” Another voice, floating back to me from the wave of bodies exiting the room, replies, “I know, I wish I would’ve had this class as an undergrad!”

When the last of the students leave the room, I lean against one of the tables in the empty classroom, slowly coming down from the emotional high I always experience when leading a class. As the excitement begins to ebb, I find myself conflicted about the night’s events. At the midpoint of tonight’s class, following an hour of good conversation and delicious pizza, I was prepared to pronounce the approach of co-construction an unqualified success. My earlier fears were unrealized. There were no exchanged looks that said, “A whole semester with this guy?” No one appeared to be calculating tuition costs and wondering how I could make them pay money to do all the work. Everyone seemed comfortable with the approach and with each other.

Yet, as I roll up the sheets of butcher paper, I am disappointed with the issues students raised and the direction in which the class appears to be going. The ideas outlined by the students are focused on the nuts and bolts of teaching. They seem to be looking for a *how-to*

course on education, a set of tools for a pedagogical bag of tricks that can be used to overcome any educational obstacle. They have presumably bought into the notion that good teaching can be described in a series of steps, and that the emulation of those steps will make them good teachers.

I understand why teachers, especially those new to the profession, are drawn to these ideas. The promise of a lifeline – a quick fix, a magic phrase, a new seating arrangement – that transforms students into eager, attentive, and engaged learners is very tempting to educators struggling to stay afloat. I can't pretend that these ideas are without worth. There is value in knowing multiple strategies for calling on students, how to efficiently distribute papers, and how to circulate the room during group work. But good teaching is more than the sum of these parts.

Though we are co-constructing the curriculum, I fear that students are reconstituting a pedagogical power structure by deconstructing teaching into precise steps. Foucault (1977) described this practice as a way of creating subjected, docile bodies. We no longer see the body *en masse*, as a unified whole, and instead obtain “holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself – movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body” (p. 137). Gutting (2005) explained this argument using the example of the soldier learning to use his rifle. The focus is not merely on shooting the enemy, the soldier must learn a specific set of procedures: “hold [the rifle] just this way, raise it to your shoulder this way, sight down the barrel this way, pull the trigger this way... it's a matter of micro-management” (p. 82). When instruction is defined as a specific set of procedures (get students attention this way, distribute homework that way, check for understanding like this), teachers cede their power to discuss education as something greater than those the sum of those discrete elements.

In the courses I independently design, I push students to examine the aesthetic and emotional aspects of teaching. I encourage students to see education as an opportunity for both students and teachers to become more fully human (Freire, 1970/2005). I approach pedagogy as more art than science. But this course is not independently designed. I have proposed that the class work together to develop this syllabus, and mine is but one voice of many. In my role as a *teacher-student*, how do I help the *students-teachers* challenge these ideas? Can I let the class continue in a way that I believe is misguided at best, miseducative at worst? What is my responsibility to those enrolled in the class? These questions fill my head on the quiet walk back to my office.

As I pass the empty classrooms, my footfalls echoing with each step, I wonder if I can advocate for a particular approach without unduly influencing the class in that direction. I recognize that my position as instructor affords me authority over the direction of the course, even as I try to circumvent that authority. Given my position in the university, students may feel obligated to go along with my suggestion, even if they would prefer a different approach.

Freire believed “educators should never allow their active and curious presence to transform the learners’ presence into a shadow of the educator’s presence... Nor can educators be a shadow of their learners” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 79). How far can I push my students before their presence becomes a shadow of my own? How long can I stay quiet before I become a shadow of my students? Freire noted that there is “no liberating education without some measure of manipulation” (Escobar et al., 1994, p. 36). But at what point does that manipulation become education *for* my students, not *with* my students, education that is transformative in name only? Since Marcus suggested the *New York Times* (Green, 2010) article, I decide that I

am justified in proposing a second article from an alternative point of view. Whether this decision is the result of thoughtful internal negotiation or simply self-justification, I am unsure.

Arriving at my office, I log into my email to find that Marcus has already sent the *Times* article to the class. I send a follow up email asking students to also read Susan Ohanian's (1985) article on stir-and-serve teaching. I hope that her critique of teacher-proof curriculum and standardized methods will be a strong counterpoint to the expert models proposed in the *Times* piece. I tell the class that we will begin our discussion next week by focusing on these articles.

Year One, Class Two

The feeling in the room is decidedly different from when I entered class last week. The room is abuzz with conversation; students are clustered in groups chatting about the new school year as I arrive. I'm happy to see that the camaraderie that we developed last week is continuing to grow.

"Welcome back," I say as the students finish their conversations and prepare for class to begin. "It's good to see everyone again. Go ahead and form groups of five – we're going to start with an activity based on the two articles you read for class tonight."

As the students move the chairs into groups, I explain Structured Academic Controversy (Johnson & Johnson, 1985; 1988) as an instructional method. We spend the first hour of class using this approach to discuss the pros and cons of each article and whether or not good teaching can be boiled down to a step-by-step approach.

I feel myself drifting into "teacher-mode" as I lead the discussion. Having used this activity many times in my methods course, asking questions about the assigned readings and challenging students on their responses feels very comfortable. I resist the urge to continue

directing the lesson and open the floor to the class. “Based on what we’ve discussed thus far, what are your thoughts about how we should frame our class?”

“I like that activity,” Marcus begins. “I will definitely use it in my class when we discuss the ratification of the Constitution. Regardless of whether we decide to go more practical or more theoretical, I hope we can keep using activities that I can incorporate into my lessons.” His statement touches on an issue that all three groups addressed: the value of “theoretical” discussions about what it means to teach versus “practical” discussions about how to do it.

“You raise an interesting point about theory and practice. In your opinion, what is difference between the two?” I ask.

Stephanie, a second-year middle school teacher, is quick to jump in. “Theory is everything I learned in my undergraduate education program, practical is what I need to survive in my classroom.”

Her response draws laughter from the class and a good deal of agreement. I try not to take this personally, as my classes are often criticized as being too focused on theory. I measure my response. “I understand where you are coming from, but isn’t everything based on a theory? I mean, tonight you learned the practical process of how to do a Structured Academic Controversy (Johnson & Johnson, 1985; 1988). But wasn’t I also advocating the theory that cooperative learning is a valid pedagogical approach?”

“Sure,” Stephanie responds, “but I already believe in cooperative learning. I just need to know how to do it. No one ever teaches us that part. The *Times* (Green, 2010) article pointed out a few of the ideas that Doug Lemov found in his research. Think about something as simple as ‘What to Do’. When I read that, I thought, ‘Of course! My instructions to my students aren’t

clear – no wonder they have trouble doing what I ask.’ It seems really obvious now, but until I read that I hadn’t thought about it. I want more ideas like that.”

Sarah, visibly annoyed, presents an alternative perspective. “I’m all for practical ideas like the one’s described in *Teach Like a Champion*. I may even buy the book myself, but I’ll read it on my own time. I’m at this university because I want to challenge the way that I approach my pedagogy. I would much rather read articles from the ‘big names’ in our field. In my classes last summer I was reading Walter Parker, James Banks, Henry Giroux... none of them told me *how* to teach, but they certainly changed the way I thought about teaching. I was hoping for more of that this semester.”

“If I had your level of experience, I would probably agree with you.” Jack, again dressed in shirt and tie, turns to address the class. “Most of you have been doing this for longer than me. I’ve only been in the classroom for about six weeks and it’s all I can do to keep everyone in their seats and paying attention. I have no administrative support, no curriculum materials other than the textbook, and no idea what to do next. I need someone to teach me the skills that experienced teachers take for granted.”

“Why do you want to keep them in their seats?” I ask. “It sounds like your theory is that students learn best when they are passive. Is that correct?”

“I mean,” Jack’s response is hesitant, “not passive, but not out of control either.”

“See, there is another theory, that students should be controlled.” I see that Jack is becoming exasperated. “I’m sorry, I know I’m giving you a hard time. My point is that *these* are the interesting pedagogical dilemmas. We first have to define what good teaching looks like before we can decide how good teaching gets done.”

“How are we going to do that?” says Jason, an elementary school teacher in his fourth year. “We have a room full of high school teachers, middle school teachers, elementary teachers... Teachers in private schools, public schools, charters... I’m really glad we have such a diverse class, but I don’t see how we’re ever going to reach some kind of consensus on what makes a good teacher.”

“We don’t have to agree on an answer,” I say, “but it sounds like it is at least a question worth considering. Let’s take the next half hour to work in our groups to determine what other questions we might want to consider as part of this course. I’ll set the timer on my phone and we’ll reconvene in thirty minutes.”

As the students move their chairs into groups, I worry that I have overstepped my bounds. Did students interpret my participation in the previous exchange as that of a peer or an instructor? From my perspective, I am traversing back and forth between these realms, participating as a peer in the conversations then stepping into the instructor role to facilitate the progression of the conversation. Yet, my facilitation shapes the overall direction of the course in a way that is not open to the students enrolled in the class. It’s not that a student *couldn’t* have suggested the transition to small group discussion, but they *wouldn’t* have done so – that would be outside the purview of a student participant.

Furthermore, by taking control of the class during these moments of transition, I may be undermining the egalitarian spirit we’ve begun to foster. In terms of physical production (i.e. completing a syllabus, setting a course agenda, etc.), we accomplish far more than we would otherwise. Yet, Foucault (1977) noted that this comes at the cost of agency. He wrote, “Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these

same forces (in political terms of obedience)” (p. 138). I will need to be mindful of this balance going forward, careful not to achieve the former at the expense of the latter.

Despite my concerns, I am impressed with the apparent ease with which the students advocate for their needs. Perhaps it shouldn't be surprising, given that they are all teachers in their own right and have developed syllabi for courses of their own. Yet, the level of engagement, excitement, and passion evident in their discourse speaks positively of their comfort with the approach. They are living up to Freire's (1970/2005) description of pedagogical engagement, in which students are “no longer docile listeners... [but] critical co-investigators in dialog with the teacher” (p. 81).

The students have formed two groups of five and one group of four. I pull a chair up to the group of four students and join their discussion about the questions that our class should address. When the alarm sounds indicating that thirty minutes have passed, the three groups wrap up their conversations and write their final ideas on their butcher paper. Each group has incorporated the issues raised in the earlier discussion, to varying degrees of success. Sarah's group has the most comprehensive outline, and she is eager to share their ideas.

“I'm really proud of what we came up with,” Sarah says. “I think it addresses both sides of the theory/practice debate.” Sarah explains her group's plan to the class. They raise five overarching essential questions about what constitutes good teaching, each with multiple sub-questions that address the day-to-day responsibilities of a classroom teacher.

“I love it,” says Marcus. “That's what our group was trying to do, but I think you pulled it off better than we did. We included theory and practice questions too, most of the same questions that you included actually, but they aren't connected as neatly as yours.”

Jason chimes in, “I agree. Our group got hung up on how to phrase the questions. We were talking about the same ideas, but couldn’t get the wording right. I really like the way you incorporated everyone’s opinions.”

“It sounds like there is agreement here,” I say. “Is this an outline we’re willing to adopt as a class?”

After a few seconds of thoughtful silence, Jack is the first to respond. “I think so,” he says. “What I like most about this plan is that it shows we’re listening to one another. I’ll admit I was lobbying for practical ideas, but I can see the value in including some bigger questions as well.”

“Plus,” Stephanie adds, “if we’re really trying to make this a co-constructed curriculum, it’s good that everyone’s voice is included. That way, if this completely falls apart, we’re all to blame.”

Marcus laughs, “You’re a ‘glass half-empty’ kind of person, aren’t you?”

“I’m a realist!” she says, smiling.

“Are there other opinions about adopting this approach?” I ask, pulling the class back to the topic at hand. “Perhaps concerns about the approach?”

“Maybe,” Sarah says, “but I’m not sure how we get around it. It seems like these are all really big questions. Even the questions that are supposed to be practical are huge. One question that our group discussed was how to get students engaged in class discussions. We could spend an entire course just on that.”

“I think we just have to be ok with that,” Jason replies. “I know I always learn more from the other people in my class than I do from the instructor anyway. Even if I don’t leave here an expert on any of the questions we’ve developed, I’ll at least know more than I used to.”

Looking at my phone, I realize that we are out of time. “Not a bad night’s work. I think we have a pretty solid outline of five essential questions, each with two or three sub-questions. I’ll type them up and email it to the class. If we can finish our planning next week, that will leave us ten weeks to address those five questions – two weeks for each question. Sound good?” The class nods.

“Great! So next week we’ll talk about how we want to approach the lessons and what types of assessments will best demonstrate what we’ve learned. See you then.”

The students collect their belongings and head for the door, conversations shifting to upcoming parent-teacher conferences, curriculum planning meetings, and other university coursework. I’m once again impressed with the feeling of community that has emerged in just two short class meetings. The feel of the classroom is that of students who have spent an entire semester together; it is hard to imagine that last week they were strangers.

On the walk back to my office I begin thinking about how much work we have yet to do before we are ready to start the actual instruction of the course. I want to make sure that we finish all the planning next week so that we can start addressing our essential questions in week four. Even as these thoughts occur to me, I recognize the dilemma they represent. Despite my stated assertion that the heart of the course is the co-construction, I am nervous that the process is taking too much time.

The commodification of time is yet another element of the power structures in which we operate. Foucault (1977) wrote, “Time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power” (p. 152). More than just a timetable of when to act, time’s dictates create a schema that defines how long each part of a specific activity should take (Foucault, 1977). We have finished the second week of class and only just now have we developed a concept of what

topics this class will address. In my mind's eye I see my course evaluations lamenting the fact that fully twenty percent of the semester was spent talking about what to learn instead of actually learning.

I wonder if my need to push the course forward is connected to a larger fear about my role (or lack thereof) in the classroom. Does my discomfort with this process indicate that we are taking too much time discussing content, or does the discomfort arise from the fact that we are discussing content at all? Even if I resist a process of education in which the “students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (Freire, 1970/2005, p. 72), my years in the classroom have taught me that an educator does more than simply guide instruction.

I recognize that the co-construction of the syllabus is, in itself, an educative experience. Yet I wonder if the pedagogical value justifies the amount of class time we have spent (and continue to spend) in its development. Do I have a responsibility as a guide to move this process forward, or in doubting the students' abilities in this regard am I justifying my own existence as an educator (Freire, 1970/2005)?

I arrive at my office unsure about what to do next. How do I keep the class on track while allowing students a voice in the direction of the course? If I attempt to move the class forward will I unduly influence the outcome? Will I exert equal influence on the class by doing nothing? I fire up the coffee maker and collapse into my office chair, thinking about how best to proceed.

Year One, Class Three

If I don't leave now, I'm going to be late for class. I grab my notebook, a few boxes of markers, and the now ubiquitous roll of butcher paper, as I head for the door. The hallways are

filled with my fellow procrastinators – those who waited just a bit too long to start that reading assignment or got in line for coffee a few minutes too late. My excuse is that I spent the entire morning (to be honest, the entire week) struggling with how to approach tonight’s class.

After another lengthy internal negotiation (or perhaps more self-justification), I have decided to present four different options about how the course could be structured around the essential questions we developed as a class. Recognizing the prescriptive nature of this approach, I will be mindful to emphasize that students are free to develop an alternative approach if they are unhappy with the options I present. This caveat is far from perfect, but I decide that it is the best option for honoring students’ input and efficiently moving into the next stage of the course.

I arrive to class a few minutes late and hurriedly tape four pieces of butcher paper to the chalkboard. On each sheet of paper, I have written a potential option for the structure of the course. There is a traditional approach (assigned readings and class discussion), an approach that examines critical incidents (real examples from teachers’ classrooms), an approach that asks students to complete a research project (action research focused on issues in their instruction), and an approach focused on professional development (creating and presenting in-service training for other teachers).

“Welcome back, everyone,” I say as the class begins to quiet down. “We have a lot to do tonight, so let’s jump right in. Please take a second to read over these posters as you pull your seats into groups of five.

“The goal for tonight’s class is to determine the structure of the course and decide on the assessments we will complete to demonstrate what we’ve learned. To facilitate this process, I’ve put together four possibilities to get the conversation going. Think of them as menu options;

though, you are free to order off the menu if you so choose. We've got thirty minutes on the clock, let's get to it."

I join one of the groups, determined to spend more time listening than talking. Since my input has already framed our conversation, I don't want to further influence the direction of the class. The students latch onto the menu analogy and carry it even further, engaging in debates about "side orders" and "substitutions," along with "vegetarian," and "gluten free" options. The mood is jovial as the students arrange and rearrange various components into a structure for the course.

When the timer sounds, everyone has finished putting the final touches on their proposals and they seem eager to share with the class. My group is particularly excited with what we have developed, so Marcus holds up our poster and begins talking through our plan.

"We're ordering 'the traditional with cheese,'" he says, to the amusement of the class. "We want a solid foundation in the literature, and we like the discussions that usually take place in graduate level classes, so we want to stick with that approach. The downside of this option is that all the readings tend to run together by the end of the semester, and it's hard to remember which article said what.

"To address that issue, we propose that one of the assignments should be an annotated bibliography that we will all contribute to throughout the semester. That way, we have a really good resource that we can use in other graduate classes and when we prepare to write our final thesis."

"Ooh, I like that idea," Sarah exclaims. "I was just thinking about our final thesis the other day. It seems a long way off, but it will be here before we know it. It would be nice to

start collecting resources now.”

“What did your group come up with, Sarah?” I ask.

“Well,” she says, “we didn’t come up with a cute name for our option, but it’s closest to the critical incident approach. We wanted to make the lessons firmly rooted in the classroom pedagogy, but still include the ideas from the essential articles and books in our field. We were thinking that we could assign a different article each week, and someone would have to present a critical incident from their classroom that related to that week’s assigned reading. For example, if you were assigned something from Dewey, you might talk about some kind of issue from your classroom involving experiential learning.”

“What if we don’t have anything like that in our classroom? Or can’t think of a relevant example?” asks Jack.

“We talked about that,” she says, “One possibility would be to assign groups of two or three students to each article. That way, there is a better chance that someone will be able to relate it to their classroom and talk about how they handled it.”

“Sounds like a neat idea,” I say, “What about your group, Jack?”

“We decided to order the traditional,” Jack says, “and add a side of research.”

“This is getting ridiculous!” Stephanie laughs.

Jack continues, unfazed. “We thought a traditional approach to the classes would be good – articles, discussions, etc. – but they should lead up to an action research project, something that would really help us in our classroom. We could identify a problem, connect it to the research, implement some kind of solution, and then write up the results.”

“That seems like a lot for one class,” Marcus says. “I don’t think I could get all that done in addition to my grading, lesson planning, and after school responsibilities. It’s all I can do just to keep up with what I’ve already got going on.”

“It won’t be easy,” says Jack, “but I think it would be valuable in the long run.”

“I have to agree with Marcus on this one,” Stephanie says, “That might work for a summer project, but I think it’s too much to take on during the semester.”

“So where are we at then?” Sarah asks. “We are split between all the options? Well, almost all the options, no one is interested in planning professional development.”

“I wasn’t sure about that one,” I say. “I wanted to suggest at least one idea outside the norm, something that you probably hadn’t done before. We do, however, have *some* consensus outside our mutual distaste for the professional development option. You all suggested weekly assigned readings followed by group discussion, the only question was what shape that approach would take.”

“Wait,” Jason interjects, “Have we decided who is going to present each week? Are you going to take the lead on that or is that something that we have to do?”

“We haven’t talked about that yet, but I have an idea,” I say. “What if we adapted Sarah’s plan and assigned a group of students to each of the five essential questions. They could find the articles that would be assigned that week and present them however they want. Maybe they choose to present a critical incident that is related to the reading, if they have one that is appropriate. Or, perhaps they introduce a new pedagogical method to teach the article that was assigned that week. That would allow us to address both theoretical and practical components each week.”

“Can we work a research paper in there too?” Jack asks.

“What about a reflection paper instead?” Stephanie replies. “It could include several of the elements of the research paper you wanted to write. You would talk about how the articles influenced your teaching, what you planned to change in your classroom, etc. The only thing that wouldn’t be there is actually doing it and writing up the results.”

“That could work,” Jack says. “I like that idea.”

“Alright then,” I say, “it sounds like it’s settled.”

“So we’ve decided on assigning readings and leading class discussions, and writing an annotated bibliography and a reflection paper?” Sara asks. “I mean, that’s fine, I just thought we would come up with something a bit more exciting.”

“I agree,” says Jack, “The idea of co-construction sounds a lot more dynamic than it ended up being.”

Marcus sounds almost hurt. “I’m pretty proud of what we’ve come up with. With more time, we might have done some things differently, but what else could we have come up with? We didn’t do anything radical because this is what we know.”

“On top of that,” Stephanie adds, “We had to go with a common denominator because we’re all strangers. I wouldn’t just jump on board with some crazy idea without knowing that it was pedagogically sound. We know that this approach works, and we know that we’ve all been successful learning like this in the past. It stands to reason that we would stick with what works.”

“I get that,” Jack responds, “and I can’t really think of an alternative. So how do we decide who addresses each question? Do we sign up for it or something?”

“I call the question about the purpose of social studies!” Marcus shouts.

“Let’s try to do this in an orderly fashion,” I laugh. “The last thing I want is a room of brawling social studies teachers. It should work out so that there are three people for each question.” I draw lines dividing the chalkboard into five sections and write one of the essential questions in each box. The students quickly approach the board and write their names under the question they are interested in addressing.

When all the names are on the board, I ask, “What do you think? Do we need to make any changes?” As they look at the list of students under each essential question, there are murmurs of consent throughout the room. “That was a lot easier than I had imagined it would be,” I say. “And a good thing too, we’re almost out of time. The syllabus is done and we know what the assignments will look like – I guess we’re ready to get started. I’ll see you next week.”

By the time the students file out of the room I am exhausted. Tonight’s class felt more than a little chaotic, perhaps because I changed the routine that we had developed. As class began, I barked orders, gave instructions, and told students what to do. Maybe the feeling of confusion was a result of the abrupt change in tone.

In a course where the instruction is supposed to be co-constructed, tonight was very teacher-focused. It was choreographed, rehearsed, and performed in front of a captive (if supportive) audience. By providing the four options for the structure of the class I had predetermined students choices. Though they were encouraged to “order off the menu,” I wonder if the freedom that gave students was orchestrated at best, illusionary at worst.

As I reflect on tonight’s class, other subtle acts of control become evident. Why, for instance, must three students have been assigned to each of the five essential questions? For that matter, with ten weeks remaining, why did I unilaterally decide that each of the five topics merited two weeks of instruction? Mathematically, this is logical, and provides an equal amount

of time and labor for each question. Though perhaps the table I drew on the board, dividing students into groups and assigning responsibilities, was something more.

Foucault (1977) wrote that these types of tables can represent “a question of organizing the multiple, of providing oneself with an instrument to cover it and master it... a question of imposing on it an ‘order’” (p. 148). Was my attempt to organize the remaining structure of the class a subconscious attempt to impose order on an unfamiliar situation? Once again, the grammar of schooling Ohanian’s (1985) is evident as I fall back on “standardized organizational practices in dividing time and space” (p. 454). I (re)enact classroom norms without conscious thought and fall back into the routine created by the generations of teachers who have gone before me. Despite my attempts to share curricular control with my students, my power as instructor reasserted itself in my organization of our upcoming lessons.

Regardless of the amount of control I did or did not exert in its creation, the syllabus is complete and the direction of the course has been determined. I am comforted by the fact that the syllabus is not one that I would have produced independently, but nonetheless one for which I am happy to claim co-authorship.

Freire (1970/2005) believed that “reality is really a *process*” (p. 75), and that thinking about this reality “does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication” (p. 77). While I’m not convinced that we were able to reach a true balance between *teacher-student* and *students-teacher* in the creation of this curriculum, we did communicate. We listened to the ideas, hopes, and concerns of our peers and did our best to develop a syllabus that met everyone’s needs. Over the next ten weeks, we will see how it plays out.

Interim

Picking up my coffee and turning to leave, I hear my name called from one of the tables in the busy Starbucks. Turning, I see three of my students from last semester's teacher education course crowded into one of the small booths at the side of the restaurant.

"Join us," Sarah calls. "We can make room." She pushes the pile of coats further into the corner and slides over, making space for me to sit next to her, across from Jack and Marcus. They have papers spread out in between them; their coffees dangerously close the edges of the table.

"The semester is over," I say, squeezing into the booth. "Don't you guys ever take a break?"

"We just have this one project left," Marcus says. "We have to design an instructional unit for our curriculum course. We each had a lot going on at work, plus the other classes we were taking, we sort of lost track of time on this one."

Jack adds, "The professor was really nice about it and gave us an extension. It's actually worked out well. I think we're going to have a lot better product now that we have some time to breathe." I remember from class that all three work in the local public school system, which has been on winter break for the last three days.

"We're using that gallery walk activity that Stephanie introduced in class," Sarah says. "We have all these pictures and quotes that we want students to respond to, so we thought it was a good fit. I've used quite a few of the other methods that were demonstrated this semester in my own class. My students have really responded well."

"Wow," I say, "that's high praise from the woman who initially wanted a more theoretical approach."

“We had *plenty* of theoretical discussions,” she says.

“That’s true,” I reply, “I really enjoyed our conversations. In fact, I thought the entire class went really well. I’d love to hear what you all thought about the course. Grades are already posted, so you can speak freely.”

Marcus laughs, “I haven’t checked my grade yet, so maybe I’ll wait to see what it is before I answer. That could completely change my opinion.” I am glad to see that the rapport we developed during the semester has continued outside of class. The mood of the class was more relaxed than others I’ve taught, and while I wouldn’t say that my students and I had developed a true peer relationship, it was certainly less formal than in a traditional class.

“No, it was good,” he continues. “In fact, probably one of the best classes I’ve taken since I’ve been here – definitely the only class where I read everything that was assigned and came prepared every week.”

“I always read everything that is assigned,” Sarah says, looking disapprovingly at Marcus. “But I did feel more urgency with the readings... like I really needed to know it. The readings were vital for the activity that my group presented. I was so worried that people wouldn’t be prepared and our lesson would fall flat. Fortunately, everyone read the articles, but that feeling made me want to make sure I was ready to support the other groups who were presenting. I had a responsibility to the class.”

“I agree,” Jack says. “This never really felt like *Scott’s* class, it felt like *our* class.”

“I can’t imagine better feedback than that,” I say. “You’ve all been overwhelmingly positive. Is there anything you didn’t like? Anything you would change?”

“Well, it did sort of get repetitive by the end,” Sarah says. “I thought each group would do something unique; you know, take the class in a new direction. Instead, it seemed like each

group followed the same pattern: assign a reading, do some kind of activity to discuss the reading, debrief the activity.”

“It’s funny you should mention that,” I say. “Last summer, a colleague and I had a conversation about this class – in fact, we were sitting right over there.” I indicated a table a few feet away where Ben and I first discussed the idea of co-constructing curriculum between teacher and students. “I was lamenting the fact that most education classes follow that same model and hoping that students might come up with a different approach, given the opportunity.”

Jack nods in agreement. “I remember voicing a similar concern during the semester, but the fact is, I couldn’t come up with anything better. We even talked about it during the week that my group presented and decided not to fix something that wasn’t broken. The approach had worked well in previous weeks, so we just kept the ball rolling.”

“I really appreciate this feedback,” I say. “It’s given me a lot to think about.” I look down and notice my coffee is nearly gone. Finishing the last of it, I stand to leave. “I’ll let you guys get back to your unit planning. Thanks again for a great semester, I hope you have a relaxing winter break.” They say their goodbyes and I drop my empty cup in the trash on my way out the door.

Walking back to my office, I think about the issues they raised in relation to the power structures we worked within throughout the semester. Sarah’s critique that lessons were repetitive mirrors my own concerns. Foucault (1977) argues that disciplinary power is aimed not at expiation or even repression, but *normalization*. He gives examples of schools that, through the hierarchizing of students, exercises over them “a constant pressure to conform to the same model” (p. 182). Perhaps similar issues are at play in this instance. The grammar of schooling (Tyack & Tobin, 1994) has normalized our pedagogical approaches. We stick with what we are

comfortable with, and claim that it is what works. These norms don't repress thoughts of change once they occur; they prevent those thoughts from occurring in the first place.

Yet, while this norm was reified, other norms were destabilized. The students mentioned an obligation to read the assigned texts as part of an obligation to the classroom community. Rather than neglecting to read the texts at all, or simply skimming them until they know them well enough as in other classes, the students came prepared for each class session in order to support their peers. Perhaps this pedagogical community created a new area of "infra-penalty" (Foucault, 1977) in which no official rules mandated preparedness, but violation of the new norm would result in feelings that they had allowed their classmates to "fall flat."

As I reflect on the course, I am struggling to negotiate a space between two seemingly incongruent philosophies: on one side, a desire for a course framed by the Freirean notion of *teacher-student* working alongside *students-teachers*; on the other side, what seems to be a Foucauldian reality, reinscribing the very power dynamics we sought to deconstruct. In trying to reconcile these philosophies, it would be an oversimplification to say that Foucault described the world as it is and Freire sought to change it, but there is some truth to that statement. Certainly, Foucault (1977) outlined the ways in which institutions shape individuals through discipline and control, while Freire's (1970/2005) work emphasized challenging oppression through the development of critical consciousness. But there are places in which the philosophies overlap; strands in their arguments that seem to speak to one another as they describe and respond to situations of power.

Freire believed that conflicts between oppressors and the oppressed are inevitable. At some point, Freire argued, the oppressed will seek the humanity that has been denied them by their oppressors (Irwin, 2012). Foucault challenged this inevitability, arguing that history does

not flow with a necessary pattern or transcendental nature (May, 2006). Though they disagreed about the certainty of a challenge to power, both Freire and Foucault believed that such a challenge was possible.

Freire (1970/2005) believed that education could be instrumental in challenging oppressive social structures. Freire's pedagogical philosophy emerged as he worked alongside farmers in Brazil to combat educational inequalities. He wrote, "illiteracy is not something that the peasants in Brazil created for themselves... it was imposed upon them so as to deny them the ability to understand their historical condition" (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 389). From Freire's perspective, for one to be oppressed, there must be an oppressor.

Foucault challenged the Marxist idea that there exists a central institution of power, be it economic, militaristic, or governmental. He was cautious when speaking about the idea of liberation, because it risked falling back on the idea of an essential human nature "that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic, and social pressures, has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression" (Foucault, 1997c, p. 282). Instead, Foucault believed that power is the outcome of many different small, uncoordinated causes (Gutting, 2005).

Foucault sought to understand these causes and how they shaped our present situation. He argued that disciplinary power is part of an integrated system, functioning as part of "a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally" (Foucault, 1977, p. 176). He wrote that this power "is not possessed as a thing, or transferred as a property; it functions like a piece of machinery" (p. 177). It is at once "absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert," while at the same time being "absolutely 'discreet', for it functions permanently and largely in silence" (p. 177).

Prior to facilitating this course, I didn't understand this argument. My struggles this semester showed that my teaching is bound up within this situation of power. It is both shaped and defined by the context of these relations. Yet, the dialogic space created through the co-construction of our course curriculum opened a space to think differently about our teaching and learning.

Though our challenge to institutional control and teacher-mandated curriculum was not the same as Freire's challenge to socioeconomic inequality in Brazil, his ideas still have important implications in this setting. Freire's work cannot be used a blueprint for critical pedagogy in any educational context, but it does provide a set of "categories and social practices that have to be critically mediated by those who would use them for the insights they might provide in different historical settings" (Giroux, 1985, p. xviii). The co-construction of course curriculum was a liberatory process; it led teacher-student and students-teachers to question pedagogical structures they would have otherwise taken for granted.

I believe, as Freire (1970/2005) wrote, "Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (p. 79). What I have discovered over the course of a semester, is that the world also acts upon those men and women, while they in turn, act upon one another. The world is indeed marked by asymmetric power and privilege (McLaren, 2009), a schema far more complicated than I originally believed. While I may not be able to subvert these structures, I can continue to 'make sense of power and to flush it out of the places in which it hides' (Kincheloe, 1997, p. 58).

As I reach my office, I marvel at how quickly the semester flew by. Time is mystery during a busy semester; I never seem to get as much done as I had hoped. I smile to myself as I imagine everything I will accomplish over the long winter break that is about to begin.

Year Two, Class One

“What a difference a year makes,” I think as I tip the delivery person and carry the armload of pizzas down the hall to my class. Though my sleep last night was every bit as fitful as it was a year ago, my tossing and turning was the result of restless anticipation instead of the rollercoaster of fear and excitement that preceded the beginning of the semester last year. I feel poised and confident as I navigate the crowded hallways on my way to class.

“Pizza’s here,” I say, setting the boxes on the table by the door. Last year, the pizza was a major crowd-pleaser and set the tone for an energetic opening discussion. This year, the students’ response was hesitant, at best. The class remains seated even as I begin opening the boxes and setting out plates and napkins. “Come grab a slice if you’re hungry,” I say. “I want us to get to know one another while we eat. We’ll get started in about half an hour.”

The students slowly get up to take some pizza and return to their seats, instead of walking around the room to meet each other as I had hoped. “Don’t stay in one place the whole time,” I say, “this is your chance to get to know everyone you will be working with this semester. Treat this like a cocktail party. Make new friends; mix and mingle.” Several people smile and nod, but make no attempt to move. I feel like I am back in my student teaching placement, shouting out instructions that students have no intention of following.

“Ok, I’m going to count you down, and you’re going to get up move around. In 3... 2... 1... Go!” Finally, the students push themselves to their feet, and move around the room to meet other people. I wonder if I’ve already undermined my plan to create a sense of equality in the course. Not only am I barking orders, I am also resorting to tricks gleaned from elementary instructional methods. This is not the start I had envisioned on my confident walk to class.

I feel a familiar fear and uncertainty begin to creep into my consciousness. Are the students going to buy into the co-construction of the curriculum this semester? What if they refuse to participate? Is it possible that the approach that worked so well last year could end in abject failure this year?

I pull a chair up to a small group of students and set my plate on the table. The students immediately stop talking, leaving only an awkward silence to welcome me into the group. “You know,” I say, “when I sat down with my high school students and they stopped talking, I assumed they were socializing instead of working. You guys are *supposed* to be socializing.” My comment draws smiles and polite chuckles from the students in the circle.

“You just caught us at a break in the conversation,” says a woman across from me. “We’ve been talking about where we work. Eric was just telling us about his new job as a middle school administrator.”

“Yeah,” Eric replied. “And, uh... Amanda, right?” The woman nods her head. “Amanda works at a non-profit doing curriculum development and a little teaching.”

“Great,” I say. “Did everyone get enough pizza?”

“Yeah, thanks,” Eric says. “This is a unique way of starting class, but I kind of like it.”

Eric’s comment makes me think about just how different this approach must seem to many the students enrolled in the class. My hope is that this is a low-pressure way to begin to build a sense of classroom community. I want the students to build personal connections before they try to build academic connections. I start all of my classes this way, so the approach is familiar to me; it’s easy to forget that this is far from the norm in most classrooms.

“You guys keep talking,” I say, “we’ll start class in about five minutes.”

As I look around the room, I see very few familiar faces. Last year, I knew several of my students through academic advisement or through previous courses. Most of them were in their second year in the program, whereas these students are just starting out. I wonder if their hesitancy is a function of the alternative format of the course or due to the fact that they are new to the university. Perhaps my students last year entered the classroom with existing relationships that facilitated the development of classroom community.

I cannot assume that my experience last year will be the same as my experience this year. These are different students with different life experiences, and the resultant community that we will (hopefully) develop will be different as well. Going forward, I will make a conscious effort to be cognizant of my assumptions, and attempt to approach this class with the same sense of wonder that accompanied last year's class.

The noise level in the room has steadily increased for the last fifteen minutes or so, and I am pleased to see that the students have begun to loosen up a bit. I am hesitant to interrupt the activity now that it has taken off, but I want to make sure I have enough time to introduce the course and discuss the co-constructed approach.

“All right everyone, let's go ahead and get started,” I say. As the class quiets down, I realize that I have drawn a distinction between our social time and the “official” start to the class. Just as co-constructing the curriculum is itself an educative process (as opposed to merely preparation for the educative process), the relationships fostered over pizza and soda are vital to the development of classroom community. Yet, my words, my previous classroom experiences, the very context of education itself – defined our initial activity as something apart from the *real* educative process that is about to begin. Once again, I find my ideas shaped by norms I had not previously recognized.

“I haven’t had a chance to meet everyone yet, so let’s go around the room and do a quick introduction. Tell everyone your name and a little about your teaching experience. Amanda, will you start us out?”

“Sure,” she says. “Hi everyone, my name is Amanda.” She is conservatively dressed and appears to be in her early 30s. Amanda speaks with quiet confidence as she describes her teaching experience. “For the last two years I’ve worked at a non-profit organization focused on global education. Most of my teaching experience has been with adults. For the most part, I conduct workshops and professional development courses for elementary and high school teachers, but we occasionally have administrators attend our seminars as well.”

“Thank you,” I reply. “I’m looking forward to learning more about the classes you’ve taught. From what I’ve heard, almost everyone else here is a classroom teacher. You’ll add a unique perspective to our discussions this semester.” Looking around the room, I continue, “Who wants to go next?”

“I will,” a man to my right responds. “I think I may have the least experience of everyone here, so this won’t take long.” He looks very young; although, this could be a result of the blue jeans and faded Patriots t-shirt he is wearing. “My name is Michael, and I just graduated in the spring. I was hoping to get a job teaching at a private school, but it looks like they all want a master’s degree. So, here I am.” Michael gives the impression that he is an undergraduate student who accidentally registered for a graduate-level course.

“What was your student teaching placement like?” I ask.

“It was good. The kids were really well behaved so I didn’t have any classroom management issues or anything. My cooperating teacher had been teaching the same class for

like 30 years, so he knew what worked and what didn't. He gave me a lot of his lesson plans, which I was really happy about. It was nice to not have to reinvent the wheel, you know?"

"Hopefully you will have a chance to revisit some of those lessons over the course of the semester and think about *why* they work," I say. "And I wouldn't worry too much about not having a lot of experience. Despite your concern about reinventing the wheel, I think we will all benefit from your fresh take on some of the pedagogical challenges we've been grappling with throughout our careers."

"And I've had a lot of those," Eric chimes in. The class turns to him in anticipation. "I'm Eric, former teacher, current administrator. I taught social studies for 15 years, was a department head for the last five, and then became an AP about a month ago. *Very* different," he says, drawing out the word to emphasize his point.

Eric is an imposing figure with a deep resonant voice. Even seated, he towers over the students sitting to either side of him. I have no trouble imagining him in the role of assistant principal, and can almost hear his booming voice directing students to get to class. Yet, he has an easy sense of humor that he is quick to display.

"What's the biggest difference between being a teacher and an administrator?" I ask.

"I thought it would be the discipline," he says. "I was afraid I would lose all of my positive interactions with the kids and only dole out punishments. But so far that hasn't been the case. In fact, I've been able to work with some of our 'problem students' one-on-one and build relationships that I wasn't able to do as a teacher. The biggest difference is all the meetings! You think you go to a lot of meetings as a teacher? That's *all* I do."

"You should come to my school, we have great meetings," says the woman to Eric's left. "I've worked at the same middle school ever since I graduated five years ago. I love it and can't

imagine being anywhere else. We have a lot of shared decision making at my school – not really with the kids, though that does happen a little – mostly among the faculty. We decide what things we need to work on as a school and then work together to address those issues, so I’m excited to see what that looks like in a graduate course.”

She pauses, adding, “Oh, I’m Lisa. Forgot that part.” Her hands move animatedly, emphasizing her points. Lisa is small in stature, but the passion with which she describes her school makes her presence rival that of Eric’s.

“I’m glad you’re here,” I say. “And I’m excited to learn more about your school, it sounds fascinating.”

As the rest of the students introduce themselves, I am surprised at the wide range of experience present in the room. Some, like Michael, are at the very beginning of their career; others have been teaching for over a decade. There are students in non-traditional roles and students in administrative positions. We have students from six different states and four different countries. Though I am excited about the possibilities this diversity portends, I worry that we will struggle to find common ground.

When it is my turn to introduce myself, I begin with my high school teaching experience. “Prior to becoming a teacher educator, I taught for several years in a high school in central Florida. I am now in my fifth year as a doctoral student, and I’ve been teaching pre-service and in-service teachers for the last three years. I have to say, I’m a bit intimidated by the experience in this room. In previous years, most of my students have been new to the profession. Many of you have been in the classroom longer than I have.

“In my opinion, that is one of the benefits of a co-constructed curriculum,” I say. “You bring a lot more experience than I do to this course, and I’m excited about the endless

possibilities that we could create. Now, you may be thinking, ‘We know more than he does? What the hell? I’m paying \$3500 for this class!’ So let me clarify: we each know something about teaching that no one else in this room knows. I am counting on everyone to bring their experiences to the table. I want us to learn from one another as a community of educators.”

Transitioning to our next activity, I continue, “I want to open our discussion of co-construction with an exercise based on something we all have experience with: classroom seating charts. This activity is based on a lesson Ira Shor (1996) used to introduce curricular negotiation with his students. Let’s start by turning to a partner and discussing the best way to arrange the seats in this classroom.”

As they talk, I walk around the room noting the various strategies they suggest. I am amused by the passion with which they argue for circles over rows or tables over circles. The earlier hesitation they showed when starting their conversations seems to have evaporated. I have to raise my voice to be heard over the spirited discussion. “Let’s regroup and discuss our options,” I say.

“I heard three ideas repeated in each group: straight rows, a big circle, and small tables. Did I miss anything?” The students shake their heads. “Ok then, let’s vote on which one we will use. Raise your hand if you want us to sit in straight rows.”

Immediately, several students start talking at once. “For real? Is this going to be permanent? Are we always going to sit this way? Will we have actual desks or just chairs?” I interrupt the cacophony of voices, “Sorry, you’ve already had a chance for discussion, now its time to vote. This is democratic!”

Reluctantly, the students vote, the majority choosing to sit in one big circle. There were, however, some students who chose not to vote. “What about those of you who didn’t raise your

hands?” I ask. Eric says, “I wasn’t happy with the choices. You can’t make one rule and apply it uniformly across all situations. Each of those choices has its pros and cons based on the situation, so I didn’t vote.”

“So you’re not a fan of democracy. And you call yourself a social studies teacher. Shameful.” I say in mock disappointment. “I know, I know, I’m a bad American,” Eric replies.

“We might call this approach ‘direct democracy,’” I say, writing the phrase on the board. “But I prefer to think of it as *American Idol democracy*. We may talk about our favorite singer with those in our immediate family, but for the most part we make an individual decision, dial the 800-number, and the person with the most votes is our winner. What are the problems with that approach?”

“We don’t get to hear other perspectives,” Amanda says. “By talking with other people we might change our minds or at least adopt a more nuanced understanding. Hopefully the discussion will lead to a *group* decision, rather than just adding up all the *individual* decisions.”

“You’re describing ‘deliberative democracy,’” I say, adding that phrase to the list on the board. “Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson (2004) have written about this approach if you’re interested in learning more about it. I want to spend few minutes talking about what I’m going to call ‘*critical democracy*,’ and the implications it has on the choices we make in this course.” I write the phrase at the bottom of the list.

“Some of you may be familiar with the concepts of critical pedagogy. In short, it is a pedagogical approach asks questions about who benefits from instructional choices and how educational decisions often reinforce the very social inequalities the seek to challenge.

“Take our discussion of the seating chart, for example,” I say. “We spent the majority of our discussion time talking about which choice would be the most beneficial for our students.

But let's reframe that discussion with the following question: Which seating chart is the most egalitarian?"

"The circle," Lisa says. "There is no hierarchy. Everyone can see and hear each other without turning around or straining in their seats. It fosters open discussion."

"But what if you don't want to discuss?" Michael asks. "Maybe I'm weird, but I love a good lecture. I would rather listen to other people than be forced to speak. Maybe the rows are more egalitarian because they let everyone choose the level of participation they are comfortable with. If you want to talk, sit up front; if not, sit in the back."

"Excellent point," I say. "Have you ever noticed that students will almost always choose seats in the back of the room when they are given a choice? Ira Shor (1996) called it the 'Siberian Syndrome' and argued that it is actually a response to the unilateral power of the teacher. He believed that students in the back are exercising a form of power in their decision to distance themselves from the teacher. If he's right, does that mean we are actually *limiting* students freedom when we ask them to sit in a circle?"

"I suppose it depends on the student," Amanda says. "I do better when I'm able to express my thoughts and talk through issues with my classmates. I would hate it if I just had to sit and listen to you just drone on and on. No offense."

"None taken," I laugh. "It seems that regardless of the decision we make, some students will be at an advantage and other students will be at a disadvantage. How do we account for that advantage – or lack thereof – in our pedagogical choices?" I pause, giving the students time to consider the question.

"You know what, we're almost out of time, so let's hold on to that question for a while," I say. "We're going to revisit that question as we work together to construct the curriculum of

this course. For next week, I would like you to respond to the following questions on the class message board: 1) Are there pedagogical issues that you find particularly challenging at this point in your career? And 2) How might a course dedicated to investigating those problems and issues take shape? Thanks for a great first class, I'll see you next week.”

As the students pack up their belongings and file out of the room, I wonder how many will be back for the next class. Though the class ended on a strong note, my concerns linger about the amount of time it took everyone to warm up to one another. I remind myself that building relationships takes time, and that I cannot expect camaraderie to develop instantly on the first night.

I begin to clean up the room and think back about the night's events. Maybe it is unfair to throw the students into a course like this without the ability to opt-out. Like Michael's point about a circular seating arrangement, there is no “back row” for the students to which the students can retreat—they are forced into the circle whether they like it or not. In my quest to make the classroom more democratic, have I infringed on the students freedom to choose not to participate? Shor (1996) explained it as a problem of authorization. He wrote that the “students are not *self-authorized* to share power but rather are *teacher-authorized* in this situation” (p. 74). He argued that this makes power-sharing a risky leap for students, much greater than that of the instructor.

Yet, Shor (1996) also recognized the democratic potential of negotiated curriculum, even when authorized by a critical teacher. He believed such a class could “develop the students' (and teacher's) democratic arts and critical thought” (p. 75). Curricular co-construction has even greater potential in teacher education courses. For the most part, teaching appeals to those who were successful in school, and their conceptions of teaching are largely dependent on their early

experiences as a student (Lortie, 2002). The process of co-constructing the curriculum will force students to confront the fact that curricular choices, like those we discussed with the seating chart, privilege the knowledge and experiences of a few at the expense of others (Segall & Gaudelli, 2007).

I turn off the lights and leave the room, the current silence of the hallways a stark contrast to their earlier tumult. As I walk back to my office, I struggle with the issue of forced dialogue. Freire believed that dialogue was a response to oppression (Irwin, 2012), that it was more than a simple tactic to engage students but a part of the process of knowing (Freire & Macedo, 1995). Students who distance themselves from this knowledge exercise a type of “self-protective negative agency” by putting themselves “in a symbolic state of intellectual exile” (Shor, 1996, p. 14). I want to challenge this subjugation, but I wonder if that challenge undermines the students’ agency? If I force students to participate in curricular dialogue, do I contradict the democratic values I espouse? By mandating that students sit in a circle, am I infringing on their right to choose a seat in the back of the room?

“What a difference a night makes,” I think as I unlock my office door and set my notes on the desk. I was so confident on the way to class, certain that my students were going to quickly develop a classroom community and eagerly embrace the process of co-construction. At the close of class, I am questioning not only the students’ interest in co-constructing the curriculum, but also the very possibility of freedom that is forced. I decide to open next week’s course by examining this issue and discussing what is and is not negotiable in a co-constructed social studies teacher education course.

Year Two, Class Two

“Before we discuss the ideas you raised on the message board, I want to first talk about what is and is not negotiable in terms of our curriculum,” I say. The students are still settling in, the sounds of backpacks unzipping, notebooks opening, and pens clicking eventually give way to a silent anticipation as I continue speaking. “I haven’t been entirely honest with previous classes when I tell them, ‘Everything is on the table.’ That’s actually not true; there are several university mandated elements that must appear in each syllabus.”

I pick up one of the dry erase markers from the tray below the whiteboard and write the words *Not Negotiable* on the board and begin to make a list as I explain those elements to the class. “First, we must include the university statement of accommodations, the policy on plagiarism, the definition of grades, and the guidelines for religious holidays. I’m not really concerned about these policies in relation to the co-construction of our course, because I can’t imagine the class deciding to not accommodate students with disabilities or refusing to excuse absences for religious purposes.” The students dutifully took notes as I spoke, copying the text from the board as if they would later be quizzed on it.

“The second non-negotiable is the description of the course. According to the academic catalogue, this course addresses ‘issues, challenges, and new frontiers in social studies teacher education.’” I pause briefly as I write this phrase on the board. “We can’t co-construct the course description, that has been set by the college. Fortunately, the description is quite vague, and we *can* co-construct our understanding of what it actually means.”

“Finally, we cannot co-construct what a course *actually is*. In a course, co-constructed or instructor dictated, we come together to explore an issue, a question, or an idea. This exploration takes place through some process of analyzing of the topic at hand, and ends with some type of

demonstration of our understandings based on this analysis.” I put the lid on the marker, place it in the tray, and look to the students. “What questions do you have so far?”

I pause before asking again. “Does that make sense? I’m having trouble reading your faces.” A few students nod, others just look down to their notes. I can’t be sure if their responses indicate confusion or boredom. “Let me talk about the parts of the course we *can* co-construct, maybe that will make it a little more clear,” I say as I pick up the marker once again.

“First, course content. What issues, challenges, or new frontiers will we talk about this term? Second, course delivery. How will our classes be structured? Lecture? Activities? Demonstrations? Who will lead class each week? Third, course assessment. How will we demonstrate what we have learned? How will grades be determined?”

“All of these topics are on the table and we will deliberate as a class to determine our responses to each question. You’ve already begun this discussion online, but I want to continue it now in class. Take the next five minutes to discuss at your tables what you believed to be the most salient points raised on the message board. Are there any questions before we begin?” The students have already turned to their tablemates and begun discussing their thoughts about the course. As the students work, I step into the hall to get a drink of water. I’m not used to opening class with an extended lecture.

I’m not particularly happy with the way class opened, the lecture felt awkward and clumsy. My objective was to inform students that, even though we were co-constructing the course, we were doing so within the limits of the institution. I had hoped to engage students in a discussion of classroom norms, but that obviously didn’t happen. Maybe I should have asked the students what constitutes a class and challenged them on each point. That would have made for

a much more interesting discussion, but it also would have taken a lot more time. Ultimately, I suppose I accomplished my objective, but I wonder at what cost?

Freire wrote, “By not intervening so as not to impose, the teacher commits an ethical error” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 391). I had hoped to avoid that ethical error by intervening at the beginning of tonight’s class to explain what is and is not open for co-construction. However, I did not intend to be so heavy-handed in my description of what constitutes a course and what possibilities we could entertain for the direction of the curriculum. In my attempt at honest disclosure, I was inadvertently more directive than I had intended. Did my emphasis on the institutional context within which the class is situated serve to reinforce those relations of power? I walk back into the classroom, determined to be more conscious of these situations in the future.

The students are engaged in animated conversations as I enter the room. Raising my voice, I say, “Let’s regroup and share some of things you’ve been talking about. What were some of the major points you’d like to discuss?”

“Our table was talking about the difference between history and social studies,” Lisa says. “How we approach the field will shape how we approach this class. I mean, if we are history teachers, we should be talking about primary source documents, understanding historical perspective, things like that. But if we are social studies teachers, we need to be talking about social justice and democratic citizenship.”

Cynthia, a fourth-year public high school teacher adds, “It’s not just how *we* approach the field, it’s how our *administration* approaches the field. It doesn’t matter if I think I’m a social studies teacher, if my administration expects me to be a history teacher, that’s what I am. Assuming I want to remain employed.”

“Can we talk more about the difference between those two ideas?” I ask. “I want to trouble this relationship. Can’t you do both at the same time? It seems like you could teach social justice and democratic citizenship through the use of primary source documents and discussions about historical perspective. Am I wrong?”

“I suppose it is possible,” Michael begins slowly, “but I haven’t seen it work. When I tried it in my student teaching placement, the students didn’t get it. I think it was over their heads. My cooperating teacher told me to take the Dagnet approach – ‘Just the facts.’ I think the rest of that stuff has to wait until college.”

“Most of my students aren’t going to college,” Eric says, “but they are the ones who would benefit the most from true social studies lessons. Are you saying all they get are the facts?”

“Yeah, if you want them to pass their state tests,” Michael replies. “It’s not fair, but that’s the way life is I guess.”

Jacquelyn, a middle school teacher in her ninth year in the classroom, was shaking her head in agitation. I try to draw her into the conversation. “Jacquelyn, I don’t mean to put you on the spot, but you had a pretty strong reaction to that comment,” I say.

“No, it’s just that, the teachers in my department say the same thing. About kids needing the facts to pass their state tests – and it’s true; I don’t disagree. But you can teach those facts through discussion of social issues. I try to run my class the way you described, Scott, with students reading primary source documents, finding the central argument, and so on. But they don’t stop there. They use that information to talk about bigger issues, sometimes current, sometimes historical. Either way, they have to put their knowledge to use in some way other than a standardized test.”

“How do you assess that?” asks Michael. “That’s something we were talking about earlier at my table. We want our classes to be more student-centered, but how do you assess a classroom discussion? Each of us has tried a different approach, but I don’t think any of us are really happy with the results.”

“Yeah, we were talking about a similar topic,” says Ryan, a sixth-year teacher in a private high school. “Not about assessing discussions, but assessing things like students’ understandings. It’s easy for me to see if they know the facts, but it’s harder to see if they understand a concept like citizenship.”

“Can I ask a question?” says Amanda. “Maybe it’s the fact that I’m not a classroom teacher, but I think it’s interesting that all of your conversations are about practice. No one is talking about classroom relationships or the role of the teacher. Why is that?”

Her question momentarily silences the class. Eric is the first to respond, “I think it had to do with Scott’s question. He originally asked, ‘what challenges are you facing in your classroom?’ or something like that. When I think of classroom challenges, I think about my teaching. I’m not sure what that says about my skills as an educator,” he adds with a laugh.

“I also thought about my teaching,” Lisa says. “To me, a classroom challenge is something immediate – like preparing students for a their state tests. Living up to my beliefs about the role of the teacher is also a challenge, but that’s more of a long-term issue. It’s not what I think of when asked about the challenges I’m facing in my classroom.”

“That’s a great point,” I say, “the questions we ask limit the types of answers we can give. I think that is also an important issue to address with regard to the co-construction of this course. I was trying to get at this idea earlier, but I don’t think I did a very good job of it. When we talk about co-constructing a course, we don’t have complete freedom. We’re limited not only

by the questions we ask – as you can see from this conversation – but also by the context of the college. I want us to be cognizant of those limitations as we go forward.”

“I introduced the idea of ‘critical democracy’ last week to encourage you to ask questions about the questions you are asking; meta-questions, if you will. I’ve heard you ask questions about the purpose of social studies education, questions about assessment, and questions about students’ understandings. I’m wondering, why these questions and not others? What do they tell us about the current state of schooling and of teacher education? Who is empowered by our choice to talk about these questions and who is not?”

“Let’s jump back into our groups and try to develop a list of questions you want to talk about this semester,” I say. “At the end of class tonight, I will collect your work and synthesize the lists before we meet again next week. Hopefully there will be enough overlap that we have a manageable number of topics to address in our remaining sessions.”

I sit out of these discussions, giving the students space to work without my influence shaping their decisions. Eric’s point about how an instructor’s question shapes the students’ responses replays in my mind. I opened class last year with the same two questions: *What pedagogical issues are you struggling with in your classroom? And how might a class dedicated to addressing those issues take shape?* Like this year, the answers were tightly focused on teachers’ practice. Last year’s class was singularly focused on developing instructional strategies they could incorporate into their lessons. They shifted to a broader discussion about the role of the teacher only after I intervened – a decision I feared would undermine the democratic culture of the class.

In my attempt to foster dialogue between *teacher-student* and *students-teachers*, I often fear that the power that is vested in me as course instructor would silence my students’ voices.

Yet, Foucault (1977) warned of the dangers of only seeing power in negative terms. Because I only looked for the ways in which my power excluded, repressed, or censored my students, I was blind to the fact that “power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (p. 194). My question, posed in my official capacity as course instructor, produced a dialogue focused on educational practice. My concerns about shifting the direction of the course once in motion were not misplaced, but did completely miss the fact that I had already influenced the direction of the course.

I ended last year hoping to ‘make sense of power and to flush it out of the places in which it hides’ (Kincheloe, 1997, p. 58). I suppose my recognition of this issue is another step in that process. Freire believed that freedom does not exist in isolation, only in the “dialectical relationship between freedom and authority” (Irwin, 2012, p. 9). Perhaps our discussion of this issue, and my earlier attempt to discussing the non-negotiable aspect of our co-constructed course, has furthered our understanding of that dialectical relationship.

I’m pulled back to the classroom as I notice students starting to pack up their belongings. Looking at the clock, I see that we have reached the end of tonight’s class. “Great work, everyone,” I say. “Just leave the lists of questions you created on the tables and I’ll come by and pick them up. We’ll start next week by finalizing our topics, then finish up by determining our assessments. Have a good week.”

I spend a full ten minutes straightening the classroom after the students have left for the evening, yet another holdover from my years as a high school teacher. Though there will be many other professors who use this room before we reconvene, I feel the need to make sure the room is ready for our next class. Besides, there is something cathartic about the process; it gives me time to reflect on the lesson and think about the weeks ahead.

Looking over students' lists of potential topics, I see that there is indeed a lot of overlap in their interests. Several of the topics we've discussed thus far are prominently represented, especially questions about the purpose of social studies education and the role of social justice in the curriculum. When we discuss these topics at the beginning of next week's class, I will reflect upon the ways in which power produces our dialogue; I will remain open to the dialogic relationship between freedom and authority as we plan the remainder of the semester.

Year Two, Class Three

I get to class early and finish writing the proposed topics on the board just as the students begin to arrive. Last week the students suggested four questions to explore, each aligned to the core theme of our course: 1) What is the purpose of social studies education? 2) How do we incorporate technology and media into the social studies classroom? 3) How do we design and implement appropriate assessments? And 4) How do we develop a socially just teaching stance?

"Looks good," Eric says as he walks to his seat. "Lots to talk about with those questions."

"Maybe too much," I say, taking a seat at one of the tables. Despite my efforts to save time throughout the planning process, I feel every bit as rushed this year as I did last year – maybe more so. Class isn't scheduled to start for another five minutes, but everyone is present so I decide to begin.

"We're going to start a bit early because we have a lot to do tonight," I say as the class quiets down. "I've written the four topics you suggested on the board. Fortunately, there was a lot of overlap in the topics you wanted to discuss. I think the message board conversations and our in class discussions helped in that regard. That being said, I want to make sure I didn't miss

anything. Are there any glaring absences? Anything the class generally agreed on that I left out?”

The class studies the board and I hear murmurs of consent throughout the room. “Good,” I say. “So our goals for tonight are threefold. First, we need to determine how we will address each question. Second, we need to decide which students will be responsible developing lessons for each question. And third, we need to decide how we are going to demonstrate what we’ve learned this semester. That’s a lot to do in one class, but I want to make sure we can jump into the course content beginning with next week’s class.”

Once again I find myself walking the fine line between direction and facilitation in my role as teacher-student. I want to provide the foundation necessary for the students to co-construct the course, but I do not want to direct them in what that course should look like. Unlike last year, I decide not provide examples of possible course structures; instead, I ask them to develop those ideas on their own.

“Each of the four tables in the room is going to focus on one question,” I say. “There is a large piece of butcher paper at each table for you to document your ideas. After fifteen minutes, you will rotate to the next table, leaving one person behind to fill in the new group on what has been discussed to this point. At the end of the activity, we should have a good idea of the class opinion about how each topic should be approached.”

“Wait, I have a question,” Amanda says. “What do you want us to write down? Readings? Lesson ideas? I’m confused.”

“All of those things,” I say. “Along with whatever else you can think of that would help us investigate that question. Maybe you know a guest speaker that we could invite to class. Or maybe there is a field trip you think would be beneficial. Really, anything is possible. Other

questions before we begin?” Hearing none, I set my timer for fifteen minutes and tell the class to get started.

As I did in last week’s class, I choose not participate in these discussions. Last year it seemed that my opinion carried more weight than those enrolled in the course, despite my efforts to undermine that fact. I hope that by removing myself from these curricular discussions, the students feel more comfortable expressing their opinions about the course without worrying about my reactions or comments.

The downside of this approach is that I feel like somewhat of an outsider in the educational community that is beginning to form. In traditional classes, and even in last year’s co-constructed course, I learn about my students’ personalities and interests through class discussions. That is not an easy process, because our time together is limited – classes only meet once a week. Now that I have chosen to distance myself from my students during much of the course planning, there are even fewer opportunities to talk about students’ experiences and begin to build relationships through our discussions.

As the students move from table to table, I wonder about the effect this has on our attempt to create a democratic community. Does my engagement, or lack thereof, carry over to the students in the course? Do they see my lack of involvement as passivity or they recognize my intention of stepping aside to let them shape the direction of the course? I suppose I could have been more transparent about my choices, but those conversations would have added to the already packed schedule of the first few classes.

When the timer sounds marking the end of this activity, I instruct the students on how to proceed. “I’m going to collect the sheets of butcher paper and hang them on the wall at the front of the class. I would like you to take out a sheet of paper and list the topics you would like to

work on, in order of your preference. I will collect your lists and assign each of you to a topic. While I'm working on that, I would like you to work in small groups to talk about how we might demonstrate what we've learned this semester. In other words, what type of assessments should we use?"

"What did the students do last year?" asks Michael. "It seems like that would be a good place to start. Was there anything they particularly liked or didn't like?"

"That's a good idea," I say. "Last year's class decided to do student-led classes each week, so the first assessment focused on their lesson planning and delivery. They did a lot of reading in preparation for those lessons, most of which wasn't ultimately assigned to the class, so they made the second assignment an annotated bibliography. The final assignment was a reflection paper based on their experience in the course."

"So, we should be aiming for three assignments?" asked Lisa.

"Three is pretty traditional for a graduate level class, though I think you could certainly make the case for more or less, depending on the requirements for each assignment." I say. "Go ahead and start talking about it at your table, and we'll regroup in 15 minutes to share our ideas."

The students all begin talking at once, eager to share their ideas with one another. I collect the students' preferences and spread them out on the table before me. The first thing I notice is that only one student listed the assessment question as either a first or a second choice. This is surprising, given the earlier interest in the topic. Perhaps their group discussions about assessment were not fruitful, or maybe they just find the other three topics more engaging. Either way, it occurs to me that we could skip this topic all together. That would certainly make *me* happy; I dread the weeks in which I have to discuss assessment in my other courses, and I would love to avoid it in this class, if possible.

I decide to leave the question about assessment out of the course plan for now and see how the groups align with only three topics. In the end, the groups were almost uniformly divided, with only one topic over represented. Unfortunately, in order to ensure equal representation across all topics, not everyone will get their first choice. Based on our interactions thus far, I have developed opinions about which students have more forceful personalities and which students are willing to let others take the lead. I try to balance each group with a diverse mix of personality types, and finalize the groups just as the timer sounds.

“A couple of things before we talk about the assignments this term,” I begin. “According to your preferences, it looks like there is not much interest in the question about assessment. Only one person ranked it higher than third, and most of you ranked it last. Are you willing to skip that topic all together and focus on the other three?”

After a moment of thought, students begin to nod their heads. “Would anyone be heartbroken if we didn’t spend time talking about assessment?” I ask. “If so, let’s talk about it.”

“Well, it’s not like the topic is forbidden, right?” says Lisa. “Can’t it be woven into the other three topics?”

“We could definitely do that,” I say, happy to find a compromise. “So, we’ll reduce the number of topics to three, but somehow address the notion of assessment within each topic. Is everyone comfortable with that?”

There was widespread agreement, so I read the list of names assigned to each of the other three topics. “I tried to keep the groups balanced while ensuring that everyone got either their first or second choice. I think it worked out pretty well. Is there anyone who is adamantly opposed to the group they’ve been assigned?”

Everyone seems pleased with the topic they were given, so I push forward. “All right then, let’s talk about the assignments you’ve developed. Who wants to go first?”

“Based on our earlier discussions about the topics, it seems like we’re going to go with student-led classes,” says Michael. “So our group thought it would be a good idea to stick with last year’s plan about the lesson planning and delivery counting as one of the assignments.”

“Us too,” says Amanda. “We also liked the idea of an annotated bibliography.”

“Yes, we’re with you on both,” says Ryan.

“That was easy, we picked those as well,” Eric adds.

“Wow,” I say, “that *was* easy. What about the third assignment, are you also on board with a reflection about the course?”

“Not really,” says Eric, “we couldn’t really come to a decision on that one. We’re pretty tired of writing reflections though. We do that in every class.”

“Our group talked about doing something to help us with our research papers,” Lisa says. “We weren’t sure what that would be. Maybe an outline or something? None of us are very far along in the process, so we would like an assignment that would get us moving in the right direction.”

“I think a research proposal or even just a detailed description of what you’re thinking about would be beneficial,” I say. “Though I think it would need to be more than just an outline if we’re going to count it as a course assignment.”

“We weren’t entirely opposed to the idea of a reflection paper,” says Amanda, “but we talked about making it more of a reflection of our pedagogical beliefs at this point in our careers, not just about this class.”

“Like a pedagogical creed?” I ask.

“I don’t know,” says Amanda, “we’ve already done a pedagogical creed for another class, so not that exactly. We were thinking it could be written more like a journal entry, but more formal. It sounded better in our group discussion, somebody help me out here.”

“I get what you’re saying,” says Michael. “I like that idea. It would be good for me since I’m just starting out. Maybe I can use it as the foundation for my research paper later on, but so far I have no idea what I’m going to be researching, so I wouldn’t even know where to begin with the other idea.”

“What if we left this assignment open-ended?” I ask. “It could be an individual project that you devise over the course of the semester. Maybe you’ll want to pursue a new idea that arises from our discussions. I guess we don’t have to decide right this instant.”

“How would we know what the requirements are in terms of length or formatting?” asks Eric.

“You are all graduate students,” I respond. “I trust your judgment. You know that this project will account for a third of your grade in the course. I believe in your ability to determine what is appropriate.”

The students are quiet as they take in this information. I let the silence hang as they think about the possibilities. “So are we comfortable adding this as the third assignment?” Students begin to nod, though I sense some uncertainty from many in the room. “I’m happy to talk with you individually to clarify any questions or help you think of a project. I’m also happy to let you tackle it on your own, whatever you need to be successful.” This seems to mollify those who were on the fence.

“Just in time!” I say as I check the time. “I can’t believe we got all that done in one meeting. I will lead class next week as an introduction to the topics we’re going to discuss. In

two weeks, we'll start exploring the first question – what is the purpose of social studies education? Based on the number of weeks remaining in the semester, we will have three weeks for each topic, followed by a wrap-up class at the end of the term. Thanks for all your hard work tonight. See you next week!”

I begin straightening the room as the students pack up and file through the door. I have mixed emotions my level of participation and influence thus far in the course. My role in tonight's class seemed to vary between two extremes: I was either at the helm, issuing instructions and directing the flow of events, or I was completely absent, leaving the students to work without my input. Students worked publicly to develop the topics that would be discussed and the assessments that would be assigned. Yet, my decisions about how much time allotted to each topic and which students would be assigned to each group, were made in private. Though my objective was to develop a course co-constructed by teacher-student and students-teacher, yet there was very little *cooperative* development in tonight's class.

An uncomfortable question occurs to me as I begin to erase my notes from the board: Were the pedagogical choices I made in tonight's class directive or manipulative? Brubaker (2009) used the phrase *strategic manipulation* in his research on a teacher educator's use of negotiated curriculum. He argued that the instructor sought to guide students to predetermined conclusions, and often did so without notice. I wonder if that is what I did in tonight's class. I certainly directed them in the decision to drop the topic of assessment and in the choice of course assessments. Yet, directing students to new understandings is part of my responsibility as an educator.

Freire (2004) clarified the difference between education that is directive and education that is manipulative. He wrote that all educational practice is directive; yet, when the instructor's

direction “interferes with the creative, formulative, investigative capacity of the educand, then the necessary directivity is transformed into manipulation” (p. 66). In my traditional, instructor-designed courses, I follow a student-centered approach that begins with the students’ interests and experiences (Dewey, 1916/1997). Though each lesson starts with a destination in mind and I guide my students toward that end, I allow my students the space to construct their own understandings of the various issues we examine. I am open about the fact that I structure the curriculum with a pedagogical agenda – that of engaged democratic citizenship. Students are free to develop their own understandings about the topics we discuss, but I ultimately frame the discussion and legitimize the issues we examine through their inclusion in the curriculum.

In this course, students chose the topics and determined the course direction. I was open about the fact that the types of questions I asked shaped their discussion, even though we didn’t expand on that topic as much as I would have liked. Other decisions that shaped the direction of the course were made without student input – or even student’s knowledge that a decision was being made. I determined that the topics were deserving of equal time and I ultimately determined which students would work on each topic. Do these decisions amount to the *strategic manipulation* of the course? The word *manipulation* implies a sense of deviousness that is not warranted, but I’m not sure how else I would describe my direction of the course.

Despite these concerns, I am happy with the list of topics the students have designed, and eager to see how the lessons take shape over the coming weeks. I will attempt to adopt a more consistent approach to being a teacher-student in the weeks to come. I also hope that as students begin leading the courses, I will be able to cultivate stronger relationships with those enrolled in the course and become more connected to the classroom community that has begun to develop. I turn off the lights and leave the classroom, looking forward to the rest of the semester.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

Vignette – (R)evolutionary Thinking

Hearing a quiet knock, I look up from my computer to see Lisa and Amanda standing in the doorway to my office. “Are you busy?” Amanda asks. I had just finished the last of my grading and I was about to walk downstairs for a celebratory cup of coffee. “I was thinking about going to Starbucks,” I say. “Would you two like to join me?”

“Actually,” Lisa says, “We were hoping to pick up our final papers, if they are ready.”

“Sure,” I respond, flipping through the stack of papers on my desk. “I just finished them, good timing! Are you finished with all your coursework or do you still have projects to work on?”

“We are finished,” Lisa says triumphantly. “What a long semester!”

“And we were going for coffee too,” Amanda adds, “So we’d be happy to join you if you’re ready to go now.”

As I move toward the door, I pick up my notebook off the corner of my desk, thinking this would be a great time to ask about their thoughts concerning the course. By the end of the semester, most of the students seemed pleased with the outcome, but I don’t have the same feeling of success that followed last year’s course. I been trying to convince myself that it is a simple a matter of repetition (classes are never are exciting the second time around), but I can’t shake the feeling that there was something missing this semester.

We arrive to find the coffee shop surprisingly empty. With no line at the counter, we quickly order and take a table by the window. Normally every table is full and there are small groups hovering near each table hoping to grab seats as soon as they are available. Today, only about a third of the tables are taken. “This is odd,” I say. “Where is everyone?”

“It’s a weird time of year,” says Lisa. “The university classes are over, but the public schools are still in session. Most people who aren’t teaching have already left for winter break, and the people who are teaching full time are still in class.”

“Well, it’s not everyday you get a window seat. It’s the little things, right?” I say, smiling. “I’m curious to know what you both thought about the class. How was the process of co-construction? Was it as you expected or were you surprised about the process?”

My questions were greeted with a few seconds of silence – just long enough to make me a little uncomfortable. “Uh oh,” I say, “Maybe I don’t want to hear the answer.” They both laugh. “It’s not that,” Amanda says, “It’s just a lot to think about. Where to begin?”

“Yeah,” Lisa says, “I really liked the class, and I was glad we got to try a new approach. But you asked about the process of co-construction, and that was really hard – a lot harder than I expected.”

“Why was that?” I ask. “Did your group disagree about what you should discuss?”

“Yes and no,” she says. “We all wanted to talk about curriculum, but we had a really difficult time agreeing on what that meant. We spent a lot of time talking past one another. It was impossible to come to a consensus because we weren’t even talking about the same thing. After a while it became clear that some people defined curriculum very strictly, seeing it only in relation to the topics we introduce in our lessons plans. Others had a broader definition that included *everything* in the curriculum, from the classroom seating arrangement to the teacher’s interactions with her students.”

“It’s such a big topic,” she continues. “Our views about curriculum are bound up in our experiences with teaching and learning. Almost everything we do in the classroom is informed through that lens. My group included people who had taught in both formal and informal

settings, some had worked with children and others only with adults, most worked in the United States but some worked in other countries. Given our varied experiences, it was no wonder we had such different thoughts about how to define curriculum.”

“That sounds like it would be a great conversation,” I say. “Did you consider using that conversation as your lesson? ‘How should we define curriculum?’ That is an excellent essential question.”

“Maybe if we had an entire course just devoted to curriculum,” Lisa says, “but we only had three weeks. Not to mention the fact that we only had two weeks to plan our lessons, and we needed to reach a decision that all four members of our group were happy with. At the end of the day, we just moved forward and tried to develop lessons that we could plan and deliver within the time constraints.”

“Were those conversations uncomfortable?” I ask.

“Not uncomfortable,” Lisa says, “just frustrating. We knew that we needed to get things done because part of our grade was based on our presentations. Honestly, we just wanted to get it finished so we wouldn’t have to worry about it anymore.”

“Interesting,” I say. “I thought you were going to say that there were heated arguments and people got upset with one another.”

“I wish!” Amanda says, surprising me with her interjection. “I mean, if we’re trying to have dialogue, *real dialogue*, it’s going to be uncomfortable at first, right? Our class discussions were never uncomfortable, which means we were never really being challenged. In our small group it was a different story – we definitely challenged one another. It took a while to get to that point, but we got there.”

“What were those discussions like?” I ask.

“Well, our group was supposed to talk about teaching for social justice. Like Lisa’s group though, we all had very different ideas about what that meant.”

“Were you able to reach a compromise?” I ask.

“Yes, but it took time. We were lucky in that we didn’t have to present our lessons until the very end of the semester. We had about seven weeks to prepare and we met every single week – for *hours*.” She emphasized the last word for effect and made a face showing her exhaustion.

“It sounds like you found that frustrating.” I say.

“No, it honestly wasn’t,” Amanda says. “I mean, don’t get me wrong, there were times when I had other things I needed to be working on, so that part was pretty stressful. But our group conversations were amazing. We came from very different backgrounds and understood social justice education in completely different ways. I learned so much from my fellow group members. We started in different places, but we ended up with a common topic to which each of us could add our unique viewpoints and experiences.”

“Can you say more about that? How did you reach consensus about what you were going to talk about?” I ask.

“We just worked it out over time. Lots of talking, arguing, laughing, thinking – eventually we just got to where we needed to be. But it took time to build those relationships. It took time before we trusted one another enough to open up and say what we were really feeling, especially with regard to the topic of social justice which was so personal to all of us.”

“Trust,” Lisa says, “that’s what our group was missing. I don’t mean to say that we *distrusted* one another, only that we never actually built trusting relationships. There wasn’t enough time.”

“I think I got a sense of that during the semester, but I couldn’t pinpoint exactly what I was feeling.” I say. “It was as if we were going through the motions of discourse without actually *doing* it. Does that make sense?”

“Yes,” Amanda says. “It was particularly evident in our in-class discussions when we had to decide what topics we were going to discuss, what assignments we were going to do, etcetera. If we were going to talk about those things, we should have first reached some kind of consensus about what knowledge is and how we co-construct it. That’s another deeply held, personal belief. It takes time for people to feel comfortable being honest, and once they are honest it takes even more time for them to reach consensus. It just can’t be done in an hour.”

“An hour is generous,” I say, “I think I only allotted about 30 minutes for those activities.”

“Yeah, but it was still a step in the right direction,” Lisa says. “I mean, we may not have fully addressed each of the topics we were assigned, but I was happy with the overall outcome. At least we had a say in the direction of the course instead of it just being whatever you planned for us to do. I actually felt like I had some ownership of the curriculum. Maybe we just needed a year-long course instead of only a semester.”

“That’s a good point,” Amanda says. “Our group built really strong relationships over our seven weeks of preparation, but it would have been even better had we been given more time. Still, those relationships were real and I think our group will stay in touch going forward. I can see us collaborating on other projects and continuing to support one another throughout our studies.”

“That’s amazing. What a great way to end a semester. I wish everyone could have had the same experience.” I say.

Lisa looks thoughtful. “I’m not sure that’s possible,” she says. “Not everyone is ready for that kind of engagement – at least not in a classroom setting. People have to come to it in their own time; you can’t force it to happen. There were individuals in my group who just weren’t interested in collaborating, not meaningfully anyway. I mentioned earlier that we just wanted to get it done, and I think the lack of personal relationships was a major reason why.”

“Our group was incredibly open from the beginning,” Amanda says. “We were all genuinely interested in one another’s point of view and truly wanted to understand our differences. I’m not sure how much time played into that, or how much it was just the make up of our particular group. Either way, I’m glad it worked out the way it did.”

“I wish we would’ve had more conversations like this with the class as a whole,” I say. “I read your individual reflection papers, and several of you made similar comments, but we never had the opportunity to reflect on the process of co-construction itself and what that meant for our education. It was almost as if we were too busy *doing* it to take time to *think* about it. But, to echo the points you’ve both made, when would that have fit into the schedule? Maybe we should have had fewer topics but spent more time on each one. Though that would mean fewer people have a chance to address the topics that they are interested in. And, can I limit the number of topics without exerting too much control over the direction of the class?”

I realize that I’m having a conversation with my self and begin to laugh. “It’s so hard! This is the dialogue that was going through my head all semester long!”

“I noticed that,” Lisa says. “There were times you seemed to zone out, like you were lost in thought or something. I thought maybe you were bored since you weren’t getting to teach the class.”

“Not at all!” I exclaim. “I love being a part of this class. I’m sorry that you thought I was bored, that certainly wasn’t the case.”

“It was only a couple times,” she says. “I wasn’t really concerned, there were a few times I was bored too.” Though her tone implies that she is kidding, I can tell there is some truth behind the humor. This was a very different reaction from last year’s students who seemed fully engaged with every lesson. What made this semester different? Why was last year’s class so much more positive about the outcome of the course?

“In all seriousness, I really appreciate the feedback from both of you,” I say. I notice we have all finished our coffee so I decide to bring the conversation to a close. We say our goodbyes and I walk back upstairs to my office. On the way, I think about everything I learned in my conversation with Lisa and Amanda. I realize how much I missed those conversations over the course of the semester. In my attempt to let the students direct the course, I was often disengaged or even lost in thought as the classroom community was coming together.

Dewey (1910/2005) wrote, “There is such a thing as too much thinking, as when action is paralyzed by the multiplicity of views suggested by a situation” (p. 31). I found myself in this situation several times throughout the semester. Ironically, I was often lost in thought about how to create a space for dialogue instead of actually *participating* in dialogue. I remained on the periphery while the students engaged in the co-construction of the curriculum. Without a teacher to help them “create the critical capacity to consider and participate in the direction and dreams of education” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 379), they struggled to speak the same pedagogical language. As a result, the process of seeing across difference took much longer to develop, and in some cases did not develop at all.

I reach my office and close the door behind me, hoping for some uninterrupted time to reflect on this conversation and on the semester as a whole. I open my notebook and begin to write. The act of putting pen to paper always seems to help me process my thoughts, and this time is no different. I settle in and begin to write about how my understanding of critical pedagogy has evolved across the previous two years as a social studies teacher educator.

Discussion of Years One and Two

The relationships that developed (or failed to develop) in the most recent co-constructed course were very different from those of the first. When I think back to my conversation with Sarah, Marcus, and Jack following last year's course, I remember the sense of responsibility they felt to the other students enrolled in the course. Sarah said that she read everything that was assigned in order to support the other students' presentations. Jack said, "This never really felt like *Scott's* class, it felt like *our* class." Then, as now, I took his comment as proof that we had successfully created a pedagogical community.

This sentiment was absent in my discussion with Lisa and Amanda. Lisa spoke of the difficulties her group had in understanding one another. Rather than attempting to work through their differences, they chose to simply move past issues of confusion and disagreement. Amanda's experiences were more positive, but she admitted to feelings of boredom during the whole-class discussions, and she did not appear to be fully invested in the success of her classmates. Though both Lisa and Amanda had positive things to say about the course, it was clear that neither student had the transformative experience described by Sarah, Marcus, and Jack.

Though I did not assume the two courses would progress in an identical fashion, I did expect similarities in the dialogic relationships that developed through the co-construction of the

curriculum. Students in first course seemed to easily communicate with one another from our first meeting. They built a pedagogical community that grew stronger every week, and I expected the same from students in the second class.

Perhaps I hoped to create a new status quo, proving Dewey's (1902) point that I missed my chains once that were are gone. I subconsciously accepted a binary understanding of curriculum – as if all instructor-designed courses would proceed in one fashion and all co-constructed courses would proceed in another. In one short semester, my challenge to the traditional process of teacher education had become a new normative criterion.

I felt a sense of uncertainty when the two co-constructed courses took different paths. Though there was a sense of trust in the second co-constructed course, it was mostly found within the small groups formed to explore each topic. The class as a whole never formed the trusting relationships demonstrated in the first semester.

The concept of trust and its connection to dialogue is central to understanding the differences between the two semesters. It was Amanda's contention that the open dialogue within her group came only after they began to trust one another. Lisa agreed, noting that her group never came to trust one another and therefore never entered into true dialogue. Though they recognized the relationship between the two concepts, they misinterpreted the causal relationship. Trust does not lead to dialogue; dialogue leads to trust. Freire (1970/2005) explained:

Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence. It would be a contradiction in terms if dialogue – loving, humble, and full of faith – did not produce this climate of mutual trust, which leads the dialoguers into even closer partnership in the

naming of the world... Whereas faith in humankind is an *a priori* requirement for dialogue, trust is established by dialogue. (p. 91)

Given this understanding, what created the space for dialogue in the first co-constructed course? What was missing in the second course? Why were we unable to replicate the pedagogical community of the previous semester?

Though it is impossible to identify a single factor responsible for the varied outcomes in each semester, I can reflect on my own choices and examine the ways in which they influenced the direction of two courses. During the first co-constructed course, I was an active co-participant in each activity. I made every effort to be both a teacher and a student, to position myself in the heart of every discussion, to have a voice in every decision. In the second course, I left the students to work through issues on their own; fearful that any attempt to build community would serve only to influence the direction of the course and undermine the spirit of equality I hoped to foster.

According to Foucault, all domination is power, but not all power is domination (Hoy, 2004). Freire agreed with this point, and recognized that “one should not try to reduce everything that happens, even drinking a cup of coffee, to a class struggle” (Escobar et al., 1994, p. 38). Herein lies the challenge I faced as a teacher-student. I recognized that challenges to the situation of power were possible, but I struggled to recognize when my students and I were challenging oppressive systems of power within the educational setting, and when we were simply drinking a cup of coffee.

In the first co-constructed course, I adopted the same approach that I take in traditionally designed courses. When the students divided into small groups to brainstorm ideas or work through an issue, I joined in their discussions. I challenged students’ ideas concerning the

practice of teaching and suggested alternatives to their understandings. These interactions were familiar and comfortable, but each question imposed direction on what was supposed to be a co-constructed social studies teacher education course.

I understood that a teacher-student was more than simply a facilitator (Freire & Macedo, 1995), but I also recognized that my voice carried more weight than those enrolled in the course as students-teachers. Even though the class ultimately chose a blend of the curricular suggestions I offered, the final product was clearly a result of my influence as an instructor. As the semester came to a close, I felt we had taken steps toward the creation of a class between teacher-student and students-teachers, but were far from realizing the dialogic classroom Freire had envisioned.

As we began to co-construct the curriculum for the second course, I chose not to participate in the students' discussion groups and withdrew even further from the traditional role of instructor. I occasionally spoke with students to provide instruction or to clarify a point of confusion, but I tried to stay out of their conversations concerning which topics to address, how to deliver instruction, and how to assess their understandings. Though my goal was to avoid unduly influencing the direction of the course, my absence inadvertently inhibited the development of relationships between the students.

Freire (1970/2005) believed that if the climate of trust fails to develop, it is because the preconditions for open dialogue were lacking. "False love, false humility, and feeble faith in others cannot create trust" (p. 91). Freire's words are painful to read. Is my pedagogy grounded on such weak foundations? With regard to false love and false humility, I say no. My pedagogy emerges from my love for my students and I am humbled by the awesome responsibility that accompanies the title of *Teacher*. With regard to having a feeble faith in others, I must,

unfortunately, say yes. My fears about unduly influencing the direction of the course failed to account for my students' power in the process and ultimately discounted their agency.

Foucault believed that "knowing is not only inseparable from our practices generally; it is inseparable from the norms and doings and sayings those practices consist in" (May, 2006, p. 20). Even as I sought to challenge the asymmetrical power relations between teacher and students, the classroom context shaped my understandings of power. My fears of unduly influencing the class emerged from the belief that the teacher has power and the students do not; a belief reified by the pedagogical norms that emerge through the grammar of schooling (Tyack & Tobin, 1994).

Yet, both power and resistance, according to Foucault (1997a), are always in existence. The struggle is not the same in all situations, the power relationships are not symmetrical, but "the continuation of this situation can influence the behavior or nonbehaviour of the other... so we are not trapped" (p. 167). My concerns about exerting too much control over the direction of the course often failed to take this understanding into account. I came to see power as something I held as an instructor; something my students experienced only as an oppressive force. But according to Foucault, power does not have to be an "unbearable tyranny" (Bess, 1988, p. 12), it can be positive a relation where one person guides the action of another.

The challenge, according to Foucault (1997c), is "knowing how to avoid the kind of domination effects where a kid is subjected to the arbitrary and unnecessary authority of a teacher, or a student put under the thumb of a professor who abuses his authority" (p. 299). For Freire (1970/2005), this challenge arises when "the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of

the students” (p. 73). In both my attempts at co-constructing a social studies teacher education course, I struggled to balance my professional authority with my students’ freedom.

Pedagogical Implications

The line between teacher-student and students-teachers is not drawn once and never revisited. In each new situation, with each new question that arises, we (re)position ourselves within the situation of power. That (re)positioning is not an easy process. Though, as Amanda explained in the opening vignette of this chapter, “if we’re trying to have dialogue, *real dialogue*, it’s going to be uncomfortable at first, right?”

In my experience as a teacher-student, the discomfort emerged from questions concerning the origins of my authority. I worried that I was acting as an authoritarian educator – one who makes “their own objectives and dreams the directives that they give to learners in their educational practice” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 378). Freire cautioned that the authoritarian teacher often falls pray to a laissez-faire practice of education under the pretext of facilitating. The radical educator, according to Freire, “has to be an active presence in educational practice” (p. 379). That presence carries an authority that resides not in the teacher’s institutionalized power, but in the value of knowledge itself (Irwin, 2012).

At the heart of Freire’s philosophy is the understanding that “knowledge grows from and is a reflection of social experience” (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. xvi). When we come together as a community of educators to discuss challenges, issues, and new frontiers in social studies teacher education, we share a social experience that produces knowledge through our dialogue. Dialogue is employed, not as a tactic to engage students, but as a part of the very process of knowing (Freire, 1970/2005). My authority as a teacher-student emerges from the value of this

knowledge. This is not an oppressive authority – it cannot be – for it furthers the development of critical consciousness for all involved.

I feared the direction I imposed during my first attempt at curricular co-construction, especially in regard to challenging students’ understandings about the goals and purposes of social studies education. Yet, it served as the impetus for the creation of knowledge through dialogue. The curriculum in the second course emerged from the students’ interests and experiences, just as it did in the first; but my hesitancy to problematize their ideas failed to push them beyond their current reading of the world. The students did not (re)examine their ideas through a critical lens, nor did they challenge their pedagogical understandings.

Over two years, my understanding of what it is to be a critical teacher educator has evolved. My responsibility as a teacher-student is not to design the perfect curriculum and force it upon my students. As Freire (1970/2005) wrote, “to consider oneself the proprietor of revolutionary wisdom – which must be given to (or imposed upon) the people – is to retain the old ways” (p. 60-61). Yet, I must also avoid falling into the trap of facilitation, stifling my challenges to students’ ideas and allowing them to remain content with their current reading of the world.

Critical pedagogy has been criticized as an overly abstract and utopian pursuit that “does not necessarily sustain the daily workings of the education its supporters advocate” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 297). Proponents contend that the complexity of the critical approach is necessary to challenge dominant narratives, some going as far to label calls for clarity “yet another mechanism to dismiss the complexity of theoretical issues, particularly if these theoretical constructs interrogate the prevailing dominant ideology” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 393).

Though I recognize the need for complex ideas to challenge complex issues, I also understand and appreciate the value of pedagogical theories that inform classroom practice.

As my understanding of critical pedagogy evolves, I am learning to enact an emancipatory curriculum that can “engage student experience in a way that neither unqualifiedly endorses nor delegitimizes it” (Giroux, 2009, p. 453). The curriculum we co-construct is grounded in the students’ educational histories and pedagogical experiences. It explores the issues and challenges they face in their classrooms, but that cannot be the point at which the curriculum ends. As the teacher-student, my responsibility is to challenge the students-teachers’ reading of the world. This is not an act of oppression, but a way to create knowledge through dialogue.

The relationship between teacher-student and students-teachers is power-laden, as are all relationships. Yet, power is not always oppressive; it has the potential to result in positive outcomes (Bess, 1988). If I seek to be the executor of change, absent my students’ voices and experience, then I rely solely on the authority of my position in the institution. If I work alongside my students, listening to and challenging their pedagogical understandings, then I draw on the authority that lies in the value of knowledge itself – knowledge we have co-constructed through dialogue.

I am learning to embrace Freire’s vision of teacher-student working alongside students-teachers, not as a theory or an ideal, but as a lived practice. Though I meet resistance from the relations of power I seek to challenge, I remain open to the emancipatory possibilities of the critical approach. I continue to inhabit the space between my commitment to Freirean critical pedagogy and my recognition of Foucauldian power relations.

The challenges I encounter open a space for dialogue through which both students and teacher can develop their critical consciousness. This approach to critical pedagogy is not abstract, but lived; it is a vision, not of utopia, but of possibility. Though we are still bound up in Foucauldian relations of power, open dialogue and a spirit of profound trust allow us to imagine alternatives to our current reading of the world.

Autoethnography as Cultivation of Self

In chapter three, I defined autoethnography as both a method and a text. As a method, autoethnography challenges traditional assumptions of empirical authority and subjectivity (Burdell & Swadener, 1999), and blends the roles of researcher and researched (Erickson, 2011). As a text, autoethnography serves to democratize educational discourse by repositioning the reader as a coparticipant in dialogue rather than a passive receiver of knowledge (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

The autoethnographic research I conducted for this study sought to connect my individual experiences as a teacher-student to the larger context in which these two courses took place (Leavy, 2013). As I facilitated the courses, I practiced the technique of self-introspection, a “conscious awareness of awareness or self-examination” (Ellis, 1991, p. 23). This approach was a method of self-cultivation, a tradition practiced by a long history of educators including Plato, Michel de Montaigne, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Paulo Freire’s (1970/2005) attention to his own critical consciousness was a form of self-cultivation, as were Michel Foucault’s (1994) studies on self-writing. As I studied these scholars’ visions of education, power, and control, I reflected upon my lived experience in the classroom through the lens of my theoretical framework and practiced a form of self-cultivation as an educator.

The word *cultivate* has at least two distinct meanings. One could cultivate the soil, for example, in preparation for planting crops; or, one could cultivate the mind, improving and refining one's thinking through labor and effort. While these definitions are certainly related, they suggest two different areas of attention. The former describes the creation of a fertile space from which growth is possible, whereas the latter represents an attention to the soul, a focus not on the development of others, but on the improvement of self.

In the sections that follow I demonstrate how the process of conducting autoethnographic research addressed both aspects of cultivation. I begin with an analysis of the rich history of thinkers who have improved their own minds through labor and effort. I then discuss the ways in which autoethnographic research prepares a space from which students can grow through the co-construction of knowledge. The following sections demonstrate that autoethnography is both a preparation for growth as an educator and a process of developing critical consciousness.

Drinking the humors of philosophers, artists, and saints.

Though autoethnography is an emerging methodological approach (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), its inward/outward focus draws on a long tradition of scholars who have written about the cultivation of self. Foucault (1997b) wrote that the precept of *care of the self* was “implicit in all Greek and Roman culture and has been explicit since Plato's *Alcibiades I*” (p. 226), wherein Socrates becomes Alcibiades' mentor and introduces the value of self-cultivation. One typically thinks of teachers as those who instruct others, but they too must be taught. Like Alcibiades, teachers must learn from their mentors, critically reflecting upon the ideas to which they are exposed.

Foucault “situates his own ‘genealogies’ of psychiatry, the prison, and sexuality in a Nietzschean tradition” (Leiter, 2002, p. 2). Foucault wrote that Nietzsche was a revelation, quite

different from what he had previously been taught. Through Nietzsche, Foucault became a stranger to his life, his profession, and his country (Martin, 1988). “We have to be lifted up,” Nietzsche wrote, “and who are those who lift us up? They are those true *human beings, those no-longer-animals, the philosophers, artists, and saints*” (Nietzsche, 1995, p. 211). Nietzsche was “lifted up” by two teachers of his own: Arthur Schopenhauer and Michel de Montaigne.

For Montaigne, the study of philosophy is an important exercise in the cultivation of self. Yet, whether one is studying Aristotle, the Stoics or the Epicureans, Xenophon or Plato, Montaigne warned that the ideas studied must be assimilated into one’s being. “Spewing up food exactly as you have swallowed it,” Montaigne (2004) wrote, “is evidence of a failure to digest and assimilate it” (p. 43). True education is more than memorizing the ideas of these philosophers; it is actually incorporating the concepts into one’s being.

Montaigne believed that as one studies the writings of philosophers, she “should not be learning their precepts but drinking in their humors” (p. 44). In these words, I read Freire’s critique of the banking model of education. To develop critical consciousness, the teacher cannot merely copy great minds; she must cultivate her self through drinking the humors of philosophers, artists, and saints. Though one seeks to learn from and with others, the development of critical consciousness also demands an inward focus – “consciousness as consciousness *of* consciousness” (Freire, 1970/2005, p. 79).

Freire’s own critical consciousness was developed through his studies of an eclectic array of philosophers, artists, and saints. His ideas were influenced by the traditional teachings of Catholicism, the Liberation Theology movement, and the writings of Karl Marx, among others (Irwin, 2012). Freire strived to be self-critical and remain open to the evolution of his ideas, an approach similar to “the Platonic wellsprings of *elenchus* or ‘refutation,’ constantly putting one’s

own position under interrogation” (p. 8). The autoethnographic research I conducted in this study served as a method of self-cultivation as an educator. I placed my pedagogical positions under constant interrogation through the lens of my theoretical framework, using the writings of the philosophers cited therein to become conscious of consciousness.

Autoethnographic research is a form of self-cultivation. As I re/positioned myself as teacher-student within the co-constructed classroom, I was mentored by the philosophers, artists, and saints discussed throughout this dissertation. I cultivated my mind through labor and effort, and developed my critical consciousness as I struggled with the promise of Freirean critical pedagogy and the limitations of Foucauldian relations of power. My understandings of critical pedagogy evolved as I enacted those ideals within the context of a social studies teacher education course.

Autoethnography is research that seeks to understand the self, but it also seeks to understand the other (Ellis, 2002). Self-cultivation also seeks both individual and social ends. Drinking the humors of philosophers, artists, and saints, is but one part of a teacher’s self-cultivation; a teacher also cultivates the soil so that students can grow and flourish. In the section that follows, I will explain the ways in which a teacher guides her students’ development and helps them develop their own critical consciousness.

Cultivation of self as cultivation of students.

Improving the self, Nietzsche (1995) wrote, is “at first, of course, only for oneself; but through oneself, ultimately for all” (p. 181). Through her pedagogy, the teacher provides the tools with which students “till the soil.” Educational leaders cannot impose their knowledge on their students, but they can open a space for the development of critical consciousness through dialogue (Freire, 1970/2005). The question of what to teach is difficult, as one must be wary of

teaching from tradition alone. Nietzsche (1995) warned about “how common it is for some collection of eccentrics and antiquated devices to be called a college-preparatory school and thought good” (p. 177). Instead, the teacher must begin with the students’ reading of the world, in order to get beyond it (Freire, 2004).

Like Freire, Nietzsche (1995) argued that education is liberation, calling it the “removal of all weeds, rubble, and vermin that seek to harm the plant’s delicate shoots” (p. 175). While this approach leads to fertile, cultivated soil, the process of pulling weeds and eradicating vermin can be painful. Yet, the teacher has a sense of what is good for the child in the long term, ignoring the student’s pain and knowing that “to be absolutely certain of making a real man of him, one must not spare his youth and must frequently flout the laws of medicine” (Montaigne, 2004, p. 46). Challenging a students’ current reading of the world is painful, but it is not an imposition. Freire (2004) argued that we ought not “flutter spellbound around the knowledge of the educands like moths around a lamp bulb” (p. 58). The teacher serves as a model for the students’ cultivation, she creates a space for the creation of knowledge through dialogue.

Yet, the teacher herself cannot be the focus of the students learning. Montaigne (2004) called this a perversion: “instead of learning about others we labor only to teach them about ourselves and are more concerned to sell our own wares than to purchase new ones” (p. 47). Instead, the teacher should strive for her students to become like bees capable of making their own honey, “which is entirely theirs and no longer thyme or marjoram” (p. 45). She does this by allowing the student to stand on his own, prepared to continue developing his critical consciousness in his own way.

Freire (2004) believed that students must ultimately assume responsibility for their own self-cultivation, “taking themselves as cognizing subjects, and not as an object upon which the

discourse of the educator impinges” (p. 37). He called this “the great political importance of the teaching act” and believed that creating this space for students is what “distinguishes a progressive educator from his or her reactionary colleague” (p. 37). The autoethnographic research I conducted in this dissertation showed me the importance of dialogue in my teacher education courses. It helped me understand the process of critical pedagogy as a process of creating relationships from which dialogue and trust can emerge.

As I consider future opportunities for research, I envision fostering a space for dialogue between teacher-student and students-teacher through the research process. Student voices are present throughout this dissertation and in my understanding of what it means to construct knowledge, but I would like them to have the opportunity use autoethnographic methods in an exploration of their own pedagogical understandings. I am curious about the extent to which they are willing to work alongside their own students in the development of curriculum and the construction of knowledge. Future studies will explore the ways in which students-teachers choose to challenge (or choose not to challenge) the system they are preparing to inhabit.

Though my students played a role in the production of this text through their participation in the reflexive, dyadic interviews described in chapter three, they were not a part of the writing process. In future studies, I will seek to co-author the research findings with the students enrolled in the course. Together, we will co-construct the narrative of becoming an educator and explore the ways in which we make sense of power.

Conclusion

I would like to say something also about my beginnings – in which I still am, because I *always* am in the beginning, as you.

-- Paulo Freire

Freire's words about beginnings are a fitting conclusion to this research. After two years of working alongside my students to co-construct a social studies teacher education course, I am still very much in my beginnings as a teacher educator. I have come to see the process of becoming a critical teacher educator as both evolutionary and revolutionary. It is evolutionary in the sense that I can trace my genealogy of knowledge through my research, noting the influence of the philosophers, artists, and saints I encountered along the way. It is revolutionary in the sense that with each pedagogical decision, I (re)conceptualized my understandings of critical pedagogy.

My early attempts to create a space for educational dialogue were primarily concerned with process. I was concerned that my habits of calling on students, restating their points for the class, and asking transitional questions would influence the direction of the class and undermine the dialogic relationships I hoped to foster. I worried that my suggestions about possible avenues of exploration were too heavy handed and carried more weight than similar suggestions made by my students. I feared that my decision to assign readings that challenged students' ideas was, in fact, an act of pedagogical imposition.

In the beginning, I found it difficult to see beyond the micro level. I had trouble theorizing outside the realm of my personal pedagogical decisions in the course. As the year progressed, I began to consider broader questions about the course as a whole – particularly in terms of the educative value of co-constructing the curriculum. When the second semester began, I became less concerned about my actions in the course and more concerned about the structure of the course itself. I widened my lens even further to include broad questions about the educational discourse and the ways in which it contributed to (or detracted from) a shared dialogue between teacher-student and students-teachers.

I came to understand that the students did not enter the room as blank slates; they came with specific reading of the world that shaped their visions of teaching and learning. Yet, I worried that any attempt to challenge this reading of the world could be interpreted as an imposition of my beliefs about education. In an attempt to give students the freedom to make their own pedagogical decisions, I did not participate in the curricular dialogue. I failed to problematize students' viewpoints, to move them beyond their current understandings and develop their critical consciousness.

I learned that my role as a teacher is to help students communicate across their differences. I must challenge their reading of the world, not as an imposition, but as a step toward critical consciousness. My authority as teacher-student emerges from a place of profound love (Freire, 1970/2005); my position does not grant me this authority, it exists in the value of knowledge itself – knowledge that we create through dialogue. Freire wrote that the efforts of the critical educator “must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power... to achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relations with them” (p. 75). This is a vision of critical pedagogy that moves beyond its roots in Marxist orthodoxy and its challenge to economic and social oppression. The critical pedagogy enacted through dialogue between teacher-student and students-teachers is a means of developing critical consciousness. In future classes I will do more to create trusting relationships; I will engage with students in dialogue without fear of imposition. I will draw on the authority of the knowledge we create to challenge the students reading of the world and create a space for self-cultivation, both on the part of teacher-student and students-teachers.

This is not a utopic vision for classroom education. The context of higher education and the norms ingrained within the grammar of schooling (Tyack & Tobin, 1994) continue to shape

the pedagogical possibilities we can envision. Yet, as my understanding of critical pedagogy evolves, I see new avenues for making sense of power. I see promise in the ability of students-teachers and teachers-students to draw the relations of power out from the shadows and to co-construct a curriculum that challenges pedagogical norms.

When class begins next semester, the students may not feel that they are ready for the responsibility of co-constructing the curriculum. As teacher-student, I will be there to guide them through the challenge. In the end, students-teachers need “freedom and nothing but freedom, that same wonderful and dangerous element in which the Greek philosophers flourished” (Nietzsche, 1995, p. 241). The scholar must be free and brave. Though the teacher-student is a guide, “No one can build for you, the bridge upon which you alone must cross the stream of life” (p. 173). While Nietzsche’s imagery is profound, I prefer to not imagine students and teachers *crossing* this stream of life, instead I imagine them flowing inside of it.

Students and teachers are like stones pulled along by a stream of time and circumstance. They progress along this stream as Nature intended, though their path is not unchanging. Like the stone, they change course as they impact others travelling through the same stream. Their ideas are challenged as they come into contact with others in the stream. A stone carried by a river is reshaped in the process; it becomes, not deformed, but polished. Similarly, teacher-students and students-teachers are polished; their critical consciousness is cultivated through dialogue.

We are always in the beginning. The stone does not emerge from the stream at the point at which it has been polished; it remains in the stream, pulled along by the currents of nature. The same is true for teachers and students; they do not step outside the current of time to exist in perpetuity, ever static and unchanging. Both the stone and the critically conscious individual

continue to be polished, reformed time and again, becoming at once ever smaller as each layer is removed, but also ever larger as the stone becomes one with the stream and the individual develops her critical consciousness.

Nietzsche (1995) described this process as the creation of a saint, an individual “whose ego has entirely melted away and whose life of suffering is no longer – or almost no longer – felt individually, but only as the deepest feeling of equality, communion, and oneness with all living things” (p. 213-214). Though I cannot claim my ego has entirely melted away, and I do not portend to be on the path to sainthood, Nietzsche paints a picture of the educator I strive to become. This is not an end to my evolution as a teacher educator, nor it is an end to my efforts to reveal my own reality (Freire, 2007). These are my beginnings as a teacher educator – in which I still am, because I always am in the beginning, as you.

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