'The Right and Necessity to Examine Everything': Interpretation in a PLC and ELA Classroom

BY

KIERSTIN H. THOMPSON

B.A., Pennsylvania State University, 1998
M.A.T, University of Chicago, 1999

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction: Literacy, Language and Culture

in the Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Chicago, 2016

Chicago, Illinois

Defense Committee:

     William H. Teale, Chair
     Taffy Raphael
     James Gavelek
     Alfred Tatum
     Peter Smagorinsky, University of Georgia

To Zach,

We live for the flood.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Now if I were a teacher in this school…I would try to make each child know that

these things are the result of a criminal conspiracy to destroy him…I would suggest

to him that the popular culture—as represented, for example, on television and in

comic books and in movies—is based on fantasies created by very ill people, and he

must be aware that these are fantasies that have nothing to do with reality. I would

teach him that the press he reads is not as free as it says it is—and that he can do

something about that, too. I would try to make him know that just as American

history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful and more terrible than

anything anyone has ever said about it, so is the world larger, more daring, more

beautiful and more terrible, but principally larger—and that it belongs to him. I

would teach him that he doesn't have to be bound by the expediencies of any given

administration, any given policy, any given morality; that he has the right and the

necessity to examine everything.

In this excerpt from his "Talk to Teachers," James Baldwin (1963) insists that every child has the

"right and necessity to examine everything." In other words, the student has the right and

obligation to question, to criticize policies and practices that may be working against him/her. He

prefaces this directive, delivered in 1963, by explaining that the texts of pop culture (television,

movies, and comic books) are misleading fantasies. He further contends that historical texts,

texts that are supposed to represent truth are equally flawed in their narrowness. He then

encourages the teacher audience to instruct students not to be bound by givens, administration,

policies, moralities, or other sources of authority. Such a call to action for teachers and students is both inspiring and devastating. Baldwin knows this to be the "great paradox of education-that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated" (Baldwin, 1963). He also warns that "no society really wants this person around." These issues of inauthentic fictions, a press doused in bias, incomplete histories and a need to examine all of it had immediacy and brutal consequences in 1963 for those teachers in Baldwin's audience, those teachers who were asked to confront the "criminal conspiracy to destroy [the Negro child]."

In truth, Baldwin's words and his call to action should beckon teachers and school administrators with the same urgency in 2016. Leonardo and Porter (2010) argue that the American school system "reaffirms an already hostile and unsafe environment for many students of color whose perspectives and experiences are consistently minimized" (p. 140). In many schools and classrooms, these oppressions are enacted through teachers' racialized beliefs about language (Fecho, 2004; Rumenapp, 2016), beliefs about comportment during class (Barnett, 2000), censor in discussions of race and literature (Anagnostopoulos, Everett, & and Carey, 2013; Thomas, 2015), and text selection (Freedman & Johnson, 2000-2001; Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Thus, the teachers today willing to take up Baldwin's charge to teach students to 'examine everything' need to first consider how their own pedagogical practices are real limitations on students' academic potential. Such an endeavor would mean that teachers themselves have to be taught not to be "bound" by givens—administrations, policies, and moralities that propagate segregative practices. Teachers themselves need to 'examine everything,' too. This is not easily accomplished, for as Baldwin warned, such persons are not really desired in society or in systems, like schools, created by society. Such introspection is

perhaps most challenging for White teachers, who make up 87% of public school teachers (National Education Association, 2010). For the White teacher, talk about race is risky and uncomfortable as they benefit from that system of power (Leonardo & Porter, 2010).

What is needed then are teachers currently within the system who desire to teach children "to examine everything," media, fiction, history, and who are willing dialecticians-"continually re-seeing their subjectivity and acting on what they see as it evolves and is transformed by circumstance" (Goleman, 1995, p. 18). In other words, teachers who wish to see change in oppressive practices must undergo a continual re-examination whereby the subjectivity of their own beliefs regarding race and achievement remains part of their efforts to teach students to become critically literate.

Becoming critically literate for me and the other three teachers of this study was an endeavor borne of a desire to help the students in our tracked classrooms. I had only been teaching students in a low-ability tracked 10th grade class for two years when this dual case-study began. Teaching in a tracked classroom required a kind of social awareness more than a pedagogical awareness that I had not confronted thus far in my fifteen years of teaching high school. When I started teaching students tracked for low-ability I anticipated focusing a lot of class time on teaching strategies-based comprehension and writing instruction. I pictured myself at the front of the room teaching reading strategies and then having students apply those strategies as we worked on summary, analysis, and synthesis of ideas. But the reality of teaching in my low-ability tracked classroom was that teaching by those strategies alone was ignoring the social and systemic discrimination that placed the students, disproportionately students of color and English Language Leaners in my tracked classroom. These students needed comprehension and writing instruction, but I needed to become much more socially conscious and confront my

own ignorance before proceeding to assume that lack of education was what was placing these in my class. The dual case study described in this study is an attempt to show how teaching students in low-ability tracked English classes required critical literacy development for both the teachers and the students.

This study examines a case of four White teachers, members of a professional learning community (PLC) who wanted to raise their own awareness and their tracked students' awareness of systemic racism and oppression through literature and non-fiction. As participant-observer in this case, I, along with the other teachers engaged in both professional and pedagogical discussions regarding our positions and our teaching practice. A second related case in the study follows one of the four teachers, Betty, into her 10th grade tracked classroom to observe her instantiation of the lessons we designed in our PLC. The two case studies seek to provide greater dimension to the critical literacy practices of teachers and low-tracked students, students who deserve the right to "examine everything" especially those academic systems that view them as inferior.

Statement of the Research Problem

The inspiration for this study comes from a need to describe the dimensions of teacher beliefs and literacy practices necessary for high school students tracked for "low academic performance and low motivation" to engage in critical readings of literature and critical discussions of issues related to race, power, and oppression, the stated goal of the PLC. Students' critical reading of text is dependent on factors that have been identified in research studies of comprehension (Beck & McKeown, 2006) and response to literature (Hall & Piazza, 2008; Lapp & Fisher, 2010). Additionally, teachers' reading practices have been studied through the lens of

book clubs (Glazier, et al., 2000; Marshall, Smagorinsky, & and Smith, 1995) and through studies of their beliefs about literature (Zancanella, 1991). Likewise, some studies describe teachers' beliefs about race (Attwood, 2011; Rubin, 2008; Thomas, 2015), but few studies exist that show teachers critically reading and discussing issues of race as preparation for student reading and interpretation of similar issues and texts, that is as a literacy practice.

In fact, teachers are rarely portrayed as critical readers of classroom literature or pedagogical texts. More often, they are posited as oppressive authority figures in response to literature and critical literacy studies (Lazar & Offenberg, 2011; Laframboise & Griffith, 1997; Marshall, 1988) and as resistant and apathetic in the literature on professional learning circles (So, 2013; Nelson, Deuel, Slavit, & Kennedy, 2010).

Adding further complication is the fact that teachers are not always critical of grouping and categorization practices like tracking that have existed in American schools since the 1920's (Ansalone, 2010; Losen, 1999). Unfortunately, teacher beliefs about ability tracking (Rubin, 2008; Watanabe, 2007) and academic struggle (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009; Triplett, 2007) help to maintain such practices, despite the research showing its negative impacts. In particular, white teachers are not always aware of the ways in which their own beliefs (conscious and unconscious) about the student populations of these lower tracked classes create lowered expectations and cement social stratifications and academic destinies for students of color (Bernhardt, 2014; Losen, 1999).

The Inadequacies of Strategy Instruction

A broad view of research in comprehension instruction shows several strategies that have positive effects on students' understanding of a text. These strategies include pre-reading

activities like building background knowledge (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) (Carver, 1992) and setting a purpose for reading (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984), post-reading activities such as answering comprehension questions (Beck & McKeown, Developing questions that promote comprehension: The story map, 1981; Anderson & Biddle, 1975) or engaging in interpretive discussions (Applebee, A., Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003) and during reading activities such as clarifying, summarizing, responding to questions (Palinscar & Brown, 1984) and inferring (Graesser, Singer, & Trabasso, 1994). Such precedence for what reading strategies have the greatest impact on readers' abilities to comprehend text is important to consider when designing research on classroom instruction of critical reading. However, these "proven" strategies are at the same time insufficient as they do not examine students' ability to criticize text content or text structures nor do they account for teachers' efforts to provoke these ways of reading. Instead, these studies place the strategy at the forefront, bypassing characteristics of the individual reader, student or teacher.

Furthermore, experimental research on what has been called "content strategies" instruction does not provide insight into classroom practices that engage students in critical reading. These "content strategies" studies are typically focused on "Questioning the Author strategies" (Beck & McKeown, 2006), which have the teacher posing "queries" about the author's choices, but do not necessarily compel the teacher or the students to engage in questioning the content of the story. For example, suggested "queries" like "Does this make sense to you?" or "Why do you think the author tells us this now?" (Beck & McKeown, 2006) do not require the classroom teacher or students to criticize beyond the level of plot. Additionally, these questions do not necessarily promote deep inquiry of text or the systems that privilege the studied text, another claim of this research. Let me illustrate, if I were to use these two questions

to initiate discussion about the first chapter of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird,* a notoriously difficult chapter for its historical view of Southern culture and the Finch family ancestry, my students could and may well respond, "No it does not make sense to me and I have no idea why she is telling me that her great, great grandfather was a fur-trapping apothecary." I, as the classroom teacher could further probe, but I would have to provide a lot of background knowledge and vocabulary instruction before ever being able to expect more insight in my students' responses. Additionally, my strategies questions could easily be tailored for students to comprehend the text without questioning the system that maintaining a racist novel as a central text of American curriculum, "a key text in the construction and contestation of the nation's cultural memory of race and racism" (Anagnostopoulos, Everett, & and Carey, 2013).

The reason is that in most cases, these strategies instruction studies attempt to standardize reading comprehension instruction and thereby ignore other prominent factors in the English classroom such as the teacher's pedagogy and content knowledge, the features of the text and students' education and personal experience. In this way, strategies-based instruction in reading literature can be compared to literary criticism or rhetorical studies of literature that reduce the studied texts to a compilation of literary devices and ignore how the characters and the words affect the reader. Rabinowitz and Smith (1998) label such readings of literature as a cases of "Blimberism," a term based on the teacher character in Dickens' novel, *Dombey and Son* who believed that "all the fancies of the poets, and lessons of the sages, were a mere collection of words and grammar, and had no other meaning in the world" (p. 27). Furthermore, Rabinowitz and Smith use this example to point out how such a view of literature "leads to arrogance and a dehumanizing view of other people" (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998, p. 27). Likewise, viewing literature comprehension as contingent on repeated strategy instruction ignores the rich and

engaging textures of the humanities classroom, and thereby defies its distinguishing features. And precisely what are the features of humanities classroom? According to Mark Slouka (2009) the humanities classroom is one filled with questions and inquiry through content that

> …Grow[s] uncertainty. Because [the humanities] expand the reach of our understanding (and therefore our compassion), even as they force us to draw and redraw the borders of tolerance. Because out of all this work of self-building might emerge an individual capable of humility in the face of complexity; an individual formed through questioning and therefore unlikely to cede that right; an individual resistant to coercion, to manipulation and demagoguery in all their forms (2009, p. 37).

In other words, the study of the humanities is intended to develop the kind of individual who questions authority, but also one who wants to be challenged by others' points of view. In order to accomplish both measures of understanding, criticism and compassion, an individual must be willing to try on others' perspectives, judge their value and be reflective enough to judge the value of his/her own perspective. This idea, of course, applies specifically to the study of literature. But this view of the humanities or of literature is too often labeled idealistic or is idolized rather that taught with intentional strategy.

According to Richard Rorty (1989) literature study should be an invitation for the individual to discover new perspectives through new language, new metaphors: "the power of language to make new and different things possible and important-an appreciation which becomes possible when one's aim becomes an expanding repertoire of alternative descriptions rather than "The One Right Description" (Rorty, 1989).

But promoting an "expanding repertoire of alternative descriptions" in an English class is no easy task, especially in a world of literature study still clouded by notions of New Criticism

and standardized testing, both of which seek "The One Right Description." In other words, it seems like such an impossibility to both teach comprehension and teach content, without being accused of 'Blimberism' on the one hand or didacticism on the other. So why endeavor to expand repertoires of alternative descriptions through the study of literature? And why can't this endeavor use "proven" comprehension strategies to achieve these "alternative descriptions" or critical interpretations of literature?

The Limitations of Reader Response Instruction

Literature is about life and though literature varies in its verisimilitude; the experience of reading and interacting with literature affords a unique opportunity: "Literature makes us better noticers of life; we get to practice on life itself; which in turn makes us better readers of detail in literature; which in turn makes us better readers of life." (Woods, 2008). But, noticing the details or literary qualities is not sufficient for producing alternative descriptions or critical interpretations of literature. For these details are like any other text, constructed by an individual with his/her own cultural and social values that may empower or oppress individuals or groups (Gee J. , 2000). Thus studies examining reader response as classroom instruction on literature have shown that the teacher can inadvertently maintain status quo or normative attitudes if he/she has never been exposed to critical reading or questioning the authority of the text (McVee, Baldassarre, & Bailey, 2004).

Even in cases where teachers have promoted reading of multicultural texts, texts that intend to offer 'alternative descriptions' (Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007) or viewpoints, teachers often avoid the risky aspects of the texts themselves thus avoiding the talk about race, but still "enforcing racial formation whether or not it is explicitly named" (Thomas, 2015).

Teachers as Critical Readers

Cases like these, of self-censorship and emphasis on an aristocracy of knowledge in classroom practice further indicate the need for English teachers themselves to develop as critical readers and critical pedagogues. The desire to want to teach students to be critical in their response to text is not enough to promote lasting change in a teacher's instructional practice. As Zancanella (1991) reminds us, "Teachers are readers of literature long before they are teachers of literature" (p. 5). Without a doubt, personal experiences, preferences, and dispositions are factors that condition the teacher's reading of literature. However, Zancanella (1991) also found in his case study of five junior high English teachers conflicts existed between what teachers believed about literature and what they actually taught. For example, Mrs. Kelly, a teacher who believed strongly that literature is best understood "by entering the world the text presents" focused significant portions of her lessons on teaching literary terms and though she told students that "they must form their own opinions about their reading, she often capped literature classes by stating the lesson she believed should be taken from the story" (1991, p. 27). What these cases indicate is that a teacher's beliefs about literature instruction or even about reading do not always translate directly to their pedagogical approaches and that they need to engage in more critical conversations about the parallels between their intentions and practices in order to influence student reading practices. This too is important, as seminal research indicates that a teacher's disposition toward a text strongly influences students' thinking and interpretation. Furthermore, a teacher's race alone, regardless of pedagogical disposition, may influence the students' thinking and interpretation as Bingham points out

> As part of that text my whiteness will be a barrier for some students and an invitation for
>
> others. Importantly, I cannot shirk that barrier status or that invitational status. That status

will not simply go away by presenting the text as if I am merely a conduit through which

my students will reach the text directly" (Bingham, 2001, p. 272)

Despite pedagogy, despite strategy, identity of teacher and student can influence interpretation,

but there are still other barriers to students' critical interpretations of text.

Authoritative Instruction and Interpretation

Certainly, Cazden's *Classroom Discourse* (1988) provided alarming insight into the

barrier of teacher authority. Her studies exposed the failures of the IRE format of discussion.

Marshall (1988) used Cazden's work to show how stifling this same discussion format can be in

terms of students' attempts to voice their own interpretations of studied literature. As Beach &

Hynds (1991) argue in the opening pages of their review of research on response to literature, "In

contrast to much reading research, researchers in literary response have tended to conceptualize

each reader as "a universe of one." (1991, p. 453) Where one reading or interpretation, that of the

teachers, is the only acceptable interpretation and all other readers must hunt to find such a

reading. This "right reading" attitude often maintains aristocratic practices in the literature

classroom. As Rabinowitz (1992) contends, instruction that is based on the skill of "close

reading" can "profoundly reduce multiplicity" of interpretation, which can lead to "interlocking

hierarchies." In further illustration of his point, Rabinowitz contends that such hierarchies in the

study of literature "…devalue certain kinds of voices. A writer directly confronting brute

oppression, for instance is apt to be seen as "less good" than someone who has the luxury to

explore minutely the details of a middle class crises" (1992, p. 233)

Thus it seems that the work of creating students who seek out "alternative descriptions"

and who resist normative readings of texts must necessarily involve teachers who have similar

approaches when they read and when they design instruction on reading literature. These are the

major goals of this case study—to determine how individual teachers read literature and select supporting texts through the lens of critical literacy when they have set as their goal to raise awareness about oppression in their 10th grade ELA classes. An additional goal is to see how these critical literacy practices are realized in the context of a focal classroom. More specifically, the research questions of the study are:

Research Question1: What literacy practices do the four teachers in the PLC use to interpret texts and design lessons related to oppression and privilege?

Research Question 2: What literacy practices do the students in the focal teacher's classroom use to interpret texts and complete tasks related to oppression and privilege?

Research Question 3: What practices, other than those articulated during PLC meetings, does the focal teacher enact to encourage interpretation of acts of oppression and privilege?

As indicated by the research questions, the scope of the study includes observation and description of both teacher interpretation of texts and student interpretation of texts. Examining the parallels and contrasts between teacher dialogue and then classroom dialogue (teacher-to-student and student-to-student) is necessary in order to attend to the fact that no "proven" strategies for critical stances in literature are recognized as contributing to comprehension or deeper meaning-making in high school classrooms, or any classroom for that matter. And though studies exist that take a critical literacy lens in readers' response (Schieble, 2012; Kenney, 2013; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007), professional development (Attwood, 2011; Watanabe, 2007), and classroom instruction (Reidel & Draper, 2011; Lapp & Fisher, 2010; Freebody & Luke, 1999), few studies examine how a group of teachers' try to develop their own critical interpretations,

first of pedagogical texts and then of their classroom curricular texts. Therefore, this study is unique in that it attempts to show what dialogue, what stances, and what texts contribute to meaning-making for ELA teachers before they step into a classroom with the intention to make critical readers of their tracked students. This, of course, adds a second layer of insight into the research. The fact that these teachers are designing practice that will encourage tracked students, ones historically deprived of rich classroom experiences and more often exposed to "drill and skill" curricular content (Alvermann, 2001) (Delpit, 2012) (Watanabe, 2008)to become critical in their interpretations of literature will help address issues as to whether such critical reading strategies promote or obscure those given systems of oppression that so many tracked high school students experience.

Adolescents and Interpretation

Suggested methods for inviting students to be constructive or creative in their interpretations of literature most often seems honored in the transactional (Rosenblatt, 2004) approach to comprehension of literature, where the reader both conditions and is conditioned by the text. This approach seems aligned to adolescents precisely because the transactional studies adolescents already have to navigate the nuances and uncertainties of their social lives and this requires both interpretation of nuance and ambiguity. Teenagers, trying to fit in and at the same time distinguish themselves and finding both success and failure in such endeavors have to adjust their thinking and behavior according to the reactions and responses of their peers therefore conditioning and being conditioned by different socials interactions. Additionally, it's worth mentioning that for teenagers of the 21st century social interaction has grown in dynamic ways because of social networks, texting, and the internet.

Most teenagers may not possess the self-awareness to see the parallels between navigating social circles, both lived and virtual, and navigating social relationships in fiction. However, this idea has been theorized to be part of the reading process. Gunther Leyopoldt (2009), in an attempt to clarify Rorty's theories of interpretation, suggests that individuals encounter literature with two notions: one is an endeavor to create an image of themselves and the other is to engage in "participate emotion" that allows them to define and create empathy for others. He supports this by showing how Rorty's claim that the new metaphors encountered by readers encourage " a sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people" (Leyopoldt, p.150). But the idea that literature encourages or provokes such empathetic responses is not guaranteed within all readers. In other words, even though an empathetic response may be ideal, there are too many contigencies within the reader, the text, and the transaction (Rosenblatt, 2004) between the two that may not evoke such responses.

Indeed this idea of multiple interpretations of a text troubles both Rorty's (1989) notion that new metaphors encourage sensitivity to others' experience and Slouka's (2009) vision that the humanities grow uncertainty and provoke questioning and rebellion.

Provoking Resistant Responses

The problem then is how do English teachers provoke still developing adolescent readers into various modes of interpretation and encourage, without coercion, the ability to hear the multiplicity of voices from within the world of their experiences and within the world of the text? How do teachers promote a text-supported, reasoned interpretation of literature and a more playful, but still justifiable interpretation that introduces new metaphors and thus new ways of thinking about themselves, the world of the text, and ultimately the world outside the text?

Rorty (1989) suggests that "the opposite of irony is common sense" and that "when common sense is challenged, its adherents respond at first by generalizing and making explicit the rules of the language game they are accustomed to play" (1989, p. 74). Several important ideas from Rorty's quote can be applied to classroom practices that encourage ironic or critical interpretations. First, students need ways to establish the "common sense" of the studied text, this level of comprehension, though perhaps basic, is necessary before additional interpretations can be made. The second step, interpreting ironic texts and promoting ironic or readings that do not seem consistent with common sense requires for some readers (adherents to common sense) "making explicit" familiar rules or expectations, and then encouraging them to examine the values that are being imposed or questioned through the use of the unfamiliar language. Finally, readers must then be allowed to judge those values as consistent with or inconsistent with their own values. And while this sounds rather simple, it requires a great deal of reading social cues within a written text. This is exceptionally difficult for many readers because irony in written text is portrayed without any demarcations for intonation. Students used to hearing the familiar inflections of sarcasm can't rely on such cues to read 'double-coding' in literature. But Lara J. Hansfield (2011), in her work on 'disruptive comprehension,' offers other insight into why this interpretive task is more challenging. Part of what makes interpretation of an ironic stance difficult is that the reader is uncertain whether or not to question the authority of the text or narrator of the text because this is typically part of the adolescent reader's cognitive bias (Tobin, 2009). In other words, students have typically not been taught to question the authoritative power of the author or the narrator, and so they only accept and believe that the narrator is telling the truth.

Critical Classroom Practices

Undeniably, classroom practices that promote critical interpretation must involve overt and repeated invitations for students to question the authority of the text and not just in terms of "Does the text make sense?" (Beck & McKeown, 2006), but in terms of do you agree with the values, the portrayals of people and power that the text has constructed? This three step process was outlined in a social semiotic reading of Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" based on Schole's *Semiotics and Interpretation* (1982). To reiterate the process: the reader first tries to determine the "sense communicated through the narrative of the story;" then he/she reads "upon the text to read the value of the story based on what he/she uses as referent in the real and/or virtual world;" and finally, he/she reads against the text "to learn how [he/she] can raise criticism by developing a new centre against the one the story centers on" (Kumra, 2011). This three step process of comprehension, understanding authorial intention, and critical literacy will provide the most basic steps that the lessons in this study will follow as the teachers and students engage in the reading and thinking necessary to produce critical readings of literature. However, the three major components of comprehension, authorial intent, and critical literacy were further developed using other established theories as Scholes' theory did not provide enough dimension to consider the intricacies of such literacy practices.

To further promote students to "re-perceive the ordinary" (Shor, 1980) in the selected texts, the teachers in the PLC will be encouraged to use multiple activities where students can engage in literacy and response to literature practices that promote dialogue and critical thinking. One such approach is "comprehension-as-sensemaking," a strategy where the teacher honors all efforts to make meaning as valuable: Application of this strategy involves dialogic practices where "readers must engage with each other's often differing accounts of what the text says"

16

(Aukerman, 2013, p. A6) Other activities are outlined in Johannessen's (2004) article on complex response practices such as inquiry-based dialogue, modeling powerful thinking, embedding practical literacy skills in more global tasks, and other classroom principles that I outline in chapter three.

Additionally, students in this study were asked to take on the role of the characters outside and within the texts, be they literary or non-fiction texts. This idea of role-playing to generate alternative interpretations has been employed in other studies of sociocritical literacy (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Greco, 1992; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007). For example, Gutierrez' (2008) work on third space and sociocritical literacy doesn't just raise questions about inequality in the lives of children of migrant workers, it has students enact storytelling and theater of the oppression roles that stop the inequality and thus encourage re-perceptions of their own lives. She and the other researchers working in the same vein (Jewett, 2007; Rogers, 2002) actively challenge participating students to reconsider what history is and insist that they make history by constructing their own narratives about their lives to challenge dominant cultural narratives.

Additional support for activities which both promote literary interpretations and reexaminations of the ordinary include performative responses (Sipe, 2008). Performative responses differ in that they are aesthetically expressive, not just receptive and can be described as a "carnivalesque romp" (p. 180) where children take the control from the text and teacher to respond with Dionysian creativity. The hope is that such responses can achieve what Tagore saw as both an act of inquiry and self-effacement. Tagore believed that such enactments encourage sympathy and logic since role-playing required children to try out "unfamiliar postures of thought" (Nussbaum, 2010). In this regard, the performative aspects of the classroom seem

crucial to trying on other perspectives and new metaphors and thus seem particularly salient to this study. This idea of performative response is honored in each lesson as students are asked to take on role-playing activities in both critical and creative ways to real social situations in fictional and non-fiction texts.

One additional way to encourage both critical and creative responses to literature is through the consumption and production of multimodal texts. Central to many contemporary educational contexts are the interpretive demands of the internet, those that adolescents and teachers of the 21st century are faced with regularly. That is, we know that current generation of students and teachers more than past generations, needs to be able to navigate the "destabilizing" nature of the literacy on the internet (Street, 2003). Although, the internet does not directly play a role in this study, the switch from one modality to another is an important aspect of the study for the teachers of the PLC and the students in the focal classroom. Recalling Baldwin's charge, the idea was to question all sources of information, fiction, media, and history. Thus the text selection in terms of its variety and its means of access is described as part of the cases of the PLC and the focal classroom.

But text selection is only part of the demands of new literacies, producing alternative interpretive texts is also an important feature. This aspect of the study also honors the context in which Gee is describing the variety of modalities and semiotic domains to prove his argument that literacy should be assessed not 'in general', that is not by standardized tests or other normative modes, but by identifying and recognizing that different individuals have different literacy strengths depending on the modality, the situation, the interaction, and the identity within that situated event. It seems then it would be an oversight in my design if I evaluated students' interpretive skills based on only one method of expression or one modality of expression. To

avoid such narrowness in design, students' interpretive skills in discussion, writing, drawing and acting/performance will be observed and analyzed as part of the study.

The Need for the Study: Critical Reading for Teacher and Student

In summation, the need for this study comes from the idea that the current literacy and literary practices in high school classrooms are not meeting the interpretive demands that students are faced with in today's ever-shifting texts of the internet or the ever-shifting values of a global society. Furthermore, the adolescents that are in tracked classrooms, though often taught skills-based curriculums need the same opportunities to read, interpret, and question complex texts as students in honors tracked classrooms, but they also need the opportunities to criticize texts and contexts beyond the classroom and so do their teachers. The literature classroom has unique affordances in regards to meeting these demands as literature has also been characterized by polyvalence and a polyphony of voices (Bakhtin, 1984; Monsma, 1996; Morson, 1998; Anagnostopoulos, 2003). Therefore, to develop the kinds of critical thinking skills necessary to interpret both the contexts and intentions of these voices and images, adolescents in literature classrooms should be encouraged to engage in critical interpretations that provoke questions about credibility and authority of multiple text-types and contexts. This idea is supported by the notion of multivocality that is characteristic of both adolescent online activity and metadiscursiveness, what the New London Group (1996) and others have described as the most critical literacy skill of the 21st century.

But teaching students how to engage in such "metadiscursiveness" is difficult, if not impossible for the classroom teacher who is encouraged to standardize or depersonalize curriculum (Fecho, Coombs, & McAuley, 2012) and who may not be in the practice of posing counternarratives about tracked students (Johannessen, 2004; Johnson & Rosario-Ramos, 2012;

Watanabe, 2007) or questioning authoritative interpretations of literature and literacy (Asselin, 2000) (Zancanella, 1991).

Therefore, this case study seeks to describe the features and dimensions of critically interpretive practices that first invite teachers to question their own authority and awareness of authoritative practices in English studies and second, to describe the features and dimensions of interpretive practices that students display when provided instruction from just such a teacher. Through these two related cases, the case of a PLC on oppression, and the case of a 10th grade tracked classroom perhaps we add further definition to what is involved when a teacher instructs her students with the mindset of the "right and necessity to examine everything" (Baldwin, 1963).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Critical literacy studies of literature expand the definitions of comprehension to include the idea that understanding of a text is made more relevant if readers examine the word and the world (Freire, 1987). The purpose of this literature review is to first examine more recent studies of sociocultural response to literature; this leads into a review of critical literacy studies and some race literacy studies in the English classroom. Next, the review examines how such critical response theories apply to the research on adolescents and tracked students in order to consider how these studies inform the conceptualization of and present need for this study. Finally, the review describes the studies on teachers as readers, as consumers of professional development and members of professional learning communities to show how the research in these areas have parallel themes for describing both critical inclinations and insecurities of teachers when they engage with texts.

Response to Literature: Action, Transaction, Construction

Contemporary theories about reader response and meaning-making can be characterized through metaphors of action. For example, Todorov (1980) and Crosman (1980) suggested that meaning is constructed. Likewise, Smagorinsky (2001) argued that meaning is constructed and further asserts that it is constructed through social interaction between readers and text and that this construction produces an interpretation that is a text in and of itself. Similarly, Naomi Schor's assertion that "interpretation is synonymous with imagination, it is a "creative" rather than critical activity" (1980, p. 171) seems to suggest that the reader is producing as he/she reads. Even Rosenblatt in her later theory, *The Reader, The Text, and The Poem* (1978), clarifies her transactional theory by suggesting that the reader's transaction with the text creates an

interpretation that she refers to as "the poem," further distinguishing reading as not only work, but an artistic endeavor.

Sociocultural views of reading also add to the notion that meaning-making with a text involves a kind of shared space with multiple interactions. Studies of sociocultural response to literature attempt to represent the *multivocality* of interpretation defined in chapter one. To illustrate this idea, Agee (2000) argues that "effective literature instruction grows out of shared understandings and respect for differing preferences" (2006, p. 311). Examples of this kind of multivocality having a positive impact on comprehension can be found in several studies of large group discussion and small group discussion where students have the opportunity to engage in sustained conversations about texts (Nystrand, 2006). Other studies have shown that fostering meaning-making requires evocation of the emotion and affective response to literature (Levine, 2013). Because such responses honor complexity and variety, these responses, are characteristic of multiple interactions with at text. A better illustration of the complexity of such responses was detailed by Sipe (2008) in *Storytime* where he defines various affective responses to literature as personal, transparent, or performative, and that all of these types of response can also possess different literary understandings, such as stance (in relationship to the text), action (meaning-making with text), and text function. Other studies of affective responses have also shown how emotional or expressivist readings of texts can speed up comprehension, while analytical processes like efferent readings can slow down a reader's cognition (Cupchilk, Leonard, Axelrad, & Kalin, 1998). Still other studies have described how readers' attitudes toward the act of reading or toward assigned readings can also impact interpretation. A study of high school students' reader response journals revealed dialogue related both to the trial of reading, what the authors called the behaviors associated with reading as well as the affective responses interpreted

in the interaction with the text (Mizokawa & Hansen-Krening, 2000). Thus, myriad actions are involved when a reader decides to make meaning with a text and those meanings can be represented in as diverse ways as there are readers themselves. Such dimension in the actions of meaning-making then requires careful considerations of the approaches or stances of the reader and the positioning of the text.

Response to Literature: The Matter of the Text

Notions of construction and creation in response to literature studies parallel the kind of interpretive activities observed in this study. But the constructions of the readers and the text must be considered as there is a dialectical relationship between the two and because these curricular texts shape the national narrative about democracy and what it means to be American (Loh, 2009). Researchers have tried to identify this through text inventories where they describe, honor, and challenge the commonly taught and read texts in public education. In a collection of essays paying homage to Rosenblatt's transactional theory, Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) examines childhood notions of democracy through commonly taught titles such as *Johnny Tremain, Charlotte's Web, A Wrinkle in Time, and Anthony Burns*. She insists that "We ought to help young people to choose literature that can engage them in the kind of thinking and feeling and imagining that will help them grow into decent, contributing members of this society" (1990, p. 8). Within her argument you can see that she believes that the text itself is critical in the moral development of its readers. And Sims Bishop is not the only one; Engestrom (1987, in Galda & Beach, 2001) uses the novel *Huckleberry Finn* to argue that the characters within "initially operate in a status quo middle-class, small-town, racist system…but as Huck and Jim acquire new tools-the use of language, parody, and discourse of freedom-they constructed an alternative, potential system" (Galda & Beach, 2001, p. 67). But this construction of an alternative text, one

23

in which readers challenge the racist or oppressive systems featured in a text, requires other literacy practices and cannot be expected from the choice of text alone (Gray, 2009). In fact other inventories of literature read in American Schools offer little more than familiarity and stasis. In a 2010 survey of U.S. literature classrooms, some of the most frequently assigned titles, *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Lord of the Flies* are ones that have endured in curriculums for half a century (Stotsky, Traffas, & Woodworth, 2010).

Research in the selective tradition provides the basis for understanding why certain texts become part of school curriculums. Much of this research recognizes that this attempt to include necessarily means that some texts, some materials and methods will be excluded and for this reason "the issue of choosing for all children is contentious" (Freedman & Johnson, 2000-2001, p. 357). Admittedly, some teachers don't recognize the controversy in text selection and ascribe simple criteria like "strong plot and characters" (Pang, Colvin, Tran, & Barba, 1992), while still others reveal more aesthetic appreciation, "I select texts that I find powerful, moving and thought-provoking, texts that made me laugh aloud or cry when I first read them" (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998, p. 288). But several other teachers expose "paradoxical positions" (Freedman & Johnson, 2000-2001) in their selection of texts, admitting that a text would have appeal for students, but was too controversial or that they had multicultural value, but do not possess literary merit (Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006).

But more and more critical sociocultural studies are featuring less teacher selection of text and more representation of student selected or multi-perspective texts. Clarke and Whitney (2009) suggest employing fictions that present multiple narrators to "deliberately foreground multiple viewpoints" and examine positioning and agency in the stories. Hall and Piazza (2008) suggest having students select from a text set that offers a range of social commentary on issues

like gender and power and in the process of Book Club (Raphael, Kehus, & Damphousse, 2001) discussions, different student groups are examining similar themes from different identity positions. The importance of cultural identity as a component of classroom text has been addressed in multiple studies of critical literacy and sociocultural response. These studies include providing greater selection of texts that would appeal to Black male students (Wood & Jocius, 2013) to text sets or "cultural data sets" that mirror linguistic and literary features of Black culture (Lee, 1995). Additionally, there are studies that feature everyday texts selected exclusively by teenagers, texts such as magazines (Kendall, 2008) and texts that are selected by teenagers, but are problematized by teachers for the purposes of raising questions about Whiteness (Schieble, 2012). This review of the literature that appears in sociocultural studies and classroom studies of literature has important implications for study of critical viewpoints in adolescents' response to texts. Selection of texts for such a study must demonstrate an awareness of the identities that readers bring to a text and the text features with which they want to identify, versus those they want to resist.

Response to Literature: Reading is Transformative

Because so many active and provocative associations are made with reading literature, it is no wonder that much theory and research in response to literature also suggests that reading can transform readers. In some ways, these studies (though published before Rosenblatt's transactional theory gained much academic attention) seemed to honor the idea of transaction even if that was not an intended purpose. Theorists, Herrnstein-Smith (1988) and Rabinowitz (1998) argue that reading fiction presents such a challenge because readers must negotiate the world of the text, the world of the reader, and the world of the author in order to try to determine authentic interpretations of meaning. These theories challenge the more complete transformative

quality of reading, what some refer to as its escapist qualities. Some literary theorists have

claimed that readers can enter the world of the text and "get lost," or identify so completely with

the characters and story world that they experience the text (Scholes, 1989) (Langer, 1994). And

while this immersive aspect of response to literature is important, it is partially important to

recognize it as a kind of Dionysian intoxication with the aesthetic experience, an experience that

Nietzsche later warned against as having hypnotizing effects (1956). This very notion of the

hypnotizing effects of literature is explored by Paul Hernadi (2001). He argues transaction

should actually be seen as "consummation with someone else's imagination," a kind of

transformative practice where interpretation is seductive, playful, and gratifying (p. 56). Hernadi

proposes that reading poetry and drama naturally inspire transformative experiences for the

reader because there is no controlling narrative point of view and the reader is more inclined

toward engaging more completely in "dramatic impersonation" of the text world. As mentioned

earlier, this notion was observed by Sipe (2008) in his study of children's response to literature

when they would blur the lines between fiction and reality in their transparent and performative

modes of literary response. But another form of blurring the lines in interpretation of text is

Aukerman's description of what she calls *dialogic comprehension as sense-making,* Aukerman

writes that applying this interpretive strategy requires a belief that "student ideas will transform

classroom discourse, other students' understandings, and even their own understandings of text,

thus they pose questions aimed at better understanding student ideas and helping these develop

and collide" (2013, p. A6). This theory of comprehension is another important consideration, for

ELA teachers to consider, in terms of position-taking and power structure within and outside the

text world. If student readers desire to blur the boundaries between the worlds of reality in order

to engage more fully in textual experience. The teacher must be aware of when these experiences

are gratifying (Hernadi, 2001), when they are upending (Grace & Tobin, 2002) and when they are contributing to greater sense of identity and control. In the next section, critical literacy studies will be examined to see how teachers help students to question those definitions of identity and positions of control.

Rebellious Readings

While studies on response to literature present a range of insight on reader, text, and the transaction between the two, it is important for this study to also consider more recent research that examines how to promote resistant, rebellious readings of literature and thus avoid those hypnotizing effects of literature or literature instruction.

Awakening readers to the biases of authors and social structures is a major goal of critical literacy. The major difference between critical literacy and critical reading, according to figurehead, Allan Luke (2012), is that *critical reading* provides instruction and opportunity to analyze bias and invites multiple interpretations, while *critical literacy* contends that text selection and what counts as reading are representations of social and political standpoints. This is an important definitional concept for this case study and provides distinction that helps categorize some of the studies that exist under the mantle of critical literacy. In terms of understanding the foundations of critical literacy, it is also important to address those methods and practices that are commonly associated with this kind of classroom instruction. First and foremost, critical literacy abides by *four resources* or "four roles" (a term later revised) of literacy (Freebody & Luke, 2003). They are:

- break the code of written texts by recognizing and using fundamental features

27

- participate in understanding and composing meaningful written, visual, and spoken texts, taking into account each text's interior meaning systems in relation to their available knowledge and their experiences of other cultural discourses

- use texts functionally by traversing and negotiating the labor and social relations around them -- that is, by knowing about and acting on the different cultural and social functions that they perform

- critically analyze and transform texts by acting on knowledge that texts are not ideologically natural or neutral

However, what is troubling about critical literacy and why it has been criticized before is because of the abstract qualities of some of these tenets and because of other statements made by Luke himself. Too often, critical literacy is taken on as a political position more than a pedagogical endeavor. Surprisingly, Freebody and Luke (1999) admit this in an interview with *Reading Online*:

> Foucault reminds us that texts and discourses have a way of taking on a life of their own, with local uptakes, interpretations, and convolutions made irrespective of their authors' intentions or the political contexts of their production. So it isn't surprising that the four categories have taken on such a life of their own through teachers', teacher educators', and researchers' work in Australia and elsewhere.

This idea that intent of the author is not a consideration problematizes part of the earlier theoretical underpinnings of literature interpretation explored in chapter one. Understanding or attempting to understand intention is part of the process for developing compassion. Evidently, this aspect of interpretation is troubled by the *four resources model* as it suggests that texts and discourses can "take on a life of their own." The distinction suggests that authorial intention

can't be entirely be ignored in favor of political discussions as this too can silence those other readings of texts that represent students' real efforts of sense-making and interpretation. Keeping this distinction in mind, it is important to examine the existing body of research on critical literacy practices in the classroom since other tenets of the philosophy are crucial to this study.

Critical Literacy and the Classroom

As ascertained from Freebody and Luke's (1999) aforementioned quote, there is variety in the teaching of critical literacy. And perhaps this variety is further punctuated by the fact that critical literacy research is really in its infancy. In a review of the classroom practices that support critical literacy Behrman (2006) is only able to include studies from 1999-2003 and does warn at the beginning that there is little consistency to the practices in the studies. The themes that emerged in Behrman's (2006) review and have been applied to the design of this study include the common practices of introducing supplementary texts, reading multiple texts, and reading from a resistant perspective. The purpose of reading multiple texts is to invite both critical perspective and to help students hear the *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin, 1984) or range of voices that offer new insight on a particular topic, setting, or social issue. Critical literacy studies since Behrman's (2006) review apply the concept of heteroglossia and honor position-taking activities to encourage students to see alternative interpretations of literature and power structures (Fecho, Coombs, & McAuley, 2012; Grant, Lapp, Fisher, Johnson, & Frey, 2012; McVee, Baldassarre, & Bailey, 2004). Additionally, Behrman (2006) noticed that often these texts represent a range of modalities: film, music, and still images. And that the texts being used represent the canon, contemporary titles, YA literature, and textbooks.

As for actual instructional practices, many of the lessons involved perspective-taking or positioning in order to provoke resistant readings. For example, in a history class student groups took on a particular cultural identity and responded to a dilemma about the transition from life in a territory to life in a state of the union (McCall, 2002). In a literature class, middle school students had to respond to Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* from the Native American perspective (Behrman, 2006). But this wasn't the only way to question or interrogate text. In some studies, teachers asked students to apply functional grammar analysis of popular texts. In another case, teachers encouraged students to produce texts using personal knowledge and experience to react and resist normative, but oppressive views of women, sex, and marriage (Shariff & Janks, 2001).

More recent studies of critical literacy practices in the classroom reveal similar strategies, but have also elaborated on the purpose or theories guiding their instruction. For example, Lapp & Fisher (2010), outline that their questioning methods are intended for "students to determine the veracity of the message" of the text and at the same time "find their identities and question their perspectives through these [classroom] experiences" (2010, p. 157). Lapp & Fisher (2010) also structure their lessons using the Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework (GRR) a method that provides part of the instructional design of lessons in my research study and is supported by the research literature promoting more complex and content rich instruction in tracked classrooms (Johannessen, 2004; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007). The one characteristic of Lapp & Fisher's (2010) study that seems perhaps too direct is their "Interrogating the Text" questions as they provide many structured questions and suggestions that may stifle inquiry and promote more response than engagement.

Name of the text & author	How is the author trying to position you? Think about what the author thinks. How do you know this?	What is the time frame in which the text is set? Think about what the world and people were like in this time period?	What techniques are being used to position/convince you? Be sure to notice arguments, quotes, data, illustrations, likeable characters, etc.?	What words (phrases, quotes, sentences) are being used by the author or characters to show their positions?	Are you convinced? What information do you need? Whose voice is missing?

(Lapp & Fisher, 2010, p. 159)

The extensive detail of the questions seems to mimic the IRE model, as the teacher is the one primarily constructing or at least, imposing these questions. As a result, students could perceive the classroom activity as rigorous, but mechanical and therefore feel compelled to provide declarative responses to the question, not engage in exploratory reading, conversation, or questioning.

However, few other studies engage in such scaffolded lessons as Lapp & Fisher (2010); there are many more that rely less on scaffolding and more on texts or rules of engagement. In a previously mentioned study by Hall and Piazza, they observed four different practices that were applied during their research that they then promoted as basic tenets of critical literacy: "Understand one's one bias and beliefs, understand views on reading the world, make issues of power a central focus, and move beyond cultural snippets" (2008, p. 37). These, too, are important considerations for critical literacy instruction, but might not be easily provoked from students, if the teacher has not further pedagogical insight than these general descriptions and the description of the research procedures.

Other studies of critical literacy, offer more elaborate prompts for student work. In a teacher inquiry study of high school students' ability to engage with and 'write against'

literature, Norma Greco (1992) provides writing prompts that ask students to take on character roles and challenge their "actual positions within their culture." Here is one of her prompts for Gordimer's *July's People:* "Choose one or two scenes from the novel and retell the story from the point-of-view of one of the characters. Try to work into your narrative a sense of the character's role-his or her "position" within the story and how that role affects her thoughts, feelings, actions, relations with others " (Greco, 1992, p. 33). As a secondary task, she asks the students to respond to metacognitive questions regarding the conceptualization of the assignment: "1. Did you have problems "becoming" the character you chose because of your own biases and beliefs? 2. How did you have to alter your values or experiences in order to play the character's role?" (Greco, 1992, p. 33). In this case of rebellious or resistant reading, students are given greater autonomy and license to explore the text, the characters' values, and their own values in order to examine the social systems within the text and to examine how the reader posits himself/herself in relation to those social systems. The trouble is that other than the prompts and excerpts of student responses to those prompts, Greco doesn't offer much description of the classroom practices that helped her students develop reflexivity. By contrast, Johannessen (2004) and Thein, Beach, and Parks (2007) offer descriptions of classroom practices that are more specific, but are not strictly about rebellious readings of literature.

This lack of description of instructional practice on critical literacy extends to others studies, too, even when those studies provide suggestions for how to promote critical conversations on race and gender. For example, Schieble (2012) proposes that two YA texts in particular, *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* (Alexie, 2007) and *Speak* (Anderson L. H., 1999) can be used to frame conversations about characteristics of Whiteness and how to provoke conversations and reflexivity about the ways Whiteness is portrayed explicitly by

Alexie's Native American character, Junior and implicitly by Anderson's White protagonist, Melinda. Unfortunately, the only instructional strategies for achieving these critical conversations are two questions, a suggestion to use journals or classroom conversation to engage in such dialogue, and an identity circle activity where students draw all of the ways in which they think about their own identity. Rebecca Rogers' (2002) study of pedagogical approaches in a critical literacy reading group offers more specific discussion strategies, but offers little insight as to how to provide a more complete instructional practice or scaffold a critical analysis of literature in the classroom. In one other early childhood teacher inquiry study, Jones (2013) describes how she modeled critical literacy through read-alouds of multicultural texts, but then was frustrated when her students did not apply those same strategies in their independent reading and instead favored personal connections and identification with rather than resistance to the literature. Even when Jones tried to more explicitly use the *four resources model* (Freebody & Luke, 2003), the students did not engage in critical readings of the picture books. Interestingly, Jones (2013) concludes that the prevalence of making connections strategies and her use of mainstream early readers are the pedagogical influences that most likely prevented critical stances in her classroom. By contrast, another study of critical readings of fairy tales in a first grade classroom reports success in inspiring critical stances when using questions that prompt position-taking (Bourke, 2008). In this example, the teacher asked students to respond to questions about the story, *The Billy Goats Gruff* like "How do you think the troll feels?" Bourke (2008) also claims that with enough familiarity with this kind of position-taking his first grade students were inclined to take on critical stances with other genres of literature, too. A second example of the role of the affective response in critical literacy studies addresses the idea that the affective response to text, can temporarily "upend" norms and power structures in a

classroom and can encourage more creative and resistant responses to literature (Grace & Tobin, 2002). Vasudevan and Johnson (2012) studied a 10th grade classroom where the students were encouraged to take political positions with the texts of their English class, but those texts were always paired in contrapuntal analyses that rendered the literacy neutral. The students in the class however engaged in more critical practices with the everyday texts they encountered in their spare time and students would enact their critical practices in performative ways like singing, and joking. Such practices have been theorized by Lee (1995) as cultural signifiers and literate practice.

Evident in these studies is the idea that some teachers want students to take on critical stances, but across studies there is little consistency in terms of the pedagogical strategies and classroom practices that promote critical literacy or student inquiry into such practice. In addition to establishing a need for a study describing with more detail the pedagogical and classroom practices of critical literacy, several other factors have been called into question. One is the paradoxical positions (Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006) that teachers find themselves in when confronting controversial texts. A repeated suggestion in critical literacy studies is to frame text conversations in conflict and contention, but many teachers are uncomfortable with this or see the practice as personally risky. A second issue called into question is the problematizing of intention. Freebody and Luke (1999) argue that author intention has no bearing on the reader's analysis of power structures and oppression in a text, but other critical literacy studies have cited intention as the underpinning from which the reader can derive a position and counter-position (Clarke & Whitney, 2009). Furthermore, McLauglin and DeVoogd (2004) insist that understanding the authorial intention is one of the essential ways "to understand the sociocultural influences of the text to understand with an edge."

Additionally, few of these critical literacy studies focus on students who fall within the tracked reader category, with several focused exclusively on all white, privileged populations of students (Greco, 1992; Jewett, 2007; Kenney, 2013; Nurenberg, 2011; Schieble, 2012). In the next section, the context of tracked classrooms is addressed as a major influence on the sociocultural practices of developing critical standpoints.

Tracked Students, Assessment and Instruction

Another area of research essential to this study is that which describes the literacy practices of tracked students, students problematically referred to as "struggling" or "marginalized" (Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000). As this study focused on four high school English teachers and one focal teacher's classroom of 10th grade tracked students, it was important to consider studies that have tried to describe the unique challenges, identities, and academic endeavors of tracked students. To some degree, the mantles of "marginalized," "struggling" and even and "ability-tracked" are embedded in how reading and comprehension is and has been assessed. But, additionally important are the recent and historic motivations—classist, racist, and nationalist—that have encouraged and maintained tracking.

Multiple studies have shown that ability tracking maintains systemic discrimination within schools (Ansalone, 2000; Losen, 1999; Oakes, Stuart Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997). Tracking or grouping students according to academic ability has been practiced since the early decades of the 20th century as a way to socially sort immigrant populations and later to segregate Black and White students within schools (Ansalone, 2010). Ability-tracking endures as a common practice in American schools, particularly in suburban schools (Modica, 2015) despite findings that show deleterious effects. And multiple studies have shown that teachers produce *cultural models* (VanDeWeghe, 2005) or sets of beliefs that condemn students to institutional

identities for their entire career. Teachers even use causal language to explain tracking such as reading preferences (Triplett, 2007), lack of parent involvement (Caughlan & Kelly, 2004), and wealth or lack thereof (Manfield, 2015). Research on tracking has revealed negative impacts on self-esteem (Modica, 2015), socialization (Ansalone, 2000; Stearns, 2004; Welton, 2013), and academic performance (Ansalone, 2010; Corbett Burris, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008; Oakes, Stuart Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997).

Additionally troubling is that modern assessments offer limited insight into the academic ability of low-ability tracked students. According to Franzak (2006), reading assessments are still conceived and designed under three decoding/analytic notions of reading: leveled texts, New Criticism, and national literacy tests. And there is no indication that such notions of literacy are going away. In fact, publication of the Common Core Standards (CCSS) revealed that these same three elements are still very influential and emerge in such aspects as text-complexity, close reading, and in the publishers' criteria meant to guide assessment consortiums like Smarter Balance and PARCC (National Governors Association, 2010).

Although there is some question as to the future of Smarter Balance and PARCC, CCSS policy predecessors like No Child Left Behind did little to empower and engage tracked students. In fact, several studies of NCLB's effects showed that teachers felt pressured to improve test scores (Assaf, 2006; Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000; Dooley 2005) and that the pressure to perform caused changes that "limit their instructional practices to low-level skills instruction," as indicated by a survey study of 200 reading teachers (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001). The NCLB legislation encouraged skills-based literacy practices as way to guarantee success on high stakes tests (Johannessen, 2004; Watanabe, 2008; Fecho, Coombs, & McAuley, Reclaiming literacy

classrooms through criical dialogue, 2012). Even more problematic was the fact that no research

existed to prove that high stakes testing leads to academic achievement (Dooley & Assaf, 2009).

Tragically, studies of the consequences of such "impoverished curriculum" (Greenleaf &

Hinchman, 2009) indicated that too little attention was paid to relevancy (Crumpton & Gregory,

2011), social engagement (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002), and identity (Tatum, 2008) in educational

policy or curriculum design. And these factors—relevancy, social engagement, and identity—are

important to the lived experiences and educational success of adolescents, particularly those of

diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Fairbanks, 1998; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; McBee

Orzuluk, 2015).

Thus, the issues remain that students continue to be categorized as "low ability" through

the use of decoding/analytic assessments or worse, imposed cultural models (VanDeWeghe,

2005), or their race and/or ethnicity; and once in the low-tracked classroom they are immersed in

skills-based instruction that ignore studies of relevancy and identity that lead to academic

achievement. In an attempt to encourage large-scale change in response to the 70% of

adolescents who need remediation in literacy, Biancarosa & Snow (2004) identified the fifteen

effective practices in literacy programs. Among them are "effective instructional principles

embedded in content, self-directed learning, text-based collaborative learning, diverse texts, and

teacher teams" (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004, p. 4). And such a robust description of teacher

professional development is impressive, but it involves a lot of work at the local level and that

work should address the cultural and systemic discrimination that is contributing to some

students being placed in classes deprived of academic engagement. In other words, orchestrating

these elements requires a lot of time-intensive curricular planning and teacher collaboration that

has yet to be captured in a single study of teacher collaborative inquiry and those teachers corresponding classroom practice.

Teachers as Critical Thinkers

Just as many studies of comprehension strategies, response to literature, and tracked students raise questions or even doubts about how to engage students in real meaning-making, many studies of teachers in professional development situations raise questions and doubts about how well teachers engage in real meaning-making. In a professional development article titled, "How Teachers Learn," Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) open by stating that "The content of professional development can make the difference between enhancing teachers' competence and simply providing a forum for teachers to talk. The most useful professional development emphasizes active teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection, rather than abstract discussions" (p. 46). Explicit within this quotation is the idea that the "content" matters and that the teachers need substance to go "deep" in order enhance their practice. Not surprisingly, this idea seems to mirror some of the same ideas explored within response to literature studies with adolescents. The idea here is that a transaction does not occur without a text of some kind, and that the text itself influences the kinds of learning demonstrated in dialogic interactions. Additionally, Darling-Hammond & Richardson (2009) report that "The human and social resources needed for professional community included supportive leadership, mutual respect steeped in strong professional knowledge, and a climate that invited risk taking and innovation" (2009, p. 49). Again, this description seems to parallel some of the studies on critical response to literature for adolescents addressing the idea that teachers in responding to the content of their classroom instruction, must be allowed to question and create alternative descriptions for what makes for good classroom practice and effective learning experiences. The

trouble is that while Darling-Hammond & Richardson suggest these as the features of good professional development, few studies actually report teachers as committed to or instantiating such practices during professional development opportunities. Even teachers with "democratic intentions are not instructional leaders for social justice," (Jones, Webb, & Neumann, 2008) nor are they mentored into such critical stances (Hall & Piazza, 2008). Instead, teachers in professional learning groups have been described as "preserving the status quo" by protecting norms of privacy, by avoiding asking questions about each other's practice, and ultimately engaging in "congenial conversations characterized by generalities about instructional practice" (Nelson, Deuel, Slavit, & Kennedy, 2010, p. 176).

And while other studies have reported similarly saccharine approaches to change in instructional practice (Sinnema, Sewell, & Milligan, 2011) (Hadar & Brody, 2012), these studies also seem to suggest problematic expectations for what constitutes as essential to transformative professional development. For example, several studies suggest that the pedagogical practices have to be "evidence-based" and that they have to involve "research-informed interventions." This strikes me as all too familiar in terms of studies of comprehension. The language smacks of a "simple view" of teaching and classroom practice, limiting the teacher's potential for interpretation to 'proven strategies' or "research-informed interventions" does not allow for the kind of innovation and creativity that drives most professionals, nor does it necessarily promote the risk taking that Darling-Hammond & Richardson (2009) claim is essential. Nor does it follow the self-directed learning that Biancarosa & Snow (2004) identify for professional development in schools with excellent literacy programs.

Professional Learning Communities

The research on professional learning communities or PLC's is still in a theory building

stage as the value, goals, and impact of PLC's remain contested (Sleegers, den Brok, Verbiest,

Moolenaar, & Daly, 2013). A review of the research (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008) developed

over the last 20 years of PLC's found some common features of successful collaboration, one of

these ideas is that PLC's honor the everyday experiences of teachers as informing practice. In

order to produce impact on learning, PLC's "must be able to articulate their outcomes in terms of

data that indicate changed teaching practices and improved student learning" (Vescio, Ross, &

Adams, 2008, p. 82). But articulation of improved learning practice may not always be the result.

Avalos's (2011) review of research on PLC's indicated that teachers only improved technical

knowledge and curricular knowledge. Likewise, an international study of PLC's found that

American teachers did little more than "exchange materials" or "bounce ideas off each other."

But studies that do recommend teachers take greater control or be in charge of their own

professional development through collaborative inquiry or professional learning circles (PLC's)

have suggested that the work involved is not easy, nor is it characterized by researched practices

alone. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) argue a taxonomy of *knowledge-for practice*, informed

by outside experts; *knowledge-in-practice*, developed tacitly by teachers via classroom

experience, and *knowledge-of-practice*, deliberately constructed through collegial conversations

and collaborative inquiry are the sources of substantive change in practice (Wood, 2007). Often

these kinds of conversations invite teachers to confront their own beliefs in order to not just try

out different lessons or activities, but in order to make them more socially and pedagogically

responsive teachers (Schuck, Aubusson, & Buchanan, 2008). Critically important to teachers

making such substantive change in both beliefs and practice according to So (2013) is that

"Teachers determine their own issues for inquiry through critical reflection on their teaching practices" (p. 189). One example of this kind of teacher-driven collaborative inquiry is a study eight teachers trying to "teach the controversial content of an antiracist multicultural foundations course…where differences, in histories, knowledge, identity, and experience contributed to individual and group learning" (Attwood, 2011, p. 122). And while this study seems to have the characteristics of a more critically-minded group of teachers who are interested in creating their own sources for transformative pedagogical learning, it takes place in a graduate level course, not in a school setting. On the one hand, the study provides important insight because the content the teachers examined as part of their pedagogical inquiry led to "teaching discomfort" and "navigating power relations," both of which can inform my case study of tenth grade teachers collaboratively planning instruction with the purpose of provoking resistant readings and interpretations in the classroom. On the other hand, the study still falls short of making explicit what discursive and instructional strategies lead students to make changes in their own thinking and interpretations of the literature. Other studies have suggested features of contention and contestation in PLC's, and that these are important aspects if teachers recognize that conflict is part of the educative process. Through such authentic teacher inquiry schools can become "transformed democratic spaces of learning" (Jenlink & Jenlink, 2008, p. 313). And there are a few studies of teachers, who are members of a PLC, that seeks transform their practice through theories of culturally responsive teaching (Sinnema, Sewell, & Milligan, 2011), through the lens of social justice (Hirsh & Hord, 2010), and through a desire to help economically-disadvantaged students (Moller, Mickelson, Stearns, Banerjee, & Cecilia, 2013).

And this, ultimately, is why the research I have proposed contributes to both the research landscape on professional development and provides a possible window into what kinds of

content and discourse in teacher collaborative inquiry on critical response to literature leads to critical response to literature in the classroom.

Conclusion

Literacy is a contested topic that has real implications and consequences for individuals, educational institutions, and social systems. And the particular case of tracked adolescent literacy is one that many policymakers, researchers, and educators have identified as needing re-examination and re-imagination (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009). But these students who have been tracked or "marginalized" (Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000) or relegated to the fringes of the system deserve literacy and literature instruction that puts their intellect, knowledge, and needs at the forefront, and empowers them to confront the very systems by which they are being excluded, oppressed, and ignored. Research in response to literature, critical literacy, and professional development has identified the ways in which teachers, texts, and classroom practices have tried to invite and have discouraged participation by these groups of students and their teachers in past decades. And while, the theoretical promises of critical literacy attempt to empower students to take critical stances, the classroom applications of such theories do not always result in significant change. However, critical literacy instruction and research remains a rather new discipline, one that deserves further inquiry and more substantive methodological and pedagogical frameworks. For the goal of enabling individuals to question, resist, and contribute to society remains crucial to the very democratic ideals by which our system of education was developed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework: Critical Sociocultural Response to Text and Case Study

The previous chapter examined bodies of research on response to literature, critical literacy, tracked students, and teacher collaboration from a critical sociocultural perspective. Critical sociocultural theory according to Moje and Lewis (2007) integrates activity theory, cultural studies, and critical discourse theory to examine power relationships in learning. Most pertinent to this study are the ways in which critical sociocultural theory exposes that "the acquisition, appropriation, resistance to, and reconceptualization of skills and knowledge is a process that may involve taking up and taking on existing discourses or disrupting and transforming fixed discourses" (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 20). The existing discourses on response to literature, critical literacy, teacher collaboration, and tracked students were reviewed in the previous chapter to expose limitations of the research on these topics. While critical sociocultural response to text has been used in classroom studies (Hansfield, 2011; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007) with adolescents outside of the classroom (Gutierrez K. , 2008), with pre-service (Laframboise & Griffith, 1997; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Reidel & Draper, 2011) and in-service teachers (Hall & Piazza, 2008), there are limited studies that apply critical sociocultural response in order to examine the teacher inquiry and professional dialogues necessary to successfully elicit similar critical responses from students in an ELA classroom. In fact, the studies in existence that examine classroom practices that lead to critical sociocultural response to texts are intervention studies (Lazar & Offenberg, 2011) or focus only on strategies (Lapp & Fisher, 2010) or particular text titles (Schieble, 2012), at times suggesting that multicultural texts provide implicit critical responses to power structures (Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007).

Studies that examined a particular aspect of teaching critical response to literature or showed how students responded to multicultural texts or critical literacy strategies all provided necessary precedence for this study. However, the design of this study is unique in that it observed and described how four teachers, myself included, engaged in a PLC exercised our own critical responses to texts, curricular, cultural, and pedagogical, and how those conversations informed and influenced the choice of supplemental materials and lesson design related to the topics of oppression, race, and power in a focal classroom of tracked 10th graders. The specific research questions of the study are:

Research Question 1: What literacy practices do the four teachers in the PLC use to interpret texts and design lessons related to oppression and privilege?

Research Question 2: What literacy practices do the students in the focal teacher's classroom use to interpret texts and complete tasks related to oppression and privilege?

Research Question 3: What practices, other than those articulated during PLC meetings, does the focal teacher enact to encourage interpretation of acts of oppression and privilege?

A Case Study with Teacher Inquiry

This research is designed as a case study because its primary goal was to attempt to describe "complex phenomena in a real life situation" (Yin, 2004). As such, the study focused on four high school English teachers, myself included as participant-observer, as we participated in bi-weekly dialogues about our tenth grade English classes. This professional learning community (PLC) was formed by the high school's English department chair in 2013 and existed before this study began. The PLC of this case is unique in we, the four teachers were all committed to the

44

ideas of examining oppression and power structures in the tenth grade curricular texts we teach. We had all had casual conversations with each other regarding our positions that the high school, Roosevelt High, had too many tracks for 10th graders and that those tracks, many labeled "low ability tracks" had an unusually high population of students of color. These critical positions and common perspectives motivated our decision to request membership in a common PLC the following school year. However, examining PLC dialogues alone is not enough to describe the relationship between the teacher discourse and instructional planning and the corresponding classroom discourse where students attempted to engage in literacy practices like reading, discussion, position-taking, and performance as a way to reflect on race, power, and oppression. By observing a focal teacher from the PLC, Betty, as she integrated the collaboratively planned lessons, selected materials, and sequencing in her own tracked tenth grade classroom the case study had two related cases for data collection, the case of the PLC and the case of the classroom. In this way the study still falls within the parameters of a case study, but does share some characteristics with teacher inquiry (Goswami, Lewis, Rutherford, & Waff, 2009).

A case study with elements of teacher inquiry allowed for the four of us, the members of the PLC, to engage in recursive pedagogical discourse or what has been described as Critically Reflective Teaching (CRT). CRT is characterized by problem identification, action planning to address such problems, and an awareness of "how one's beliefs, assumptions, and experiences influence perceptions of self and the social world" (Burbank, Bates, & Ramirez, 2012, p. 2). As we, the teachers in the PLC became more immersed in our professional and pedagogical inquiry into critical responses to literature, we reflected on our own beliefs and engaged in action-oriented dialogue to change or alter how we approached instruction, our students, and the required and supplemental texts of our classrooms. These practices are also in line with the

features of a teacher inquiry paradigm where teachers must be conscious of a set of assumptions about their practice, consult research to inform that practice, design practice from a single theory or set of theories, and have a clear methodology and indigenous logic that influence the design (Goswami, Lewis, Rutherford, & Waff, 2009).

As teacher participants in this study, we desired to elicit critical responses to texts in tracked classrooms and we employed a variety of strategies to engage students in position-taking (Greco, 1992; Nussbaum, 2010; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007) and other classroom practices previously described in studies on critical literacy and critical response to text. We also sought to engage in frequent dialogical activities that are supported by research that challenges the "basic skills" approach to learning that many teachers have applied in tracked classrooms. For example, Johannessen (2004) outlined principles of instruction that should be employed in classrooms with tracked adolescent readers. They include:

- Focus on complex, meaningful questions and problems so that students'
  reading and writing can be in the service of genuine inquiry (Hillocks, 2002).

- Make connections with students' out-of-school experience and culture.

- Model powerful thinking strategies

- Encourage students to use multiple approaches to academic tasks and have them
  describe their approaches out loud to the rest of the class so that all students hear
  different ways to solve the same problem.

- Provide scaffolding to enable students to accomplish complex tasks.

- Make dialogue with students the central medium for teaching and learning (Hillocks,
  2002; Langer, 2001).

- Use teaching strategies that will help the students internalize the questions that good readers ask when they read (interpret) literature.

(Johannessen, 2004, p. 639)

The four of us, as teacher participants took a unique position toward tracked students, one that we saw as a political position. We had all heard other teachers of tracked students used language of condescension and 'struggle' to describe the learning and intellect of tracked students and we sought to collaborate in ways that resisted such deficit ideologies. Together, we articulated the objective of the PLC members: "To raise student and teacher consciousness about power, race, and socioeconomic status through discussion of literature and non-fiction." Two of the four teachers, Mellie and I had previously participated in a sophomore level PLC and had collaborated to design lessons featuring the characteristics like "focusing on complex meaningful questions for student inquiry," "scaffolding to read complex texts," and "making dialogue with students a central medium" of our classes, those features enumerated by Johannessen (2004). We found commonality in our beliefs about student inquiry as I had been a student of George Hillocks, Jr. and so had Mellie's cooperating teacher in her pre-service experience. We also were both teaching sophomores tracked for low academic ability, students whose Explore scores were lower than average.

The following year, two of us, Mellie and I, were asked by the department chair to select a single professional development text to guide our thinking for the year. We were also asked to invite other teachers into a PLC as a means of continuing the work we had started the year prior. We selected *Authorizing Readers: Resistance and Respect in the Teaching of Literature* (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998). I had recently read Rabinowitz' (Rabinowitz P. , 1992) essay, *Against Close Reading* and felt challenged, but affirmed when I read his analysis of how New

47

Critic analysis of literature can be turned into nothing more than a "guessing game" for students without classroom authority to justify their interpretations. I then gave a copy of the article to the three other teachers in the PLC and we discussed it as a challenge to our thinking about text interpretation. This led us to research other readings by Rabinowitz and ultimately lead to the selection of *Authorizing Readers* (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998).

Researcher Stance

As participant-observer in the case study of the PLC, it is important to describe my role in the context of the site and the design of the data. I had been teaching for fifteen years at Roosevelt High School when the PLC was formed and as mentioned earlier the PLC came together because of the four teachers' similar beliefs about tracked students and a desire to extend some work that one of the four teachers, Mellie, and I had only explored in isolated lessons on Theater of the Oppressed in a previous sophomore level PLC. I found the lesson-planning invigorating because we had to engage in inquiry practices in order to inform our understanding of Boal's (1992) political viewpoints on theater. This led us to further inquire about some of Freire's work and his influence on Boal (Kaye & Ragusa, 1998). But, the engagement of the students during the lesson was something that I had not anticipated and I think that Mellie felt the same way. Our department chair had observed us during the instantiation of the lesson and encouraged us to continue the work. Initially, I had wanted to focus only on integrating more performance into my classes, but casual conversation with another colleague in the study, Gloria, furthered my interest in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2014). Gloria had been studying critical race theory in her graduate program and she engaged me in frequent conversations about her observations of systemic racism within Roosevelt High School's tracking practices, its disciplinary practices, and within teachers' stances toward students. Mellie

48

had shared with Betty the lessons we developed on *Theater of the Oppressed* (Schaedler, 2010)and Betty's interest in trying out such practices in her tracked classrooms connected the four of us as a collaborative group.

Once the following school year started and we began our PLC work reading the Rabinowitz and Smith (1998) book, I quickly recognized that our conversations were more challenging and more complex than any others I had experienced and this was the inspiration for the research study. Advised by my dissertation committee to observe the teacher inquiry in practice, I decided to observe Betty's classroom. I felt that observing her and her students' engagement with the activities and texts would provide a better viewpoint on how a teacher unfamiliar with these practices would approach critical readings and interpretations. Betty was the only member of the PLC who had no prior professional development on critical theory, nor had she tried to employ lessons on critical reading.

I also felt that observing Betty's classes would allow me insight into my own practice, since I, too, was a participant of the PLC and was enacting the same lessons in my classroom. Roosevelt High School has a large English department faculty. I knew Betty from 9th grade level meetings and admired her enthusiasm and rapport with students and faculty. I also knew that she would take the ideas and designs cultivated in the PLC and apply them intentionally in the classroom. This allowed me to distance myself from Betty's practice.

I respect my colleagues very much and tried to avoid imposing strategies that overlooked a colleague's insight or sacrificed the integrity of the lesson design. I knew that as participant observer, I walked a thin line between participating in the PLC discussions and trying to influence the discourse or the instructional planning in way advantageous to a particular outcome. However, the four teachers in the study were already independent learners with a

predisposition for innovative teaching and learning and this also helped me maintain shared interest in and critical distance from the other teachers' classrooms.

One other essential element this case study is the social context of the study. All observations for this study take place during teacher PLC meetings or within the focal teacher's classroom, but this study is uniquely characterized by the fact that three of the four teachers in the PLC teach in tracked 10th grade classrooms, including the focal teacher. The student participants of this study have been tracked because of low Explore scores, a history of below average academic performance, and/or behavioral/motivational issues. This dimension of the study honors the idea that case studies provide descriptions of "dimensions and dynamics of classroom living and learning" (Barone, 2004).

As explored in the literature review, too often adolescents who score low on standardized reading tests are cast into remedial English classes that do not engage them in intellectual pursuits (Ansalone, 2000; Oakes, Stuart Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997). Rather, these students are presented simple "drill and skill" kinds of instructional practice and are denied rich content. This practice is known as the "deprivation approach" (Alvermann, 2001) and is characterized by a cultural construction of the reader as someone who does not possess literacy skills necessary for academic insight and who will remain outside of the cultural expectations for success in other aspects of life: finding a career, etc. (Rubin, 2008). This happens as a result of being confined by functional literacy classes where they learn to "become dependable, but not troublesome" (Alvermann, 2001, p. 681). Evident in this quote is the idea that tracked readers, are taught not just reading skills, but taught to follow cultural constructions of normativity. In other words, rather than being taught strategies for recognizing and resisting coercion, they are encouraged to submit to oppressive educational institutions. Thus the design of this research is also unique in

50

that it is taking a group historically taught "functional literacy skills" and shaped culturally to be docile, compliant and changing that perspective to a position of teaching literacy skills critical of such oppressive cultural and educational systems. This aspect of the study maintains phenomenological aspects of a case-study, but also provides a rationale for applying grounded theory to the collected data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Setting

Roosevelt High School (pseudonym) has been ranked in national polls among the best. It is a large suburban high school with over 3,000 students and a fairly diverse population. White students make up the majority at 64%, Black students represent 11%, Latino students represent 11%, Asian 8% and 3% are multiracial. The faculty are 97% white with over 80% earning a master's degree or higher. The students at the school score better than the state average on standardized tests such as the ACT. Instructional spending per student is almost $3,000 more than the state average. Though such rankings and spending put the school as better than average within the state, Roosevelt has at its 10th grade year an unusually high number of low-ability tracked classes (four, a number that does not include the general or the honors tracks) that make it an appropriate setting for this research study. Also worth mentioning is that Roosevelt like many schools across the country reports lower graduation rates for its Black (80%), Latino (74%), and Economically Disadvantaged (75%) students, student populations that have disproportionate representation in the four tracked classes that the teachers in this study teach.

Participants—Students

The students in this research study were enrolled in a tracked sophomore English class at Roosevelt High School. Students enrolled in the tracked classes at Roosevelt High School receive the same academic credit toward graduation. As mentioned earlier the research site has

several tracked classes in core academic classes like English, math and science. There is one honors track, one general population track, but there are four different RTI (Response to Intervention) tracked 10th grade English classes. The focal teacher in this case study teaches in a track for students whose Performance Series and Explore scores fall within the normal range (range of 10-17). But these students are tracked because of an "at-risk" label (labeled by the school) and because of past demonstrations of low motivation and poor academic performance. As many as 40 students can be enrolled in this class, which is also coordinated with a common U.S. History Class. At the time of the study there are 24 students enrolled in the focal teacher's class, 3 White females, 9 White males, 3 Black males, 4 Black females, 1 Latino male and 4 Latina females. The pseudonym, gender, and race of each of the 24 participants in Betty's class are detailed in Table 3.1 and in chapter five, the case of the focal classroom. The students are also further characterized by excerpts of their participation in classroom dialogue.

Table 3.1 Student Participants in Betty's Classroom

Pseudonym	Gender	Race
Shiggy Diggy	M	White
Seth	M	White
Tad	M	White
Nenny	F	Latino
Roger	M	White
Amber	F	White
Bangz	M	Black
Meirin	F	Black
Whatsittooya	F	Black
Handsome	M	Black
Kiana	F	Black
Jazzmin	F	Latino
Tomia	F	White
Tamika	F	Black
Cori	F	White
Seid	M	Latino
Mariana	F	Latino
Stefani	F	Latino
Deputy	M	White
C.J. Watson	M	White

Joker	M	White
DaSheriff	M	Black
Hank	M	White
Adrian	M	White

Because three of the four teachers who participated in the PLC discussions were also teaching tracked students, it is worth describing the profile of the students in those classes as well. Two of the teacher-participants, myself and Mellie, in the PLC taught in two of the other tracked classrooms. The students in our classes were tracked for low performance on standardized reading tests such as Performance Series and Explore (range of 9-12). The students were typically enrolled in Scholastic's Read 180, a two-period literacy block as freshmen in order to improve reading comprehension. The fourth teacher in the study, Gloria, teaches in the "regular" or general education population of sophomores. These students fall within the average range on the Explore (range of 10-17) and Performance Series tests.

Participants—Teachers

There are four teachers involved in PLC case study. All four teachers had been faculty at Roosevelt High School for at least four years, but the range of teaching experience was from 5 years to 15 years. All four teachers taught at least one section of sophomore English at the time of the study, and as described in the previous section, each teacher taught a different population of sophomores. I, as the primary investigator and teacher at Roosevelt High School, am also a participant observer in this study and I'm one of the four teachers in the PLC. Additionally, all four teachers have participated in the Professional Learning Community (PLC) for sophomore English since August 2013. The teachers asked their department chair to form this group to address the common interest in addressing oppression in the literature of the curriculum and their political discussions about tracking students. Each of the four teachers brought their unique

experiences and stances toward teaching and learning English Language Arts. In the PLC meetings prior to the start of the study there had been some discussion of tracking and of the all school initiatives to improve African American student success, but otherwise there had been no strong influence of any one single goal or pedagogical endeavor.

Table 3.2 Profiles of Teacher Participants

Pseudonym	Years of Experience	Educational Experience	10th grade class taught
Betty	6	B.A. English M.A. Education	2 sections of students tracked for lack of motivation and past failures in core courses
Gloria	13	B.A. English & Education M.S. Teaching Advanced coursework in Curriculum Studies	2 sections of non-tracked
Mellie	13	B.A. English M.A. Library Information M.S. Literacy	2 sections of students in inclusive classroom, co-taught with Special Services faculty
Kierstin	15	B.A. Rhetoric & French M.A. Teaching English PhD candidate Literacy	2 sections of students tracked for low Explore scores

To address the goal of the PLC, "To raise student and teacher consciousness about power, race, and socioeconomic status through discussion of literature and non-fiction" and provide detailed response to the research questions of this study the following sequence of PLC meetings and classroom observations was followed. This sequence grew organically from the thinking and dialogue of the four teachers. There was no intervening aspect by me as a researcher in this sequence of topics. The only intervening influence was Roosevelt's High School's demand that teachers in PLC's submit a year-end reflection of their work.

Research Procedures

After obtaining IRB approval in February of 2014, every two weeks for 10 weeks total, two-hour long PLC meetings of a group of four 10th grade teachers, myself included, were recorded. This amounted to a total of 5 meetings. During the two-hour meetings, teacher participants discussed self-selected texts that informed their pedagogy, in general, and in their practice in their 10th grade classrooms. As part of this work, teachers planned common lessons for instruction in those 10th grade classes. All five of these two-hour meetings were videotaped and transcribed for analysis. Any materials that emerged from or were designed by the PLC were also collected. This included the texts researched and consulted during their two hour meetings. A list of these texts, their content, and pedagogical purpose is detailed in Table 4.2 and the lesson materials that were developed by the PLC teachers (these are described in chapters 4 and 5, but examples can be viewed in (Appendices F-H).

Sequence of PLC Meetings

In this section, I want to briefly describe the sequence and content of the five PLC meetings. These are presented in Table 3.3, but are also more precisely narrated in chapter five, the findings on the PLC. When I first started recording the meetings, the four teachers had been engaged in some previous conversations about a 'Whiteness' in English Studies (Barnett, 2000) article they had read that exposed some critical positions on how the teaching of canonical literature was essentially a way of sanctifying White cultural norms. The four of us saw connection between this idea and some of the ideas that Rabinowitz and Smith (1998) were addressing about authorial readings and the democratic classroom. They were applying this thinking to challenge linguistic ideologies or "White ways of talking" in another article they read by June Jordan (2007). In this article, Jordan talks about language norms and a group of Black

college students she instructed on how to read African-American English Vernacular (AAEV) using the book, *The Color Purple* (Walker, 2006) and then how they used that language in a letter of protest about a police shooting of Reggie Jordan. The four of us were interested in using the letter of protest to raise students' awareness about language standards and biases and we started to construct the first lesson of the study in this meeting. In the second meeting, we continued to conceptualize the protest letter lesson, but also spent a great deal of time talking about, reading, and analyzing the very recent controversy over the NFL ban of the n-word. In this lesson, much of our talk focused on language issues, but this time from a slightly different perspective related to language and context. In the third meeting, the four of us revisited the article on "Whiteness" in English Studies and continued to conceptualize and plan out the scaffolding of skills necessary for teaching the protest letter lesson. We also discussed the recent media labeling of Seattle Seahawks cornerback, Richard Sherman, a "thug." This adds new dimension to their discussions on language, race and oppression. We then started reading, "Recitatif," the short story by Morrison (1997) that becomes a central text in the third lesson of the classroom case. During the fourth meeting, we developed questions for discussion and comprehension of Morrison's short story. We also discussed ways to connect the racial stereotypes and oppression of characters in the story to characters in *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937), one of the curricular texts that many of us were required to teach in our 10th grade classes. The fifth meeting in the sequence requires that the four of us complete a reflection on the work that we did conceptually and how that work impacted student learning. This was a requirement by the school, Roosevelt High School, and one that had important implications for the collection of data on the PLC discourse.

Table 3.3 Sequence and Content of PLC Meetings

Date of Meeting	Topics of Discussion	Texts	Instructional Content or Skill	Questions or Instructional Dilemmas
2/26/2014	Chapter 3 of Rabinowitz & Smith	Chapter 3 of Authorizing Readers & June Jordan article	To understand their own biases about language and to see institutional biases against race through language ideologies	How to structure writing task so that student groups assigned to either prompt (PR team for police or Editors of Newsday) examine issues of language and racism.
3/12/2014	NFL and use of the n-word	"Politics and the African American Human Language" by Ta-Nehisi Coates *Of Mice and Men To Kill a Mockingbird*	Questions of language and intention and white rules for who can and cannot use the n-word	Trying to understand for themselves how to navigate use of n-word in NFL and how the n-word in different contexts has different meanings
3/26/2014	Whiteness in English Studies	Richard Sherman's on field post-game interview by Erin Andrews "Richard Sherman on What Being Called a Thug Really Means" Skip Bayless interview of Richard Sherman Daily Show segment on Rob Ford, Justin Bieber, and Richard Sherman	White norms of behavior and "rationality" being imposed in NFL contexts Institutional privilege and oppression in media labeling of Rob Ford and Justin Bieber's criminal activity as "bad boy" behavior v. Sherman's post-game aggression as "thug-like"	Dialogue centers on examining whiteness and white privilege in these instances and the institutional racism being used to label Sherman's behavior. Discussion of celebrity double standards spark conversation about submissive portrayal of Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird*
4/16/2014	Close Reading of Morrison's "Recitatif"	"Recitatif"	Marginalization of characters, use of oppressive language "dummy," "fag."	Decision to have students draw interpretation of one of three reunions between main characters in the story, Questions about ambiguity in text's

				portrayal of characters and friendship and racial conflicts
5/21/2014	Year-End Reflection	Focal teacher's student drawings of "Recitatif" *End of Year Reflection Questions*	Student interpretations of "Recitatif" and "thug" language lesson	Conversations about democratic classroom and focal teacher's experience of "Recitatif" and other lessons developed by PLC

Sequence of Classroom Instruction

For the second case of the study, I observed the lessons conceptualized and designed by the PLC as they were realized in the focal teacher, Betty's classroom. A total of 4 lessons, amounting to 9 days of classroom observation were videotaped and transcribed for the purposes of analysis. I also interviewed Betty in semi-structured interviews (See Appendix A) after each lesson. These interviews centered on her impressions of the lesson, student engagement, connectedness to the discussions in the PLC, and her individual reflections on her practice and student learning. Additionally, student artifacts and the assessments of learning related to each of the four lessons were collected. These include a position-taking letter and "quick write" reflection from lesson one, a viewing guide and comparison chart from lesson two, and a student drawing and reflection from lesson four. In the fourth lesson, Betty had her students prepare scenes from *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) and perform those scenes from an authorial perspective and a critical perspective using Boal's (1992) *Theater of the Oppressed*. The student assessment of learning was the performance itself and so transcripts and field notes describe this demonstration of learning. The lessons and their goals are described in Table 3.4 and Appendices A-E.

Table 3.4 Sequence of Focal Classroom Lessons

Lesson Focus	Texts	Instructional Content or Skill	Questions or Student dilemmas	Task	Assessment of Task/Content/Skill
Whole Class Reggie Jordan	Brooklyn Police and Newsday worksheets (created by PLC with student letter from June Jordan article)	To engage in discussion To question white standards of English and how they oppress others who speak in dialect AAEV	Students express confusion over why police would shoot someone in the back. Students express beliefs about what language says about who you are	Students discuss and write letter response to student protest letter. Students engage in class discussion of shared letters and standards of English	1.Students write response to students from assigned persona (Police or Newsday) 2. Students write reflection on writing task.
Language Instruction using examples of Reggie Jordan and Richard Sherman	Article on Thug Language, Richard Sherman on-field interview,	Language Analysis-Motivations for writing letter, Language as Identity Expression, Racial Bias	What does society value about expression? Students express differences in how black students talk. There is some dispute between students about identifying as black and using or not using AAEV	Students discuss what white values are in language expression and how those values are used to judge Richard Sherman and Reggie Jordan	Discussion-whole class to assess small group work from Reggie Jordan letters
Final Day "Thug" Language	Article on Thug language, Clip from Daily Show episode on Rob Ford,	To engage students in discussion on how white standards of behavior and expression	What does white society value in terms of behavior? How do different standards of judgment	Students answer discussion questions analyzing language used to judge Rob	Worksheet for discussion and analysis of language in episode of *The Daily Show*

	Justin Bieber, and Richard Sherman	are used to privilege some white celebrities and oppress celebrities of color	apply to people of different races?	Ford, Justin Bieber, and Richard Sherman	
Transition lesson from language instruction to "Recitatif"	Buzzfeed's *23 things to love about Richard Sherman*, video of Richard Sherman man-on-the-street interviews asking, "Who is a better cornerback, Richard Sherman or Durrell Reavis?" "Recitatif" by Toni Morrison reading packet	To draw thematic connections between oppressed characters and content over the past several days To reveal Richard Sherman as funny, goofy character, to show dimensions of his personality	What are the connections or similarities we see between fictionalized accounts of oppression in Steinbeck's novel and contemporary accounts?	Students are asked to draw thematic or symbolic connections between characters in Steinbeck's Of Mice and men, and men in language instruction lessons (Richard Sherman and Reggie Jordan)	Group discussion making connections across texts and characters and "Recitatif" reading packet
Guided Reading "Recitatif"	"Recitatif" by Toni Morrison reading packet	To closely read and analyze relationships, characters, and themes of oppression in short story.	Students question what it means to be an orphan and character motivations of mothers and two central characters, Twyla and Roberta.	Students must respond to questions in close reading packet.	Written answers in packet and discussion in small groups.
Guided Reading	"Recitatif" by Toni	To closely read and	Students negotiate	Students respond to	Written responses in packet, small

"Recitatif" Day 2	Morrison close reading packet	analyze relationships, characters, and themes of oppression in short story.	author's intentions regarding racial ambiguity of characters	questions in packet and teacher-generated questions during whole class discussion	group discussion and whole-class discussion
"Recitatif" Drawing Assessment, lead to assessment & assessment work day 2 (Days 1 &2)	"Recitatif" by Toni Morrison close reading packet	To visually represent through a paper drawing one of three reunions between characters, Twyla and Roberta in short story.	Some students express beliefs about who is white and who is black and why, but no other dilemmas.	Teacher finishes reading story and has students finish discussion of questions in packet. Students begin working on drawings	Drawing of one of three reunions between Roberta and Twyla and written defense of drawing
Theater of the Oppressed Final Assessment for OMM Day 1	3 original scenes from Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men	I can understand how performance can help us understand or can help us be better thinkers and readers. And I can identify and re-envision acts of oppression in Of Mice and Men.	Student dilemmas are limited to shyness, but this is rare. Observed student groups try out various voices and delivery of lines. They coach and encourage each other.	Students must act out a scene where characters are oppressed in the novel, Of Mice and Men. Students make interpretive choices about the roles they play and delivery of lines.	Students must fill out character preparation sheet. They have to perform scene as it originally appears in the novel. Student audience has to identify and make suggestions for how to revise oppressive scenes.
Theater of the Oppressed	3 original scenes from Of	I can act out revised scenes to	Student dilemmas are limited to	Students plan and act out revised	Students have to turn in reflection and evaluation of

Revised Scenes OMM Day 2	Mice and Men and student revised scripts	stop oppression or empower oppressed characters. "Change it to take the power back."	performance dilemmas, feeling shy, forgetting lines. There are dilemmas attached to use of oppressive language. Students spontaneously revise "n-word" to "nagger"	scenes to eliminate oppression. Students evaluate peers performances based on changes in character, movement, and dialogue.	peers' performances to teacher. No data collection other than class recording of performances.

Lesson 1: Language and Power

In the first lesson (Appendix B), students developed criteria for understanding how language conveys race and identity and how that race and identity is perceived. The goal according to Betty was to discuss the question, "Who decides how we express ourselves?" from multiple perspective and multiple texts. Students began the lesson by working in small groups to read and propose a response to a letter composed by a class of Black students who are protesting the death of one of their classmates' brothers. The original letter appears in June Jordan's collection of essays titled *On Call*, but was also published in a collection of essays on critical reading (Jordan, 2007). The original letter was drafted both in Black English and 'textbook' English. The purpose of having students respond to the letter in small groups is to generate a conversation about the power of language and how language use and expectations can change perceptions and responses. Also, the goal was to make students more conscious of prejudices or stereotypes they and others may harbor. Such an awareness is important for the later lesson on the short story, "Recitatif" by Toni Morrison (1997). Thus the activity asking students to respond to the letter written in Black English was to help raise a consciousness and sensitivity to both

overt and subtle ways in which readers draw on their own identities and their own prejudices to draw conclusions about individuals.

Lesson 2: Media Bias and Language of Oppression

This lesson (Appendix C) was to build new readings related to the question of "Who decides how we express ourselves?" Betty was most inspired by the recent NFL ban on the use of the n-word and had asked us to consider this as a central focus of one of our lessons. Seattle Seahawk cornerback, Richard Sherman, had not long after the initial controversy (created by White teammate Richie Incognito calling Richard Martin the n-word) had been labeled a "thug" by multiple media sources after talking passionately in an on-field interview with Erin Andrews. The students were asked to watch the on-field interview and then the following day's press conference where Sherman addressed being called "thug." Students initially filled out a viewing guide with response questions like, "Richard Sherman says, "So I'm talking loud; I'm talking like I'm not supposed to." What does he mean when he says, "that he's not supposed to"? Who decides how we express ourselves?" Students then watched a video clip from *The Daily Show* in which Rob Ford's behavior and media portrayal was compared to that of Justin Bieber and contrasted with that of Richard Sherman. Students also filled out a video guide in response to this video with example questions like, "Are all three of these people being held to the same standard? Should they be? Why or why not?" Class discussion of each viewing guide followed each video. Students also discussed an article (Waldron, 2014) written on the topic of media bias in the context of the media's labeling of Richard Sherman as a "thug."

Lesson 3: Questioning Racial Stereotypes

The third lesson (Appendix D) features a short story. Toni Morrison (1997) crafted a story called "Recitatif" in such a way as to mask or confuse the racial identities of the two main

characters and one minor character. Morrison's authorial choice is one that many readers may

ignore and could lead to confusion, but the authorial choice also provokes readers to rely on

racial stereotypes to infer each character's racial identity in order to understand at least three

major and several minor racial conflicts in the story. Betty's students read the story in whole-

class and small group settings and answered comprehension and response questions during their

reading. Students also engaged in some whole-class discussion of the story, but as Betty saw this

as one of two culminating activities for her sequence of lessons, she did not want to interfere too

much with interpretive authority (Allington, 2012) and assigned a student assessment where

students had to portray their interpretation of one of the racial conflicts through a drawing and a

written defense of that drawing.

Lesson 4: Re-Imagining Oppression

In the final lesson (Appendix E), students developed an understanding for the procedures

involved in Boal's (1992)Theater of the Oppressed in order to better understand the experience

of the oppressed characters in Steinbeck's (1937) novel, *Of Mice and Men*. Among the original

intentions of the art form were to educate the public on the lived situations of the oppressed and

to collaboratively seek solutions to both internal and external factors contributing to the

oppression (Schaedler, 2010). By learning this theatrical method of enacting the scene of

oppression, stopping the scene, and revising or rewriting the scene to empower the oppressed the

students engaged in both comprehension and critical aspects of reading and interpretation.

Acting as the characters from the novel will required understanding of their personalities, their

motives, and their social positioning (Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007; Nussbaum, 2010). Stopping

the oppression in the selected scenes required a recognition of the oppression, but

revising/rewriting the scenes to alter the power positions requires a kind of interpretive skill that

seems to encourage the kind of political maturity (Cook, 2013) that resists and reshapes the basic

interpretation of the text. For this task, student groups relied on understanding of the text and a re-imagining of the sources of oppression

The first three lessons were conceived and designed by the four teachers during five observed meetings of the PLC. The fourth lesson was conceived of by Mellie and me in our prior collaborative experiences, but was adopted by Betty as a more critically literate assessment of the end of the novel, *Of Mice and Men.*

Data Collection

Transcripts

The previous two sections which provided description of the sequence of observations of the five PLC meetings and the four focal classroom lessons represented two of the major sources of data, catalog and transcripts. As discussed in the prior sections the PLC meetings occurred bi-weekly and met for two hours. The classroom lessons were instantiated over nine days. Each class period is 50 minutes long. All aspects of classroom talk were video recorded, whole class discussion and small group discussion. For each lesson involving group work, two groups were randomly selected to be recorded.

Focal teacher interviews

Shortly after each lesson observation, the focal teacher was interviewed for her evaluation of the effectiveness of the lesson, the level of student engagement, and student articulations/demonstrations of the goals of the PLC and/or Betty's other pedagogical goals. The semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A) was designed to provoke reflective responses from the focal teacher about her instruction and about student learning.

Lesson plan artifacts

The lesson plans were also included as part of the data collection. While the conceptual underpinnings of the lessons and the scaffolded skills needed to teach the lessons were part of the PLC meetings, the execution of the lesson and the particulars of instruction was left up to Betty. At times, she supplemented the PLC lesson design with other materials, like worksheets or questions cast by power point on the board. These materials were also collected (See Appendices F-H) and/or accounted for in field notes.

Student Assessments

Each of the four lessons had at least one student assessment used as means for students to capture their thinking about the content of the lesson and the critical stances they were taking in regards to that content. These assessments came in a variety forms, the position-taking letter in response to the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan, the "quick write" reflection on the motivations of the Brothers and Sisters, the viewing guide questions for two videos on Richard Sherman being called a "thug" by media outlets, the viewing guide for *The Daily Show's* satirical exposure of media's racial bias, and a student drawing of one of three racial conflicts in "Recitatif'" (Morrison, 1997) with a written defense of the student's visual interpretation.

Data Selection and Analysis

Conceptual change in teachers as well as students is central to this study. This is because the teachers together articulated a common goal "To raise student and teacher consciousness about power, race, and socioeconomic status through discussion of literature and non-fiction." That goal was set to transform current practices in their 10th grade ELA classes. The PLC of four teachers selected texts that focused on critical stances against authority in literature interpretation (Rabinowitz P. , 1992; Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998), language (Jordan, 2007), and social hierarchies (Delpit, 2012) to inform their work toward meeting the PLC goal. Likewise, the

66

curricular texts being used for students raise issues about oppression (Steinbeck, 1937) and the consequences of ignoring oppression (Morrison, 1997; Young, 2010). For these reasons, a content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was applied to the various discourses enacted through the PLC meetings and the classroom dialogues. Because the existing research on critical literacy studies demonstrates limited descriptions of classroom procedures and activities that prompt critical readings, I included content analyses of the student demonstrations of learning as well. Thus various contexts and discourses of critical interpretation of texts were analyzed. Keeping in mind the idea that "Discourse is a form of social action" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) I wanted to bring to light how the social awareness of language, power, race, and oppression manifested through the various discourses observed in two cases. From the case of the PLC, the discourse analyzed included teacher talk about texts and their related lesson plan materials. From the case of the focal classroom, the discourse analyzed was whole-class talk, small group-talk, and the demonstrations of learning from each of the four focal lessons: a position-taking letter to the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan, a "quick write" reflection from the same lesson on language and power, a viewing guide analyzing media's racial bias, and drawings and written rationales analyzing awareness of racial stereotypes.

If "discourse is a form of social action," (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) coding the content of these various discourses from the features of critical literacy would allow me to describe instances of critical response to texts across all sources of discourse to see if the teachers and students were actually meeting the stated goal generated by the PLC.

Stages of Coding Analysis

Coding began once all data was collected from the 5 PLC meetings and the 9 days of classroom observation. In the initial stages of transcribing PLC and classroom discourse,

67

cataloguing (Merriam, 2009) was used to organize the discourse into conversational turns, a turn in this stage was a single topic of discussion. Anytime there was a notable shift in topic a new episode in the discussion was charted. This also allowed for me to make some choices about what episodes of the PLC meetings and classroom observations needed full transcription and what could be captured in description. As PLC and classroom transcripts became more complete, open coding (Purcell-Gates, 2004) was initially applied to capture the topics in in conversational turns. In this stage of analysis, generic codes for race talk and critical literacy (Freebody & Luke, 2003) emerged. The initial codes were repeatedly monitored for effectiveness in capturing what behaviors and beliefs were being expressed during PLC and classroom dialogues This process follows the principles of the constant comparative method (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Critical Literacy

In the second round of coding greater definition was considered in terms of defining critical literacy. This time I used subcodes directly influenced by Freebody and Luke (2003)'s *Four Resources Model*, which was defined in chapter two. The codes are authorial criticism, language analysis, and transforming normative behavior. Conversational turns had to show an individual seeing a text or an argument as constructed and had to question or criticize that construction in order be coded for authorial criticism. Turns exhibiting language analysis had to show questions regarding the power of language. Turns exhibiting transforming normative behavior had to offer intentional re-creation of cultural norms. But not enough of the PLC and classroom conversations were being captured through these codes alone. Initially, process-oriented codes were developed and then abandoned as they didn't seem consistent with the research questions.

68

Comprehension

In the third round of coding, comprehension codes were developed from Hillocks and Ludlow's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension (1984). I was familiar with this taxonomy and had used it before to assess my own students' comprehension. The taxonomy consists of seven levels of comprehension, but the first two can be characterized by features that are directly stated in a literary text. The other five levels require more inference from various sources or literary features and demonstrate more advanced comprehension. As I saw some of this taxonomy enforcing New Critic views of "right readings" (Rabinowitz P. , 1992), I abandoned the seven levels and sought to describe instances of basic comprehension and advanced comprehension. This could be a contested part of my design, but I wanted to show that comprehension questions that were not easily characterized as critical literacy were part of the discourse in teacher and student discourse.

Classroom Talk about Race

In later passes through the data, I wanted to capture with greater precision the variation in talk about race. Some of this talk was captured through the critical literacy codes, but much was not. I think tried to apply Attwood's (2011) characterization of teacher's approaches to talking about race, but this too provided coding for very narrow portions of the PLC and classroom data as most of these characterizations described resistance or fear toward discussing race.

Authorial Readings

In one of the final passes through the data, I realized that much of what both the teachers and students were doing in terms of critical readings was inspired directly by the PLC self-selected text, *Authorizing Readers* (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998). As I reread the theoretical case that Rabinowitz and Smith make for reading for authorial audience, the imagined or ideal readers

that the author had in mind while writing, I realized that much of the lesson design talk and the classroom talk could be characterized by this interpretive work. I then developed from the pedagogical text four codes that defined resistant readings of literature according to Rabinowitz and Smith: author's intention, humanizing the text world, and seeing interpretive possibility to make sense of the text. This round of coding revealed the most resonance between the content of the PLC meetings and the content of the classroom activities. Ultimately, developing codes from a pedagogical text on resistant readings of literature made the most sense, especially since that text was the text the four of selected to transform our teaching and meet the goal we articulated for the year. These codes also honored the teacher inquiry (Goswami, Lewis, Rutherford, & Waff, 2009) aspect of my research design, as I wanted to capture the literacy practices that the teachers engaged in order to design the critical reading lessons for the students in their classrooms. I also developed a few other related codes that I label "democratic behaviors." This idea of democracy and interpretive communities is addressed by Rabinowitz and Smith (1998) and invited further description of the interactions between the teachers and the students in the focal classroom discussions. The subcodes for this included shared difference or positive opposing, soliciting knowledge from home institutions, and relating lived experiences to make sense of others' interpretations of texts.

Only the initial open coding was done by hand. All other coding was completed using ATLAS.ti software. This software tool allowed me to count code occurrences and manage the five PLC transcripts, the nine classroom transcripts, the 19 letters to the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan, the 20 "quick write" reflections on the motivations of the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan, and the 19 images and rationales from interpretations of Morrison's (1997) short story, "Recitatif." The additional data sources of PLC minutes of meetings, lists of texts read by

70

PLC members during meetings, the semi-structured interviews of the focal teacher Betty and her

lesson plan materials were not included as part of the code counts reported in the data analysis

chapters four and five. Instead these sources provided secondary sources for triangulation of data

(See Table 3.5). To confirm the reliability of my coding I met with two other graduate students,

to discuss my coding of PLC transcripts and classroom transcripts. I provided them with the

coding manual after initial training meetings and we coded the transcripts independently. We

then met at a later date to discuss all of our coding of these transcripts. During the course of our

conversation, when we saw differences, we discussed and negotiated each difference to reach

agreement, sometimes this meant that my reading of the turn and the subsequent coding was

more persuasive, sometimes it mean that I honored their readings as more perceptive and salient

to the codes. This method of discussing all codes represents a more sociocultural approach to

analysis as described by Smagorinsky (2008). Additionally, as I selected quotes from the

transcripts that captured the data from the narrative standpoint required by a case study (Stake,

1995), I employed member checks, asking the members of the PLC to read segments of the data

analysis to be sure that I was capturing their experience of the conversations, and the classroom

activities, in the case of Betty and her students.

Table 3.5 Data Triangulation and Correlation to Research Questions

Data source	Research Question	Dimensions of Data	Triangulation	Coding
PLC Observations	**RI**	-Teacher discourse about pedagogy, interpretation of non-traditional pedagogical texts -Teacher discourse about planning and instruction -Teacher discourse	Lesson materials, classroom observations	Authorial Readings Democratic Interactions Critical Literacy Comprehension Race: Instructional Goals

		about anticipated student thinking/response		
Classroom Observation	**R2, R3**	-Teacher-student discourse on critical responses to supplemental texts, inquiry tasks, and curricular literature -Student-student discourse on supplemental texts, tasks, and curricular literature	PLC transcripts, student assessments	Authorial Readings Democratic Interactions Critical Literacy Comprehension Race: Instructional Goals
Student artifacts	**R2**	Student discourse (written, drawn, and enacted) in response to supplemental and curricular texts	Lesson plans, Classroom transcripts	Authorial Readings Democratic Interactions Critical Literacy Comprehension Race: Instructional Goals
Focal teacher interviews	**R2, R3**	-Teacher discourse on pedagogical values, alignment between pedagogy and classroom practice -Teacher evaluative discourse on teaching and student performance	PLC transcripts, Classroom transcripts	Authorial Readings Democratic Interactions Critical Literacy Comprehension Race: Instructional Goals
Lesson plan artifacts	**R1, R2, R3**	Teacher discourse on pedagogical values, scaffolded instruction, questioning techniques, and inquiry design	PLC transcripts, Student artifacts	Authorial Readings Democratic Interactions Critical Literacy Comprehension Race: Instructional Goals

The next chapter will discuss with greater depth the narrative of the PLC and analyze the

findings to research question one: "What literacy practices do the four teachers in the PLC use to

interpret texts and design lessons related to oppression and privilege?"

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS- THE CASE OF THE PLC

As described in the previous chapter, the design of this study relies on two related cases, the case of the PLC of four teachers of 10th grade English where I am a participant-observer and the case of a focal teacher from that PLC, Betty, and her instructional practice and interactions with students from her 10th grade tracked classroom. Because of this structure, the analysis will be divided into two chapters: one analyzing the findings of the PLC discussions and data sources and the other analyzing findings from focal teacher, Betty's classroom interactions (teacher-led discussions, small group discussions, and learning products) with the 24 student participants of this study. Both analyses describe the interpretive practices demonstrated in and applied by the four of us in the PLC in order to meet our stated goal for the academic year, "To raise student and teacher consciousness about power, race, and socioeconomic status through discussion of literature and non-fiction" The data collected as part of the two cases will address the major questions of the study.

Research Question1: What literacy practices do the four teachers in the PLC use to interpret texts and design lessons related to oppression and privilege?

Research Question 2: What literacy practices do the students in the focal teacher's classroom use to interpret texts and complete tasks related to oppression and privilege?

Research Question 3: What practices, other than those articulated during PLC meetings, does the focal teacher enact to encourage interpretation of acts of oppression and privilege?

Chapter 4 focuses predominantly on the first research questions and the literacy practices of our PLC, while Chapter 5 focuses on questions two and three, the literacy practices of the focal teacher and her students.

The five major codes of the study: authorial readings, critical literacy, democratic interactions, literature comprehension, and race were used to analyze and describe the complex interpretive practices of the teachers of the PLC. These codes help to describe the dimension of the conversations in the PLC work, work that included dialogue for the purpose of informing and extending our knowledge base with regards to issues of oppression in the literature we teach, in the way that we structure our lessons, in the content of the literature that has been historically taught in the discipline of English, and in current sociocultural contexts outside the classroom.

Two of the codes, the *authorial readings* code and democratic interactions code were developed from the book that we, the four teachers of the PLC chose as our central source of pedagogical study, *Authorizing Readers: Resistance and Respect in the Teaching of Literature* (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998). These two codes were applied to the transcripts of the five two-hour meetings of the PLC to see if the four of us were engaging in the same rebellious readings that we were planning to evoke from students during the lessons we designed collaboratively. The authorial readings code accounted for the resistant interpretive practices such as identifying the author's intention, which according to Smith and Rabinowitz are efforts to infer the author's message to his/her imagined audience. This idea of the "imagined" audience is akin to what Herrnstein Smith (1988) distinguishes as the "original" or "immediate" readers that are sometimes even directly addressed in works of fiction. However, evaluating a text for the author's original intention is not always possible or likely given that readers' interpretations are influenced by sociocultural contexts (Gee, 2000) as well as personal experiences of the texts

75

(Herrnstein Smith, 1988). Rabinowitz and Smith seem to account for both of these ideas by arguing that authorizing readers involves allowing for interpretive possibility and "humanizing the text world." Both of these aspects of interpretation were used as subcodes in the authorial readings code. The democratic interactions code accounts for those interpersonal moves that are important to inviting debate or discussion, that is, resistance, through interaction with other readers. The subcodes included in this category were shared difference, the invitation or provocation of differing opinions, honoring home knowledge or sources of knowledge outside of the text, seeking moral insight from the texts, and relating lived experiences or sharing personal narratives to make sense of the studied texts.

The critical literacy code was applied to track evidence of language analysis by the members of the PLC. These codes were chosen because of the original goal articulated by the PLC to "To raise student and teacher consciousness about power, race, and socioeconomic status through discussion of literature and non-fiction" and the later articulated goal to "examine issues of race and power in language." Critical literacy is a burgeoning educational practice, but one that is still uncommon in the majority of American classrooms. The subcodes used are based on Freebody & Luke's (1999) *Four Resources Model*, a seminal framework for application of critical literacy in the classroom. The subcodes that fall within this coding family include authorial criticism, language analysis, and transforming normative values. The practice of authorial criticism is consistent with the literary analysis practices that Rabinowitz & Smith (1998) outline in parts of their book, but it was included within the critical literacy code so as to include any criticism of an author, in other words, not just the author of literary texts. This is a minor distinction, but because the PLC study and the content of the collaboratively-designed lessons often involved non-fiction texts and video, the critical literacy code allowed for coding of

authors and speakers of every text genre and modality. The language analysis subcode accounts for any analysis at the word-level. The transform norms code is a significant part of any critical theory as the ultimate goal is to analyze for the purpose of transforming existing power structures, including those structures asserted in classroom texts, and classroom interactions.

Basic and complex comprehension codes were also a part of the analysis of interpretive practices for the PLC and the classroom interactions. The authorial readings and critical literacy codes involve interpretation, often applying sophisticated ways of making meaning with a text, but these practices remain uncommon in American high school ELA classrooms. The comprehension codes address basic meaning-making, that is drawing meaning from directly stated information and complex meaning-making, synthesizing information from multiple sources across a text or inferring from figurative language (Hillocks & Ludlow, 1984) was included to show that these more familiar practices were also present in both the teachers' dialogue and the classroom interactions.

The race code was a code used in initial passes through the data, but became so overwhelming in its frequency so that the code was later divided into subcodes that represented teachers' goals for discussing or planning discussions about race. The race code is somewhat unique in that it originally was conceived of based on the precedence of Attwood's (2011) study of a PLC trying to teach anti-racist content. I anticipated that my colleagues in the PLC would express similar feelings of fear about teaching racially-charged materials and that the students would express similar connections between systemic racism and personal experiences. While some of the dialogue in the research could be characterized in by these descriptions, ultimately these codes did not capture with much accuracy the content of the PLC or the classroom conversations about race. Instead, the race code was applied anywhere that it became an explicit

topic and then any of the critical literacy or authorial reading codes could provide greater specificity to how race was being addressed. A subcode was later added to account for any language that demonstrated a recognition of the goal to understand systemic oppression as this provided a more nuanced description of the race dialogues in both the teacher talk and the classroom talk.

Table 4.1 shows the frequency with which these codes appear across the five two-hour meetings of the four teachers, myself included, in the PLC. The frequencies of the major codes helped to shed light on the most significant interpretive practices of the study. In other words, the categories of authorial readings, critical literacy, and race had similar numerical representation and thus emerged as the central themes in the interpretive practices of the PLC. The findings related to all five categories will be discussed throughout the chapter, but the greatest emphasis will be placed on the three themes, authorial readings, critical literacy, and race.

Table 4.1 Code Frequency for Interpretive Practices of PLC

Code	Frequency	Percentage
Authorial Readings	162	25%
Critical Literacy	192	30%
Democratic Interactions	89	14%
Literature Comprehension	74	11%
Race	131	20%

Professional Text Selection

Before addressing the analysis of the major themes of the study, it is important to situate the conversations of the PLC dialogue within the contexts of the texts we selected as professional development. This is a unique aspect and finding related to our interpretive work as teachers and collaborators. The professional text selection of our PLC was not detailed in the methodology

chapter with the exception of the central pedagogical text by Rabinowitz and Smith (1998) because we continually added, in impromptu fashion, to their professional readings at each meeting of the PLC. In this way, the collection of data necessarily included a record of all of the texts that we four teachers accessed and read as part of our bi-weekly discussions. Some of the texts listed in Table 4.3 are texts that were found (via the internet), read and discussed in-situ, some were copied and shared various members as potential classroom texts, and some were visited and revisited by some PLC members and not by others, but became reiterated as common references in the five observed meetings. Table 4.3 was designed to capture the variety of purpose, genre, and modality, and subject of the texts that we, the four teachers, read and consulted as part of our work.

The central purpose of the PLC from the beginning of the school year was "To raise student and teacher consciousness about power, race, and socioeconomic status through discussion of literature and non-fiction." For this reason, we, the PLC members, discussed several texts and issues that in past studies of teacher response to literature have been subjected to silence, self-censorship and avoidance (Freedman & Johnson, 2000-2001; Glazier, et al., 2000; Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Such contentious and controversial topics often make teachers feel isolated in their efforts to bring change to the classroom (Freedman & Johnson, 2000-2001) or make them resort to teaching texts that uphold familiar ideological positions (Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006). However, the four teachers, Betty, Gloria, Mellie, and I were aware of the controversy of these issues and desired to confront and challenge familiar texts and ideologies so we sought out supplemental texts that would fulfill these aims. This literacy practice, while not explicitly coded for, was a repeated practice during and between every PLC meeting, the five in this study, and all those that took place in the academic year. This feature of

79

our professional practice also contributes to the field of research on PLC's as no other study indicates such diversity in readings. Other studies of teachers developing critical literacy practices have called for greater specificity and "concrete examples" to make such practices more visible for uncertain practitioners (Rogers, 2014). Thus, the description of the interpretations that lead to the design of critical literacy lessons is important, but so too is the content and resources we used to increase our own knowledge and awareness of oppression in the English classroom. As mentioned in the introduction, an awareness of the systemic oppression is more than many white teachers recognize and address (Rubin, 2008).

The very first supplemental (supplemental here is used to indicate any selected text other than *Authorizing Readers*, the central pedagogical text) article we read and discussed in the PLC was "Reading "Whiteness" in English Studies" (Barnett, 2000). One of Barnett's main arguments proposes that "white instructors, especially, locate our own roles in relation to "whiteness" and to explore these roles in ways that "dislodge it from its centrality and authority" (Dyer 10)" (2000, p. 33). This became a pivotal, if unspoken goal for us in the PLC, as text after text, both professional and those intended for the classroom were selected to explore issues of whiteness in our pedagogy and practice. All of us recognized this as an ignored and unfamiliar topic in our past practice. To illustrate this idea, and the previously mentioned idea that this PLC was discussing controversial issues by society's standards, several selected texts were written by Ta-Nehisi Coates in response to the NFL's decision to ban the n-word. This was a hot-button topic in the second semester of the year of this study and we, the members of the PLC found great similarity between the race issues we were trying to explore in our classes and the issues that the NFL was addressing within its own franchise. Coates was taking on the cultural issues related to banning the n-word (Politics and the African-American Human Language, 2014) and

80

the PLC found his articles a resource for thinking, discussion, and reflection of their own practices. The texts themselves were not coded as part of the overall code counts, only the dialogue the teachers had about the texts during the five meetings observed. As this is a case study, the uniqueness must be such that it is worth close examination (Yin, 2009). The text selection was the most unique in any of the literature on professional learning communities. The majority of the texts selected were not pedagogical, but current events texts that addressed issues of race, power, and privilege. Many academic articles call for professional development in critical literacy (Jones, Webb, & Neumann, 2008) (Nieto, 2000) or call for more studies that show how teachers learn (Boud & Hager, 2012), but none detail everyday texts teachers access to develop their own understanding of issues related to social justice, oppression, or plurality.

Table 4.2 PLC Selected Texts

Author	Title	Modality	Text genre	Subject	Primary Use
Barnett, Timothy	"Reading "Whiteness" in English studies"	Print	Literary theory, language theory	Whiteness as inherent part of English study	PD
Bayless, Skip	ESPN *First Take*	Cable broadcast	Sports television	Bayless challenges Sherman to defend his record and his "smack" talking.	PD
Brooks, Gwendolyn	"Primer for Blacks"	Print	Poetry	Pride in Blackness	PD, possible instruction
Brooks, Gwendolyn	"We Real Cool"	Print	Poetry	The pitfalls of running with a fast crowd	PD, possible instruction
Burns, Robert	"To a Mouse"		Poetry	A farmer's empathy for a mouse	PD, possible instruction (used mostly to illustrate different dialects)
Caldwell, Alicia	"Is 'thug' the new word of choice for	Online text	Editorial, mainstream media	Richard Sherman press conference	PD

	bigots?"				
Coates, Ta-Nehisi	"Found in translation"	Print	Journalistic essay	Examples of "imputing morality into language."	PD
Coates, Ta-Nehisi	"Politics and the African-American human language"	Print	Journalistic Essay	Implications of banning n-word from NFL	PD
Delpit, Lisa	"Picking up the broom" in *Multiplication is for White People*	Print	Pedagogical text	Racism and oppression in American education	PD
Farrar, Doug	"Richard Sherman says it's really disappointing to be called a thug"	Print	Sports article, Major media source	Richard Sherman's press conference	PD, instruction
Howard, Greg	"Talented, arrogant, and Black"	Online text	Sports blog-Major media source	Richard Sherman's post-game interview	PD
Jordan, June	"Nobody mean more to me than you and the future life of Willie Jordan"	Print	Pedagogical text	Narrative of Jordan's instruction in Black English and Black students who employ Black English as language of advocacy and activism	PD, instruction
Morrison, Toni	"Recitatif"	Print	Literature	How racial divides follow two orphaned girls	Instruction
Rabinowitz ,, Peter J.	"Against Close Reading"	Print	Literary theory	Pitfalls of close reading, idiosyncratic reading	PD
Roake, Jessica	"Not Helpful: Making kids read *The Help* is not the way to teach them about the civil rights struggle"	Online text	Education article	Criticism of *The Help* as offensive misrepresentation of Civil Rights era	PD

Sherman, Richard	ESPN *SportsCenter*	Cable broadcast	Sports television	Sherman interviews public in New Orleans about his record	Instruction
Stewart, John	*The Daily Show* - 1/30/2014 episode	Cable broadcast	Satire	Rob Ford and Justin Bieber's behavior compared to Richard Sherman	PD, Instruction
Waldron, Travis	"Richard Sherman: 'Thug' is 'accepted way of calling somebody the n'word'"	Online text	AP article, mainstream media	Richard Sherman post-game interview	Instruction

There is variety in terms of the modality of the texts we read in the course of the year, and this had some influence on what texts were then used in the lessons collaboratively designed to meet the PLC goal of raising student and teacher consciousness about language, power, race, and oppression. For example, as a PLC, we watched *The Daily Show* episode comparing and contrasting the behavior of Justin Bieber, Rob Ford, and Richard Sherman first to develop our own language of criticism regarding the media's labeling of Richard Sherman as a 'thug' for his animation in a post-game interview, but later the PLC members decided that this clip would help students see the systemic racism in how white and black celebrities are posited differently and pilloried differently by the media.

As noted in Table 4.2, there is also variety in the text genres. Listed among these are texts that were intended for professional development such as Delpit's (2012) *Multiplication is for White People* and Jordan's (2007) "Nobody mean more to me than you and the future life of Willie Jordan." Note that some of these texts remained purely as influences on or challenges to

pedagogical practices. This was certainly the case with some of the literary theory, too. *Against Close Reading* provoked important thinking about interpretive authority in literature and the downfalls of a New Criticism perspective, but it remained relegated to professional discussion. The same could be said for journalistic texts like Greg Howard's sports blog and Skip Bayless' interview of Richard Sherman. These texts helped us in the PLC see how pervasive the stereotyping of Black athletes was, and this was critical to developing our thinking about systems and language of oppression in those systems, but those texts were never used in any of our classroom discussions.

Other texts, which may seem more common in a PLC of four English teachers, like Robert Burns' and Gwendolyn Brooks' poetry, were strongly considered during the brainstorming and development of lessons to expose students to different conceptions of the English language, but were ultimately abandoned through the different iterations of personal reflection, dialogue, and attempts at psychologizing the curriculum (Smith & Girod, 2003). The iterative process of reading, selecting, re-reading, re-imagining, reflecting, and acquiring are not only a defining feature of our work in the PLC, it is also some of the most important work in my career as a high school teacher. My colleagues shared similar feelings. In the year-end meeting, Mellie asserts that it was the supplementary materials and not the central pedagogical text, *Authorizing Readers* (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998) that she found most worthwhile:

Mellie: I have to admit that the other texts we found were more interesting.

Kierstin: What do you mean, the articles we read?

Mellie: Yeah.

Kierstin: I love that.

Mellie: And it happened more by happenstance than deliberation.

84

Betty: Yeah.

Kierstin: That's what I feel like is wrong with other PLC's they think the only thing they can use is the book they bought.

Betty: Yeah, they're doing the *habits of mind* and they end up discussing the same thing over and over again.

Mellie's preference for the articles we read over the pedagogical texts is another important finding related to PLC study. The articles, books, and videos were complex and provided a rich resource for discussion and for planning and instruction. Mellie comments on the idea that the texts were found "by happenstance more than deliberation." To some degree this is false, the articles, mostly found through online searches, didn't just fall from the sky and so there was intention behind our individual and collective searches during PLC time. But, the articles were found during PLC time. In this sense, all of us were immediately satisfying the need for more knowledge, the need to understand more deeply of the issues related to language, race, and power. We didn't spend hours laboring over the central pedagogical text because once we focused on the topic of the NFL banning the n-word the pursuit of information regarding the controversy and other related issues, both contemporary and historical, claimed a kind of immediacy for us. Thus, the search for information was not narrowed or restricted in the same way as for those PLC's, like the one referenced in the same discussion that chose to focus on *Habits of Mind* (Costa, 2009) and remained loyal to the pedagogical text they selected to fuel their discussions. The four of us, in a continual search for new knowledge demonstrated what other researchers have called the inquiry stance in professional learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Snow-Gerono, 2005), which was also allowed us to provide more responsive instruction, a feature of instruction important to students of diverse backgrounds (Sinnema, Sewell, &

Milligan, 2011; So, 2013). Additionally, the compulsion to keep reading and researching articles related to racism, and racialized language in the NFL showed our commitment to understanding from multiple perspectives, sources, and genres the contemporary issues of race in American institutions.

Authorial Readings

The previous section addressed the content and genres of the texts the teachers read to inform their professional knowledge and to design and plan lessons to address the goal of raising consciousness about race and power in language and in practices in their classrooms. The following sections examine the interpretive practices applied during the discussions of those texts. The remaining sections of this chapter describes how the themes of authorial readings, critical literacy, democratic interactions, comprehension, and race emerged as part the teachers' endeavors to reflect on their own knowledge and extend and challenge the literacy practices of their students.

Authorial readings is a term defined by Rabinowitz and Smith (1998), authors of the central pedagogical text the PLC selected. They argue that a key component in authorial readings is "taking seriously the cost in human terms" (p.35) of the interpretive positions that readers take. In this way, any reader of a text, student readers, and perhaps, more importantly, teacher readers must consider how their interpretations of characters impact in real ways the characters in the story world and those readers affected by the discussion of story. The means of producing authorial readings is by reading a text for the authorial audience, that is the author's imagined audience and then to invite reader response questions that challenge or apply contemporary contexts to the author's intention. This process "confounds hierarchies that have long existed in the classroom" (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998, p. 37). Such an upset in authority can threaten

teachers' sense of control or expertise, but is necessary to cultivate a "safe enough" space that "entertains the notion that there is more than one "right" way to interpret or address an educational dilemma" (Thornton & Romano, 2007, p. 202). A similar concept of interpretation has more recently been developed by Aukerman (2007) who advocates for what she calls *shared evaluation pedagogy*. In such a pedagogy, the teacher's interpretation of a classroom text is not privileged over the students' interpretation and instead "sees the construction of "internally persuasive" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345) textual understanding as a dialogic process without a predesignated (or necessarily common) outcome" (Aukerman, 2007, p. 94). Surrendering interpretive authority is expressly communicated in both the PLC discussions and in the focal teacher's classroom interactions and this seems primarily the result of the study of and attempt at adopting Rabinowitz and Smith's (1998) pedagogical stance. Table 4.3 shows the frequency with which authorial readings occurred in the five meetings of the PLC. Each of the five meetings had a focal topic or focal text that we, the PLC members, used as part of our inquiry into our own understandings of race and oppression or to develop lessons to raise the consciousness of students' with regard to these issues. In table 4.3 and subsequent tables that report the interpretive practices of the PLC members, the focal texts and topics are listed as identifiers, but those texts named in the table are not the singular text discussed during the two-hour meetings. As mentioned in the section on text selection, the four of us engaged in continual searches and impromptu readings of a variety of texts during each of the five meetings observed.

Table 4.3 Code Frequency for PLC *Authorial Readings*

PLC Topic	Author's Intention	Humanizing Text World	Interpretive Possibility	TOTALS
Chapter 3 of Rabinowitz & Smith (1998)	13	0	3	16
NFL bans n-word	37	10	10	57

Whiteness	0	4	8	12
Close Reading of Morrison's "Recitatif"	2	24	29	55
PLC year-end review	5	11	6	22
TOTALS:	57	49	56	162

Table 4.3 also shows the subcodes for the authorial reading practices. The authorial reading code

was broken into three subcodes, author's intention, humanizing the text world, and interpretive

possibility; each of which offers further definition to the interpretive moves made during PLC

discussions and readings. Considering the author's intention or imagined audience is part of the

authorial reading, as is the idea that the reader is trying to empathize with the characters in the

studied text. In other words, the fictional world "is a stimulus activating elements of the reader's

past experience-his experience both with literature and with life (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 11).

Additionally, authorial readings recognize interpretive possibility, this is a necessary position if

the readers, teacher and student, are going to consider multiple readings as valid, and not

privilege one dominant discourse inferred by the teacher or by published literary critics.

Determining author's intention occupied much of our PLC conversations, but it is

important to consider with more detail the texts that generated the most discussion in this

subcategory. The majority of author's intention codes are present in the meeting where the four

teachers discuss the NFL's recent attempt at banning the n word. Realize that the numbers here

don't tell the full story, at this particular two-hour meeting, much of the conversation was based

on articles on the NFL ban, but as the four of us were planning and sequencing lessons the

conversation also dipped into the intention of the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan letter and

the intention of Toni Morrison's construction of characters in "Recitatif."

Thus, multiple genres of texts compelled conversations regarding author's intention. When the four teachers were reading Coates's (2014) article on why banning the n word from the NFL would be racist, we struggled to understand the nuances of his argument:

> Mellie: If the word is used in other public spheres there'd be backlash. This is a public sphere and a public game and a public venue so why is this venue different? To continue to play devil's advocate…
>
> Gloria: I don't think he's saying that venue should be okay and in other venues it shouldn't.
>
> Kierstin: Wait, do you mean in the NFL?
>
> Mellie: Yeah, he's saying in the NFL it should be allowed.
>
> Gloria: He's saying anywhere it should be allowed by black people. And it's different if one uses it is in the in-group and one uses it in the out-group.

In this exchange, Mellie applied her experience with public and private language use to interpret Coates's intention and argument regarding the NFL's ban of the racially charged n-word, but Gloria challenged Mellie's interpretation, suggesting instead that Coates's argument required an understanding, not of public v. private, but power and racial structures in the NFL and in other American systems, that banning the n-word really takes power away from black players who use the word as part of their culture and heritage as Coates's (2014) writes, "Any effort to raise a standard for African-American humans that does not exist for non-African-American humans is racist."

The PLC struggled similarly with *authorial readings* of literature. All four members situated the central activities of the case study within a unit on Steinbeck's (1937) *Of Mice and*

Men. Our conversation on the NFL's ban of the n-word raised questions about our own use of the word when teaching a novel where the word appears repeatedly.

Kierstin: It is interesting…so if you were reading a passage out loud from a novel

do you read the n-word aloud?

Gloria: I don't know that I've ever said it out loud.

Kierstin: Because I will read it from a passage, but I will not say it. If we're talking about

the word I will not say it aloud, I will say, "n-word." And a lot of kids will say

when they're reading out loud, do I have to say this word aloud? And I say no just

say, "n-word." So I don't force them to, but I say if you do read it we know it's

not your word it's the author's words. Huh... I just wonder how other people…

Gloria: I feel there's a range in the department, right? Don't some people have their kids

read it, like it's the text. Don't some people? I don't want to say force, but not like

"No you don't have to," but almost like "it's the author's words and if we're

reading the author's words then we should read it."

Mellie: If it's the author's words, we understand it's the author's words.

Gloria: But if a kid said, I don't want to read it out loud would you say you should?

Mellie: But then again when they read it do we understand the effect? Yes.

Kierstin: What do you mean?

Mellie When they choose to read it and you hear it? Right? Does it have a greater

impact? Yes…which is often the point the author's trying to make, too…right?

Betty: Yeah.

Gloria: It depends. I don't think John Steinbeck didn't mean anything by it, but I don't

think it was like okay this will have an impact even thirty years after that or now or you know.

Kierstin: But he clearly paints Crooks as an oppressed character.

Gloria: Oh for sure.

Mellie: I mean don't you have authorial perspective or whatever? He chose to include that character for that very reason. Deliberately brings Crooks into the group with Candy.

This conversation exposed our various positions as white figures of authority in the classroom. Mellie and I defend using the n-word when reading an author's words aloud and Gloria challenged that thinking by asking us to reconsider the notion of an authorial reading. She called upon her knowledge of Steinbeck as a socially aware author, but she questioned whether he could have possibly predicted the impact that the n-word might have decades after the publication of his novel. Gloria also shared the variety of positions that white teachers take in regards to an author's use of the n word. She also hinted at the ways in which the position that the teacher takes with regard to author's intention and use of the n-word might compel an unwilling student to vocalize a racial slur. In addition to pointing out how an authorial reading has the effect of forcing a language of oppression in the classroom, this conversation also revealed the individual nature of readers and the experience they bring to the interpretation of a text. Some readers, teacher or student, may try to avoid the n-word, some may want to discuss its function in a text, but the word itself cannot be made neutral by either point of view. Therefore, the power of the authorial reading is to insist on addressing that power in classroom conversation. Smith clarifies the role of the authorial reading:

Peter and I know that our project of rehabilitating authors as essential participants in

literary conversations will seem to some to be reactionary. However, because authorial

readings are necessary if students are to offer political critiques of texts, to pay an ethical

respect to others different from themselves, and to engage with each other in common

projects, we think that our theory of the importance of authorial reading can ground truly

progressive practice (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998, p. 47).

Analyzing the role of the authorial reading in our classroom practices was important to see the

politics of the n-word and the politics within the classroom. So while the quote above indicates

that authorial readings are essential for students to engage in "political critiques of texts, respect

others, and engage in common projects," the PLC conversation indicates that the same is true for

teachers engaging in collaborative discussions about texts in their classrooms.

Humanizing the Text World

For some, it may come as a surprise that authorial intent was not coded more frequently

in the other PLC meetings, especially the meeting where the members closely read the short

story, "Recitatif" by Toni Morrison. Instead this conversation consisted of interpretive moves

where the four teacher readers identified with and felt for the characters in the story. But, in

reviewing the transcript, the discussion of the story focused so centrally on the relationship

between the two main characters Twyla and Roberta, that the repeated racial conflicts between

the two girls, whose racial identifications remain ambiguous throughout, become the background

to the story of their friendship and status as orphans (at least it did for us during our

conversation). Some may read this as a conscious or subconscious sublimation of racial issues

because the PLC consists of four white teachers and to some degree this may be true, but race is

not ignored in our discussion of the story. At the opening of the meeting, I announced that I had completed the task of writing some initial comprehension questions with the following caveat:

> Okay, let's go over umm "Recitatif." I'm telling you that most of the questions that I asked about the story have mostly to do with response, like how they think the characters are feeling or comprehension so I don't have a ton of direct race questions because I wanted to work on that together. I want you to know I wasn't ignoring race I was just trying to honor everyone's opinion.

The PLC proceeded to read the entire story together, stopping to ask questions that intentionally tried to analyze race as a factor in relationships, but more frequently analyzed relationships. In the following example of negotiating the wording of a comprehension question, race is explicitly discussed as a factor in the girls' relationship:

> Betty: Do we need to add something in the second paragraph that addresses race at all?
>
> Kierstin: 'Cause it's mentioned twice in the second paragraph, right?
>
> Betty: Yeah and it just says, "strange place with a girl from a whole 'nother race."
>
> Mellie: But the kids might bring that up because it says, "What are your impressions of her?" One thing that they might bring up on their own is that she seems kinda…
>
> Kierstin: Racist?
>
> Mellie: Racist.
>
> Gloria: Racist, yeah. That's what I was thinking.
>
> Kierstin: Okay, that's good

But later conversations about our reactions to the characters provoked questions related to the girls' interactions with each other and our reaction to such events.

Gloria: I'm not saying we have to write a question about it, but it breaks my heart when

she hugs her mom and smells her, she can't stay mad at her.

Kierstin: Oh I know. That's why I asked the question on number five, no wait…where's

the one…uh, "How would you describe Twyla's feelings toward her mother,

Mary?" She's so conflicted. I feel like…I'm hoping they'll see that conflict.

Gloria: Mmmhmmm.

In the example, Gloria interpreted the hug between Twyla and her mother with emotionally

charged language and admits that "it breaks [her] heart." Critics of reader response may see this

as little toward the effort of really comprehending a text, but that is not in alignment with

Rabinowitz and Smith's (1998) pedagogy, nor is it really in line with what literary theorists

assert about good analysis. Herrnstein-Smith (1988), McCormick (1985), Scholes (1989), and

Turski (1994) among others have suggested that emotional analysis of a text is essential to the

very purpose of literature. Other examples of the way in which we as a PLC "feel the pain of the

text" (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998) included making assertions about the girls' friendship, the

men they marry and their motivations for doing so, and their manipulation of each other's

memories and feelings.

However, these interpretations are not always immediate for the individual members, nor

are they accepted by all members of the group and these differences in opinion matter in terms of

finding a better truth or a more persuasive one at the very least, and matter to the practice of

critical response. In the following analysis of the subcode *interpretive possibility* and the

subsequent analysis of the code family *democratic interactions*, the role of dissent, both internal

and external will emerge as a critical component of the PLC's dialogic process.

Interpretive Possibility

In the course of conversation about Morrison's "Recitatif," the four of us in the PLC struggled to not only find plausible interpretations of the character interactions and Morrison's messages, but also struggled to predict how our students would interpret relationships in the story:

> Mellie: Another thing I thought. She brings up her husband and she describes her husband's family, you know. And you know in that section I was thinking, well of course she married that type of man. Why would that type of person appeal to her or examine her choice of husband…I don't know.

> Kierstin: Yeah, I don't know. Number nine, I wonder if I should just alter it some. She talks about…I mean it's not just the husband. It's the whole area. And people are coming in. The new grocery store is part of the change in Newburg. So for number nine do you think that question should be about how has Newburg changed or…something like that? Right now it says, "Roberta and Twyla reunite in a Newburg grocery store, why is a description of the store important to this meeting? Explain." But I don't think…I don't think that's it. Shouldn't the question be more about Newburg…I don't know… or their backgrounds? I don't know I feel like there's a better question than this one.

> Gloria: Yeah…I was thinking…The way it's written now I was wondering if it needed to come after they learned more about where Roberta ended up.

> Kierstin: Oh yeah.

> Gloria: But I wasn't exactly sure how to change it.

> Kierstin: So should I just put…?

95

The number of "I don't knows" and "I was wondering" or "I was thinking" prevalent throughout the brief excerpt of conversation showed the yearning for better articulation of meaning. Mellie, Gloria, and I worked on possible interpretations, but couldn't agree on a single best interpretation with regards to understanding the story. Part of the dispute here was trying to determine whether the information offered about Twyla and her adult life was more salient when considered from a relationship status regarding the description of her husband, or a setting status regarding the description of the grocery store and town in which the scene takes place. The added complication came when Gloria layered the consideration of reading as a new reader, the way she knew her students would encounter the text and how the chronology of events would also influence their understanding of what has meaning. This issue of writing questions and anticipating student responses became a much bigger source of dispute during the PLC's reading of "Recitatif" and is discussed through the lens of democratic interactions, another aspect of interpretation defined in Rabinowitz & Smith's (1998) *Authorizing Readers*.

Democratic Interactions

The subcodes in the democratic interactions family were defined based on a short, but important section in *Authorizing Readers* (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998). In this section, Smith clarifies critical differences between reader response theories (Fish, 1980), transactional theory (Rosenblatt, 1978), and the more resistant reader response that he and Rabinowitz are advocating, a theory strongly influenced by John Dewey. Smith sees an insurmountable flaw in Fish's notion of interpretive community and that is the misapplication of the term, community. He cites Harris (1989) to show that community does not account for the disputes and disagreements that occur during interpretation of a text. Smith also explains that Dewey (1944) sees such opposition as healthy. Smith goes on to describe how this quality invites difference,

96

but it also invites personal experience to enter into the conversation as individuals in his study of adult book clubs expressed enjoyment related to sharing each other's lived experiences through their dialogues about novels. A second observed feature of the adult book club interactions was the pursuit of moral insight. To account for these social moves that occur during meaning-making among multiple readers, subcodes for applying home knowledge, seeking moral insight, sharing lived experience, and provoking difference were created.   Table 4.4 provides insight into the frequency and again helps to capture the significance of each move through numerical representation. Admittedly, applying home knowledge became a somewhat problematic code. It remained rather elusive when coding both the PLC conversations and in the student interactions, but I included it because it is also a notion honored by Freebody and Luke (1999) in their definition of critical literacy, an influential component of the PLC's work. It is possible that part of the problem was difficulty observing distinct differences between home knowledge and lived experience. Lived experience is defined by characteristics of storytelling, when an individual applies the narrative of a life experience to help comprehend or interpret a text. Home knowledge is supposed to be similar to the idea of honoring individual sources of knowledge that may not be recognized or sanctioned by dominant cultures, an idea perhaps similar to the theory of "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Moral insight was another code that was rarely observed in the PLC and classroom dialogues. It seemed that the teachers, perhaps because they were more focused on issues of race and oppression, viewed these issues as more important than issues of morality; knowing right from wrong.

This also may be a conscious effort on my part not to confuse the issues of race and inequality with questions of goodness or being a good person. This too, was topic of the PLC discussion during the meeting on the NFL ban of the n-word. In the Coates's article, he quotes

James Baldwin to show the superhuman efforts that many people of color have tried to make in order to surmount racism: "If you can strike this bargain here. If you can make sure your armpits are odorless. Curl your hair. Be impeccable. Be all the things that the American public says you should do right? And you do all those things-and nothing happens really" (quoted in Coates, 2014). In other words, the impact of racism does not relate to good or bad behavior, discrimination is discrimination and occurs despite people of color's best social efforts. According to Baldwin, a Black man or woman may try to be exceptional, but exceptionality does not allow him or her to surpass the oppression of racism. And in the inverse way, white men and women cannot put an end to racism simply by being "nice." Being an ally in the fight against racism is more about resistance than it is about etiquette. Therefore, in passes through the transcripts, conversational turns that were coded as "moral insight" would have been singularly about morality without any clear relationship to racial issues. Shared difference or the invitation to discuss and debate a topic was easy to observe throughout the PLC and classroom transcripts. This code is unique in that it requires observation of multiple conversational turns, that is, contributions from various speakers, to account for the difference or opposition in different readers' interpretations. In the name of analyzing the most relevant and most frequent democratic interactions, only the areas of lived experience and shared difference in the democratic interactions code will be addressed. An interesting note is that often these codes, lived experience and shared difference co-occurred. As explained earlier, shared difference can only be coded after observing multiple turns from more than one speaker in a conversation. Thus, I allowed this code to be an exception in the study. Because an individual has content within their speech that may indicate other interpretive moves within a single turn, I coded their

individual turn, and then coded shared difference over multiple turns if there was evidence of dispute or disagreement.

Table 4.4 Code Frequency for PLC *Democratic Interactions*

PLC Topic	Home Knowledge	Moral Insight	Lived Experience	Shared Difference	TOTALS
Chapter 3 of Rabinowitz & Smith (1998)	0	0	1	3	4
NFL Bans n word	1	8	6	9	24
Whiteness	2	2	5	5	14
Close Reading of Morrison' s "Recitatif"	0	0	6	16	22
PLC Year-end review	0	0	24	2	26
TOTALS:	3	10	42	35	90

Relating Lived Experience

To show the occurrence of using a lived experience to express dissent, let's return briefly to the discussion of Morrison's "Recitatif" during the fourth meeting of the PLC. In the previous section on interpretive possibility, a conversation was excerpted where the four teachers were trying to determine the most effective way to address the character changes and the relationship between characters and setting in the story. Just before this moment of questioning and uncertainty, the teachers were addressing a segment of the story where the narrator Twyla describes the people who came to the orphanage seeking children to adopt. The four of us struggled here and a great deal of uncertainty was being expressed with regard to what details were more saturated with meaning. During the many attempts at a better interpretation or a better question, Gloria shared a personal experience that provoked new thinking and disagreement for the teachers.

I feel like to get at it, it might just need to be a discussion question. Every question that I think of is the kind of thing I feel resentful as a student like I have to answer. There's a

specific thing we want them to look at. It's not a *Right There* question, necessarily, like, "What word does she call the men?" But it's that same feeling of "Okay, so you want me to say something specific." I don't know that I would enjoy the question that we're trying to get them to discuss in a question format at least…I can't think of a way that doesn't feel leading and annoying.

Gloria was predicting her students' response based on her experience in school. She said she was "resentful" when a teacher anticipated a specific or singular interpretation. When she proposed a "discussion question" as opposed to a "right there question" (Raphael, 1982) she seemed to indicate a desire for multiple voices to respond to this question, a desire for possible interpretations and she found it frustrating that we, her colleagues continued to brainstorm questions that narrowed that possibility, just as she recalled it being frustrating when she was a student.

Other examples of lived experience did not necessarily express disdain for questions or teaching practice, but they invited deeper insight into textual analysis. In the discussion of the NFL's ban on the n-word, I offered a connection based on a classroom experience I had had with two students a few days earlier:

> Kierstin: Umm, can I ask you if this is an appropriate comparison or if you see this as similar? Yesterday or the day before, two of my Latina students were speaking in Spanish to each other and one of my other students said, "Speak English." And I said, you guys, that's their language, they know that language, let them use their language. This student says to me, "You're not allowed to do that in school, though. You're not allowed to speak Spanish in school."

\

100

I said, "Yes you are. What are you talking about? I said I don't think that's true that there we even classes where people are learning English and that may be their primary language, they're allowed to used Spanish in that class. And he said, "No, you are not allowed to use Spanish in school." So then they gave an example of a teacher who they had last year, who forbade them from speaking Spanish in class. And her reasoning was that they could be saying negative things in Spanish and she wouldn't know so they're not allowed to use Spanish in class. So isn't that the same kind of idea?

Gloria: I see it as similar, yeah.

Kierstin: Like, I'm the figure of authority, I'm setting the rules.

Gloria: I don't have access to something that makes me uncomfortable and so you're not allowed to use it.

Kierstin: Because I'm afraid you might be offending me.

Gloria: Yeah.

Kierstin: It feels like the same kind of thing to me.

In this excerpt, I remarked on the striking similarity between another classroom teacher's instruction forbidding my students from speaking Spanish and the NFL's attempt to ban the n-word. My lived experience, or at least, my students' lived experience of oppressing their language and culture was enough for me to see how the NFL's ban was a form of oppression on Black culture. The conversation that ensues between Gloria and me where we assume the persona of the teacher who banned Spanish in her classroom also helped to articulate the source of the oppression and authority and the feelings of being left out that those in power, the white

team owners, the white players, and the white league officials might be using to motivate their actions.

Still other examples of relating lived experience helped some of the teachers, like Mellie, identify with what was happening to the NFL players. She related the ban on culture and language as relating to her grandparents' immigrant experience.

Mellie: Oh I agree with everything you are saying, but I also think there are arguments to be made against it and I understand where those arguments are coming from. The same thing happened to my grandmother who was not allowed to speak Italian in school because of those…that discrimination against all the immigrants. I think it happens in every immigrant population.

Certainly, this lived experience highlights the idea that language can be used against an individual or a group to oppress their culture and to privilege the more dominant culture. But, Mellie used this example to then assert her dissent with the opinion that the NFL ban on the n-word was racist. She wanted to see the ban as an insistence on professionalism in the workplace. The conversation continued:

Gloria: Sure.

Kierstin: Oh yeah we have speakers of Polish and Ukrainian…

Mellie: And it's not like I haven't grown up with the polish side of the family or the Italian side of the family calling each other Dago or whatever. It's just that's in the home. The point I'm making is when they're doing that on the field it's no longer in the home it's in a public context and that's a public venue. Therefore, I would say that the bigger culture and the universal is operating and not the private, which is the point we keep going back to. They're using amongst

themselves in this small group, but no they're representatives taking part in this very public venue and forum.

Of course, Mellie's argument of the NFL players being representatives of the league was an understandable point, but it also incurs implications of the racist idea that people of color should become representatives of their race, an unequal standard that white people are not asked to uphold (McIntosh, 1989). This dispute was but an instance in the five PLC meetings, but it provided a window to how the very same issues that take place on a national stage in terms of racial oppression and questions of access and equality were also evident in our teacher conversations as we tried to understand the issues, the debate, our personal identities in those debates, and how we would plan for and provoke similar discussions in our collaborative lesson plans.

Shared Difference

As mentioned in the introduction to this section on democratic interactions, the shared difference code came from the notion that "The discourse of understanding, however, allows for challenge and collaborative turns" (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998, p. 46). Thus it's possible to see how in the conversations that revealed both lived experience and resistance to common interpretations did not often inspire outrage. As a PLC, we remained unified in our endeavors to find the most meaningful interpretations of racism, articulations of questions for a lesson, and the character relationships within a literary text. Even though we didn't always agree, the sense of unity in a PLC made us feel less vulnerable during potentially divisive discussions. The importance of such unity in PLC's has been documented as more likely to inspire teachers' risk-taking (Dooner, Mandzuk, & Clifton, 2008; Holmlund Nelson, Deuel, Slavit, & Kennedy, 2010).

There were also times when the examples of shared difference resulted in a more focused interpretation. Take for example the earliest PLC meeting of the study when the teachers were planning one of the focal lessons:

Kierstin: Ok…so there's two situations, one is you're the police department and

the second one is you are the members of the class and Newsday has just

rejected your letter. They refuse to publish it. Umm…

Mellie: News Day and its TV affiliates.

Kierstin: All right so what' the question? Write a letter to them… explaining why this

deserves to be published or why this deserves media attention?

Mellie: Oh…perhaps, see I was thinking of it from the perspective of why do you think

this wasn't picked up? I mean… You would think that media would jump on

something that was clearly unfair and motivated by race. Right? Don't you see

stories about that all the time and yet this was rejected why?

Kierstin: But isn't that the same as the perspective of the police officers?

Mellie: Well, the police officers are protecting themselves.

Betty: I'm getting a little lost in the purpose of the lesson.

Mellie: Why? Well I know.

Betty: Are we focusing on why they purposely wrote in this style?

Gloria: I think it's important to uncover…I think it would be powerful for them to uncover

their own bias. Because I think it's easy to show an example something that makes

us angry or messed up and makes us go, "That's unjust." It's not the same as

realizing that in ourselves. It's like reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* or *The Help* or

something…and saying, "They were such assholes," but then not realizing how we're being assholes.

Betty: That was a really great part of the end of that Central Park Five movie. I don't know if you watched it. At the end he said, "I don't think what we should learn a lesson from this. I think what we should learn is we're pretty bad people and we're often pretty bad people." It's such like how he puts it is really powerful and wonderful. You should really watch it. But it reminds me of that, like realizing that "It's not like, Oh look at what they did to these boys." It's an evil, nasty part of all of us.

Gloria: And it's still happening. It's not like, "Oh, that was bad."

Betty: "Yeah, thank God we're over that!"

Kierstin: So that will come out if they're the members of the Brooklyn police department and responding to it?

Gloria: Right.

Kierstin: So then the question is do we just leave it as that and everybody answers it that way and then we ask them to consider why they responded that way?

Gloria: And I think your questions are totally important. But I think if first they respond and then we go oh isn't that messed up and then you can say how can you justify or reconcile this? Then we just as easily dismissed while judging people who dismissed it. You know?

Betty: Yeah, I think we could either be half Brooklyn Police and half the news affiliates because they may have different responses, but ultimately getting at the same

ideas. So if we wanted to have two perspectives, I think those would be the two perspectives we would have.

This was an important example of shared difference in the PLC meetings. There were some really nuanced challenges, ones that were potentially insulting, but none were taken with any notable offense. Betty's first challenge, calling into question the purpose of the lesson was a catalyst for the proceeding conversation, a conversation where we not only reflected on the ambiguity in the purpose of the lesson, but that compelled a better articulation of our desired results for the students and the cognitive steps needed to arrive at those results. Gloria made it clear that a powerful opportunity in this lesson was for the students and the teacher to examine our own racial biases. She made it expressly clear that this lesson was meant to challenge the biases of teachers as much as students when she invoked the all too common detached interpretations of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Help* where teacher readers chastise others' racism, but fail to see its presence in their own readings of those texts. Betty supported Gloria's desire by adding a new example to the idea that sometimes interpretations of events result in non-closure and less appealing self-images; "that we're often pretty bad people." Then as Gloria, answered my question on whether or not our lesson design will help students reach such a conclusion or, at the very least, reflect on their own biases, she reminded me that my original plan and reflection questions would have proved us hypocrites in our endeavors: "But I think if first they respond and then we go oh isn't that messed up and then you can say how can you justify or reconcile this? Then we just as easily dismissed while judging people who dismissed it. You know?" Gloria is directly pointed out the flaws in our group designed lesson and in my interpretation of what the reflective questions of the lesson should be. I honestly didn't see that hypocrisy, nor did I see the importance of the non-closure until I had the opportunity to be

challenged by an alternative viewpoint. In this way, the lesson planning itself may be disrupted by various insights and challenges, but the ultimate outcome in terms of conceptual design is improved by those interruptions and dissenting opinions.

Critical Literacy

Interruptions and dissenting opinions may be a key component in Rabinowitz and Smith's (1998) theory of literature discussions, but they are also key in Freebody and Luke's (1999) *Four Resources Model*. Admittedly, there is some overlap between the ideas in these two theories. Therefore, the use of codes for this pass through the data are mostly meant to cover those aspects of literacy practices that the teachers demonstrated in their PLC meetings, but that could not be accounted for by the *Authorial Reading* or *Democratic Interactions* codes.

Table 4.5 Code Frequency for PLC *Critical Literacy*

PLC topic	Authorial Criticism	Language Analysis	Transforming Norms	TOTALS:
Chapter 3 of Rabinowitz & Smith (1998)	51	24	3	78
NFL Bans n word	9	50	5	64
Whiteness	3	22	0	25
Close Reading of Morrison' s "Recitatif"	0	7	2	9
PLC Year-end review	14	8	0	22
TOTALS:	77	111	10	198

As Table 4.5 shows, the major occurrence of critically literate practices in the PLC discussions were those that demonstrated critique of author's purpose or position and language analysis. Authorial criticism is the recognition that a text is a construction by an individual and that his/her construction may be incomplete, flawed, and or oppressive. Rabinowitz and Smith (1998) might argue that this is the intended outcome of authorial readings, in fact they take several chapters to argue this very point, but the subcode was included within the critical literacy category to show

that it is an intentional critique of the construction of a text. In fact, when I coded transcripts for this subcode, I did it as a way to distinguish from moments when the teachers or students are attempting to articulate the author's intentions, as different from moments when they disagree with that very intention that they articulated as an interpretation. The instances of language analysis are, of course, the most frequent and while that should not come as a surprise since the PLC named analysis of power in language as one of their stated goals, it does indicate that we, the PLC members remained consistent in our efforts to try to achieve that goal. Transforming norms occurred with very little frequency and really becomes an outlier in this study. It was difficult to code for transforming norms since the idea indicates that individuals are intentional in their attempts to re-conceive and revise normative behaviors. And while it's possible to argue that teachers engaged in conversations regarding the legacy of whiteness and racial bias in their own practice is an effort to transform normative values, I did not see direct articulations of such action statements so the numbers in this category remain comparatively low.

Authorial Criticism

Authorial criticism, a literacy practice directly calling into question the author or speaker's intention or constructed text, takes center stage during the discussion of June Jordan's (2007) "Nothing mean more to me than you and the future life of Willie Jordan." Our PLC did not originally intend to discuss this text as part of the meeting. The text was referenced in Barnett's (2000) "Reading 'Whiteness' in English Studies" and the teachers decided to read the full chapter as it appeared in an instructional text on critical reading. We were hoping to gain both insight into 'Whiteness' in our own classroom instruction and to find ways to address racial bias in language with the students. A great deal of time was spent examining author's intention and reframing that intention to help students in our 10th grade classes feel the same immediacy

108

that the original readers of the letter felt when they received it. This idea of the *original readers* was addressed in the section on author's intention in the *Authorial Readings* code. To reiterate, this is the idea described by Herrnstein Smith (1988) among others, that every author has a biased reader in mind that they are speaking to, in some cases directly, when they construct their meanings. In the case of the letter from the Brothers and Sisters of Reggie Jordan, June Jordan, Willie's professor at the time of the letter writing, tells us that the *original readers* of the letter were a news outlet in New York called *Newsday.* The Brothers and Sisters wanted their letter to be published as a form of social protest against the racially unjust killing of Reggie Jordan, Willie's brother, at the hands of Brooklyn police officers. The four teachers knew this intention and original audience, but wanted to replicate this experience of receiving the letter without providing too much background information on the letter writers or their reasons for writing. The discussion from the four of us in the PLC then took nuanced interpretive turns to try to recreate this impact for our student readers.

> Mellie: When you hear a story like this what is your… initial response? Oh yeah…it was because he was black. I don't know.
>
> Kierstin: Well, what would be an ideal response for you to that question?
>
> Betty: I think that police abuse their power because it would lead into…if they talk about power then it would lead into our conversation about the power of language and writing in this way.
>
> Kierstin: All right so let's say some kid says that. Some kid says the cops abuse their authority…
>
> Mellie: Maybe the first question is "What's the flaw in this story?" Given the evidence, what's the flaw?

Kierstin: Isn't that too leading though?

Mellie: So then the follow up question is, "What do you think…"

Betty: Do you think there's value in asking that question and then asking them how they would respond like, "What would you do if this was your brother and then show them the letter?"

Gloria: We're just flipping… I mean in a way it's good to have them take both…to have them think what it's like to be Willie and what it's like to be the police, but I don't' think we can seamlessly go from what we're asking them and this. I think they're very different jumps.

Kierstin: Well, I mean. Is there a way to divide the class? I mean secretly? To have what looks like almost identical prompts, but half the class responds as if they are Reggie's family members and the other half responds as if they are the Brooklyn Police Department?

Betty: To the original question that Mellie was asking?

Gloria: One would get that question, right, and one would get the how would you respond as the police department if this is the letter you got? Right?

Kierstin: Something like that…yeah…I don't know.

Gloria: So we're anticipating, maybe not setting them up for that one side would feel sympathetic to the family that feels this huge injustice and the other side would be sympathetic to the idea that it doesn't warrant being taken seriously and then we could deconstruct this with them. Is that what you're thinking?

Kierstin: My fear is that if we do too much frontloading then we're telling them and where

does the conversation come from? We're like handing them here's the answer

we want you to find. Whereas if we give them the two possibilities, they have to

discuss and debate to persuade one another. It makes things a little more

ambiguous for us in terms of whether or not they'll get there.

Betty: So we would give the letter and then half the kids would respond as if they were

the family and then half the kids would respond as if they were the police

department?

The pedagogical dilemmas the PLC faced was trying to encourage different kinds of authorial

criticism from the students in their classrooms. In order to provoke such different responses, we

decided to have the students respond to the letter written by the Brothers and Sisters of Reggie

Jordan through different personas. Initially, the personas were the family of Reggie and the

Brooklyn Police. Gloria clarifies that these different personas would provoke sympathy from

those students assigned the family prompt and disdain or lack of seriousness from those students

assigned the police prompt. In this situation, only half the class could potentially criticize the

author's intention or constructed argument, but as Gloria confirmed, "We could deconstruct this

with them." In other words, we, the teachers would create a whole class discussion comparing

the responses in order to analyze the stark contrasts in response. The PLC members changed the

personas for the letter activity multiple times, trying again and again to identify the persona that

would provoke the ideal response, "that police abuse their power" from the students in their

classes. After some discussion of the fact that the letter was originally rejected by the media

outlet, *Newsday*, the teachers settled on asking half the students to take on the personae of

representatives from Newsday and half take on the personae of representatives from the

Brooklyn police department. As we tried to word and reword the prompt for the worksheet, we discussed the sequence of the lesson plan and the scaffolding of student thinking.

> Kierstin: Ok…umm...Students return to their groups return to large class and read their letters out loud?
>
> Mellie: Does there have to be some sort of reflective question like why did you accept or reject, does there have to be just one?
>
> Kierstin: Well maybe that's part of the teacher discussion.
>
> Mellie: Hold on, should there be a question about the letter before they write their own letter? What's your initial reaction… to the letter or
>
> Kierstin: Won't they talk about that though in order to write the response?
>
> Mellie: 'Cause ultimately isn't that what we want? If this letter comes across your desk, what is your response?
>
> Kierstin: I could just put that question, what if I put that question, "What is your reaction to this letter?"
>
> Mellie: Was this person drinking when they wrote it? Is this person a child…?
>
> Kierstin: What if I just put, you the members of the Brooklyn Police Department…prepare a response to this letter.
>
> Gloria: Yeah, I'd be more interested in their reaction than in their official letter response.
>
> Mellie: Yeah, given that reaction how do you respond?
>
> Kierstin: Do you want me to put that in the prompt, "Given their reaction, how would you respond…
>
> Mellie: to the authors."
>
> Mellie: Did your mom teach you proper English?

Kierstin: I'm sure that some of them are going to say that…

We decided it was best to hear the students' response to the letter written by the Brothers and Sisters of Reggie Jordan before they craft a written response from the persona they had been assigned. We as teachers were unified in the desire to read or hear the students' initial reactions to the letter written in African American English Vernacular or AAVE (Lee C. D., 2006). In fact, Mellie shows her desire by providing anticipated student responses like, "Was this person drunk?" and "Did your mom teach you proper English?" Mellie only anticipated negative, even insulting authorial criticism that suggested the authors were impaired by alcohol or undereducated. She, of course, knew that the Brothers and Sisters are educated and are writing in AAEV to show purposeful cultural expression and to provoke racist responses. And Mellie assumed that her students would choose similarly racist responses. Soon after, Betty raised important questions about the implications of allowing such racist interpretations to linger in the classroom:

> Betty: Do you think it's important, because it's not only that they wrote it intentionally, but intentionally wrote like that knowing it would be rejected, but also knowing that making that choice was going to …I don't know

> Mellie: You know how we brought up that that television story of the football player…was it a football player? The last time we met?

> Betty: Incognito and that…

> Kierstin: No….no…no…the thug comment…

> Gloria: Oh, Richard Sherman.

> Mellie: Do we follow up with that? Because it's about perception through language...or should they be combined in such a way to add to their thinking about…

113

Betty: So like another lesson?

Mellie: Right or they're combined in some way to get them to think about….

Kierstin; So let me ask you this…Do you feel like after you have told them that statement, that this is college educated students and that they did it intentionally and they knew the letter would be rejected is that where you want them to have a personal response to that right away? Or do you want the Richard Sherman clip and then have a personal response?

Mellie: I would know better if I had seen it. I would want to see the clip before I can make a decision. So maybe we can start off next time by watching that.

Kierstin: Where he says, don't call me a thug

Gloria: Oh where he says, don't call me a thug?

Kierstin: Yeah where he says, "I feel like that is the easy way of calling me the n'word." We were talking about that last time.

Betty: But I also think that showing the interview could also be interesting. It relates to one of the articles that we read and how different groups of people communicate differently. We were reading how in discussion in the Black community it is much more common to be very passionate whereas White people are more reserved and so that's what we respect so when he went off and said, "I'm the best," We were like, "Oh my god, that's not how you behave."

Gloria: And I read something that wasn't just about black culture; it was about football culture and it was seconds after he had this huge game and he's supposed to be aggressive and he had gone and said good game to the guy who messed up on the 49ers and the guy just pushed him. So he was like good game, the guy pushed him and

he's got to be interviewed. So he's pissed because this guy pushed him. Like we

expect you to be aggressive where he's supposed to be aggressive. So he's pissed at

the guy. We expect you to be one way and a different way and we can't expect both.

Betty turned the conversation with one question regarding authorial intention. When she asked

about announcing not just the intentional construction, but the intentional publication in the face

of being rejected, she was implying a kind of courage or risk-taking that the Brother and Sister

authors have because they can anticipate White language standards. Mellie picked up on this

implication and asked about the more recent press over Richard Sherman, cornerback for the

Seattle Seahawks, being called a thug. This connection cued Betty to recall the 'Whiteness' in

English Studies (Barnett, 2000) article and other White standards of behavior that force authorial

criticism, admonishing Black students for being too passionate in discussion. And this White

standard for behavior sparked Gloria's comment that White standards of behavior are often

contradictory when imposed on people of color. When she describes how many standards

Richard Sherman is subjected to in his post-game interview she observes, "We expect you to be

one way and a different way and we can't expect both." This build in interpretation regarding

White Standards imposed on language, on emotion, and on behavior was critically important for

us as White teachers to experience. We had to challenge our own conceptual limitations with

regard to why the letter construction of the Brothers and Sisters was more than just an act of

raising social awareness. But we also had to process a series of conceptual steps that emerged

from both content of the professional readings and from contemporary contexts in which issues

of 'not being good enough' (Coates, 2014) for White expectations still plagued people of color.

In this way the teachers were able to reflect on multiple dimensions of racism in the contexts of their lessons, the contexts of their classrooms, and the context of current issues.

Language Analysis

In the PLC meeting that followed, the one that focused on Richard Sherman being called a thug after his passionate remarks in a post-game interview, language analysis was a common mode of interpretation. The meeting began with a reading from the Ta-Nehisi Coates's (2014) article previously mentioned, "Politics and the African-American Human Language" and much of the coding related to sections of the meeting where we, the members of the PLC read aloud of lengthy excerpts from the article. But there were concentrated moments where the four of us tried to make sense of why the NFL's ban on the n-word was racist according to Coates. To help us explore the dimensions of culture and race we watched two brief news reports on the ban and then had the following discussion:

> Betty: One of the arguments I heard for it that I heard was that they want "roll down."
>
> That may happen, not for a few years obviously, but roll down to college, roll down to high school. This is an expectation by the highest league, the highest position you can get to in football, maybe it will roll down to all of the other football players. You know it's a way to disintegrate the word if people are looking for that.

> Mellie: But no matter what, people get charged up about that word.

> Kierstin: Oh sure. Yeah.

> Mellie: I don't think that conversation has ever gone away.

> Betty: This is maybe too football-y. I think the speaker gives the word power kinda like

the article was saying. And so the intention behind using the word um if you do

have bad intention then obviously I think that should be addressed and you should

be penalized for and that to me would be umbrella'd under unsportsmanlike

conduct. So they don't need a separate rule and if your intention when you're

using that word isn't hateful because you and your buddy do that. That is not

unsportsmanlike…. I don't see what there has to be a different penalty.

Mellie: Related to that word.

Betty: Related to that word. I'm sorry, I feel like I derailed our meeting. I was just

interested.

Mellie: No, I think it ties in exactly to what we're talking about.

Within this discussion, it is possible to see the intricate relationship between authorial criticism,

intent, and language analysis. When Betty stated that she believes that the speaker gives a word

power she is examining language and intention, but she is not necessarily examining other issues

of context related to the construction of meaning. This is why the reading of Coates' article is so

critical to the teachers' conceptualization. Before the teachers applied Coates' examination of the

sociocultural meanings of the word, Betty saw only the hatred of the n word as it was used in the

context of players Richie Incognito and Jonathan Martin. She also saw the word being used in

the context of the franchise of professional football. And questioning this system of professional

football is critical for the related conversation about Richard Sherman. But, the NFL is not the

only system to be questioned when considering how to examine the n-word or other racially

oppressive language in classroom conversation. The four of us then turned to thinking about the

classroom and recalled previous experience related to racially charged language and the use of

the n-word in literature we had taught, namely Harper Lee's (1982) *To Kill a Mockingbird.*

Gloria prompted the conversation by asking the other teachers how they felt about the n-word being used in the novel. Betty responded first, and spoke about a discussion she had with her students.

> Betty: Yes, and I said, "Would you feel more comfortable if [Harper Lee] had left this word out? Should she have supplemented a different word and my students were like no she needed to use this word. One, it sets the time and place for us. "We need to remember that this word was used often so it was like an important document in history," was generally what the whole class said. Then I said, "How many people would feel better or think that we should replace the word?" and then I asked it the opposite way, "Keep the word in?" and everybody thought it was necessary.

> Mellie: I mean before reading we start with Emmett Till, *Strange Fruit*, and the Scottsboro trial documentary. How can you expose them visually and orally to those things and then say, "Oh let's read this book and avoid the word, "nigger."

> Gloria: Oh I'm certainly not advocating for avoiding it.

> Mellie: You know what I mean? Right away pre-reading they get the idea.

> Gloria: Yeah, but stop and give yourself credit and I mean that. I don't think everyone who teaches *To Kill a Mockingbird* starts out by doing *Strange Fruit*, Emmett Till, and the Scottsboro boys. Already, you're doing…I can't even think of all the positive words I want to use, but throw in a bunch of really positive thoughtful words…

> Mellie: How can they understand Jim Crow if they don't see those things or hear those

things?

Gloria: You are already creating compassion in your students by doing that. You are

already unveiling some level of complexity of how horrible things were, how

vicious and violent and inhumane. I think that that is not always the case. Not

that people are trying consciously not to do that, but you then avoiding that word

with your conversations after doing all that work would seem really

weird…. Somebody who hasn't done that work and just opens up the book I think

at that point have a lot more work to do to handle that work properly. I hope more

people are teaching the book in the context you are, but my concern with the

books we teach is that it is always in the South and always before Civil Rights.

Then it's like, "God they were so racist then. God they were so messed up!"

The PLC members' examination of their own practices in reading or preparing to read *To Kill a Mockingbird* became a way for us to situate past analyses of the n-word in our classes. This conversation also provided a window into the "linguistic and cultural repertoires" (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003) that we as teachers were calling upon to make sense of the newer contexts and texts that we had analyzed for racially biased language and systems of oppression in this case study. Mellie, Betty, and Gloria revealed that they did not shy away from discussion of the n-word in previous years of teaching English. However, the contextualization of those conversations and interpretations was both enlightening and problematic according to Gloria's analysis. She observed that discussing the word within the context of the song, "Strange Fruit," the contexts of the historical Scottsboro trial and the death of Emmett Till still situated the study

119

of the n-word in history. Even Betty's comment supported Gloria's observation as she noted that

the n-word is considered a historical document. Herein lies the problem for Gloria when she

argued, "My concern with the books we teach is that it is always in the south and always before

Civil Rights. Then it's like, "God they were so racist then. God they were so messed up!" She

called into question the ways in which the curriculum historicized the use of the n-word. She also

implied with her last invocation, "God they were so racist then" that calling upon historical

repertoires alone to analyze racial slurs only serves to detach students and teachers from current

issues related to the use of racially charged language.

Toward the end of this PLC meeting, we sorted out and found connection between the

goals we had set as our primary objectives for the year and the texts we had been studying and

designated for more immediate use. What ensued was a conversation that envisioned a more

contemporary repertoire for talking about race:

> Betty: I'm still wrestling with "Recitatif" and how it fits into this specific lesson
>
> about language because the language in that is really stripped down intentionally.
>
> I mean you can't tell. It's not like they're speaking in any way that signifies that
>
> one is one race and the other is a different race... I think there needs to be some
>
> kind of thematic bridge because there isn't a direct language bridge. Do you know
>
> what I mean? I'm just trying to think…about power maybe, we need to start
>
> having the conversation, I mean I guess we'll get to power by the end of the
>
> lesson, but I still feel like maybe more about…
>
> Kierstin: I still say that's related. I mean we are looking at a powerless person, right?

Willie Jordan, who's rendered more powerless by the police because they shot

him so many time and then so the student group, they're trying to take back some

of the power by using a language they feel empowered by.

Mellie: Which I mean actually that make me think of these articles we were discussing at

the beginning of... You know this idea of what is happening in football right now.

Isn't that the same idea…The word is being cleansed. We are using it in a

different way. We should be allowed to or empowered to do so …so maybe that's

the bridge?

In this exchange, PLC member Mellie articulated the idea that the n-word is "being cleansed"

through the NFL's ban. She took on the persona of a Black NFL player to say "We are using it in

a different way. We should be allowed or empowered to do so." This idea of the n-word or the

use of the word in AAEV as an empowering use of language was a radically different

understanding of the word based on our "cultural and linguistic repertoire" (Gutierrez & Rogoff,

2003), but we found a way to honor this meaning in the more recently designed lessons and

curriculum, a curriculum that took into account multiple social contexts and interpretations of the

word.

Comprehension

Comprehension is included here to identify instances of basic and complex

comprehension that occurred in our teacher conversations during PLC meetings. There was a

higher occurrence of literature comprehension interactions in the classroom transcripts than in

the PLC transcripts. This was mostly accounted for by the fact that there was a high occurrence

of basic comprehension codes in the classroom transcripts and less of those basic comprehension

codes in the PLC transcripts. Students ask a number of vocabulary and recall questions in the

Table 4.6 Code Frequency for PLC Comprehension

PLC topic	Complex	Basic	TOTALS
Chapter 3 of Rabinowitz & Smith (1998)	4	32	36
NFL bans n-word	0	6	6
Whiteness	3	9	12
Close Reading of Morrison's "Recitatif"	12	6	18
PLC Year-end review	0	2	2
TOTALS:	19	55	74

course of their interactions with the teacher and their interactions in small group work. The teachers in the PLC also asked some basic comprehension questions, but a greater proportion of their questions and comments are abstract questions that require more than simple inferences. The frequency of comprehension codes (Table 4.6) was included here to show the basic and advanced comprehension moves were part of the discussion and comprehension process. Even though, the teachers in the PLC and the focal teacher in her classroom, had as a central goal to analyze oppression and power in their ELA classroom, it does not mean that basic or advanced comprehension can be overlooked or diminished. These interpretive tasks may not be directly defined as part of critical literacy or authorial readings, but they are necessary to reaching understanding and happened repeatedly throughout these professional and academic dialogues.

Race

Analyzing texts for race is central to the work of the PLC. In each of the previous subsections of analysis, race has been addressed as part of the PLC meetings. Race as a topic or a lens for analysis was also featured in the table of teacher-selected texts observed during the case study. In this final section of analysis of the case of the PLC, I will address the ways in which

goals related to discussing race emerged in the teacher dialogues. Because race factors into

almost every PLC meeting, coding the conversations for race alone in the early passes through of

data became overwhelming to the point of total saturation and thus the code of race had no

distinction. In order to describe the dimensions of race as addressed by the teachers in their

dialogues, it was necessary to first code for the other aspects of interpretation, authorial readings

and critical literacy. But these codes did not always capture the purposes, often directly stated,

that the teachers had for designing lessons and questions for their students. Ultimately, a code

was developed to describe all of the instances when the teachers articulated that understanding

institutional oppression was a learning goal and an intentional part of their lesson design.

Table 4.7 Code Frequency for Race

PLC Topic	Goal: Understanding Institutionalized Racism	Race
Chapter 3 of Rabinowitz & Smith (1998)	18	41
NFL bans n word	10	63
Whiteness	32	10
Close Reading of Morrison's "Recitatif"	0	8
PLC Year-end review	9	9
TOTALS:	69	131

Table 4.7 shows the number of times that race was mentioned as part of a conversational turn

and the number of times a goal was articulated related to understanding institutionalized racism.

These numerical representations of frequency highlight how often the teachers were naming the

goals and desired outcomes in designing lessons that "raise student and teacher consciousness

about power, race, and socioeconomic status through discussion of literature and non-fiction." In

this section I will highlight excerpts from three of the meetings, the meeting discussing Chapter 3

of *Authorizing Readers* (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998), the meeting discussing the NFL ban of the

n-word, and the meeting addressing 'Whiteness' in English studies (Barnett, 2000). I chose

these three excerpts because all three revealed goals related to understanding institutionalized

oppression in three very different systems that the teachers are a part of or are subjected to.

In the meeting where the teachers discussed the NFL's ban on the n-word, Gloria and I get

caught up in a discussion of how White standards of oppression invade our own classroom

interactions with students.

>Gloria: I was thinking when you were talking, not at first, but I just wonder how
>
>many teachers who don't see it the same way, like white teachers are saying it
>
>like could you act a little more White? And that's not how you're saying it, but I
>
>wonder if that's hard for them to really hear because that's not the way they've
>
>heard it that way before. Then that gets me mad at our staff and our lack of
>
>professional development and how pervasive that mentality is.
>
>Kierstin: I get that some of those expectations of what it means to be a good academic
>
>or be a good student are based in White values. I'm not trying…I feel like I want
>
>to encourage all of my students to be better students in all kinds of different ways.
>
>I just get worried that my Black students don't hear it as I want you to be
>
>successful, just like I want my Latino and my White students to be successful.
>
>And so that's always in the back of my head. Do they think I'm only addressing
>
>all the Black kids in class because I think they're problematic, but that's not it. I
>
>have those same conversations. I don't know; I just worry about it.

Here Gloria and I expressed definite needs and desires related to better understanding how we as

teachers and how the school perpetuates systemic oppression. Gloria stated the need for better

professional development to address White views on relationship between race and academic

success, an issue with documented impact in research on stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995). I also articulated the need to better understand my own Whiteness and the ways in which I as a White teacher convey oppressive ideas and expectations regardless of my intention. These goals related to understanding oppression crisscross domains of teaching that are both personal and systemic.

In the PLC conversation on Whiteness in English Studies, Betty introduced the rest of the teachers to the controversy over Richard Sherman's post-game interview with Erin Andrews.

> Betty: Yeah …And there's this little White [Andrews] that everybody made a big deal out of like 'oh she was scared, she cut away.' But she didn't... like…And they were…like in her ear like 'alright cut this before something happens.' She was fine; she wasn't threatened. But when you just see that…people responded.
>
> Gloria: I didn't even know that people were talking about that, that she felt personally threatened?
>
> Betty: Yeah, but she didn't. Yeah…But, originally they were saying that. You know, "Erin Andrews, she was scared …she ended the interview." She wasn't scared of him…like clearly…
>
> Kierstin: Okay, wait let me go back to these questions 'cause maybe we can ask a question about that too. "So at one point in the press conference, Richard Sherman says, "So I'm talking loud, I'm talking like I'm not supposed to. What does he mean by this? Who decides whether?" What did you say? (typing).
>
> Betty: I guess I said something like, 'Who gets to decide how we should speak or how you should speak?'...I really think this is the perfect opportunity. Way back a

long time ago we talked about this article on Whiteness and the article advocated

for us talking…We always talk about qualities of Black culture and we're never

forced to think about White culture and this paragraph is just…it's like (reading

from article) "In studies of students' interactions they find that Black students are

often aggressive in discussion" …um or White students think that. And Black

students think that White students are passive and uninvolved. And it says

"African American students often take a personal interest in what they debate and

establish as a part of their sense of self. White students, on the other hand,

consider passion and confrontation…" right? I don't know I think this would be a

good time to explore whiteness, as well. Like how would we want...? I don't

know I guess those questions get to it. Like who decides what should you sound

like?

As Betty spoke she revealed to the rest of us, and perhaps herself, that much of the conversation

in the classroom needed to focus on White expectations for behavior and language and not just a

consideration of, but a critique of those expectations. Betty implies this critique when she argues

that Erin Andrews did not feel threatened by Richard Sherman's behavior, but that the White

television audience did. As Betty talked, I recorded her thinking through the lens of our lesson

plan on Richard Sherman being called a thug and tried to capture her observations and

interpretations about how White standards for talk and expression cast Black athletes, like

Sherman into threatening stereotypes. At the end of her exposition, she stated the desired

discussion in her own words, "Who decides what you should like?" This question was borne

from both knowledge and frustration, a social consciousness, developed from the 'Whiteness' in

English Studies (Barnett, 2000) article that inspired Betty's goal of discussing Whiteness and its oppression of other cultures.

The final excerpt was the earliest overview of the collaborative lessons and scaffolding that we, in the PLC described. This excerpt is included as a bridge between the knowledge and interpretative dialogue that the teachers experienced in the PLC and the knowledge and interpretive dialogue that the focal teacher Betty and her students experienced in the classroom. Gloria reads the overview:

> So it says, umm …small groups five minutes or so. The letter in Black English and anticipated response. Large group teacher problematizes idea that there's nothing redeeming in this letter …um show letter side by side, ask what they think about second letter still in large group. Teacher reveals first letter was a conscious decision. Ask why they might have chosen to respond in this way. Give larger Jordan article and have students surface what reasons for writing in Black English. Discuss power in language. Then move into "Recitatif." After reading, discuss assumptions we made on identity based on the power and the voice.

The simplicity with which Gloria describes the sequence of lessons, ideas, intentions, and dialogues is ostensibly familiar. That is, any teacher could describe a sequence of lessons or ideas that they have constructed. But the depth and dimension of meaning and interpretation that we four teachers in the PLC experienced was anything but familiar. In trying to reflect on our own biases and oppression within the literature that we taught, the classrooms in which we engaged diverse student learners, and the everyday contexts that we must help those students read and question, we revealed that familiarity is deceptive and potentially harmful. The teachers showed through authorial readings, critical literacy practices, democratic interactions, and other

127

meaning-making efforts that 'to re-perceive the ordinary' (Shor, 1980) required a willingness to question everything; the layers and layers of relationships and experiences that exist in the history and presence of racism.

In the next chapter, the findings on the case of the focal classroom are examined to see the ways in which Betty tried to foster similarly resistant interpretations in her classroom conversations and activities.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CASE OF THE FOCAL CLASSROOM

The case of the PLC as described in chapter four provided an in-depth look at the dimension and content of the interpretations that the four ELA teachers, Betty, Gloria, Mellie, and I made during five meetings to meet our objective, "To raise student and teacher consciousness about power, race, and socioeconomic status through discussion of literature and non-fiction." Chapter four provided a layered analysis of how the four of us tried to address this objective in pedagogical reflections about literature we taught, instructional planning on how to engage student thinking about power, race, and oppression, and personal reflections on the ways in which our own beliefs and practices may have reinforced systems of oppression. The case was examined from multiple critical literacy theories (Freebody & Luke, 1999; Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998) and existing studies of comprehension (Hillocks & Ludlow, 1984) and teaching anti-racist content (Attwood, 2011) in order to describe the complexity of the teacher dialogues about their beliefs and practices. In this way, the descriptions of the PLC dialogues addressed the first research question of the study:

> Research Question1: What literacy practices do the four teachers in the PLC use to interpret texts and design lessons related to oppression and privilege?

In this chapter, the case of the focal teacher, Betty, in her 10th grade tracked ELA classroom addresses the two other major research questions:

> Research Question 2: What literacy practices do the students in the focal teacher's classroom use to interpret texts and complete tasks related to oppression and privilege?

Research Question 3: What practices, other than those articulated during PLC meetings, does the focal teacher enact to encourage interpretation of acts of oppression and privilege?

Primarily these questions will be addressed concomitantly. In order to answer research question two and share the literacy practices of the students, it was necessary to show the practices of Betty while trying to engage her students, tracked for low motivation, in thinking, discussion, reading and assignments that raise critical questions about systems and situations of oppression. Therefore, evidence presented in this chapter includes transcripts from whole-class and small group dialogues, as well as student-written responses and assignments collected during the 9 days in the classroom. There were a total of four lessons that were developed from the work of the PLC, with some lessons requiring more than one day's instruction, thus resulting in 9 total days of observation over a month. There were 24 students in Betty's class. As mentioned in Chapter Three, this class consisted of students with a normal range of reading ability (ACT Explore scores of 10-17), but had been identified by former teachers and school counselors as having less than ideal academic habits, including lack of motivation and lack of work completion. Students were often failing classes in junior high for these reasons. Students in this track were also removed if they accumulated too many absences. As described earlier, students of color are disproportionately represented in this track. And this local occurrence has commonality with national research on race and tracking (Ansalone, 2010; Losen, 1999) In Betty's class of 24 students, 50% are White, 29% are Black, and 21% are Latino. For comparison, school wide 64% were White, 11% Black, and 11% Latino. Table 3.1 showed the student participants of the case and their self-identified race. Race of the students and teacher is significant to the study for two reasons three of the four teachers in the PLC taught in tracked

130

classrooms where students of color were disproportionately represented and all four teachers in the PLC are White. This dynamic of a White female teacher interacting with a diverse student population is a common feature in classrooms across the United States (Glazier, et al., 2000; Rogoff & Angelillo, 2002) and has been studied as characteristic of systemic oppression of race (Ladson-Billings, 1998), language (Blake & Cutler, 2003; Rumenapp, 2016), and 'struggle' (Triplett, 2007). Conscious of this aspect of the school, all four of us asked their department chair to create this PLC so that they could address issues of oppression in ELA classrooms. We, as teachers of low-ability tracked students, had some suspicions of systems of oppression that seemed to be influencing student placement in classes. The second reason that race and gender of the students were included as a description in the study was to visualize the classroom community that Betty and her students co-constructed.

From a sociocultural perspective, Betty's classroom is a cultural community (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003), one that has varied participation from individuals who possess different linguistic, cultural, and historical repertoires from which they draw upon to make sense of and "engage in particular forms of language and literacy" and interpersonal conflict-resolution behaviors. These dimensions of the classroom are important features, but do not implicate that 'static' definitions of identity like race or ethnicity are attributable to any of the analysis in this chapter. Betty and her students may call upon their race or ethnicity in order to make sense of or engage in some of the dialogue and activities, but at times race and ethnicity may not be part of their sense-making, as each individual has a "constellation of factors" (Rogoff & Angelillo, 2002) that contribute to meaning-making and interpretation.

Furthermore, the texts selected and lessons designed by the PLC members, that are realized in Betty's classroom were intended to make English more inclusive and asked critical

131

perspective on language and systems that are not inclusive. To be specific, the four teachers constructed their own objective to raise consciousness about oppression, race and power and reflected on and revised past ways of approaching and designing content for their students. Because of this intentional change in their instruction, the cultural content of lessons and pedagogy behind the lessons is a factor of analysis. The codes that were used to analyze the literacy practices of Betty and her students in this case of the study were the same as those used to describe and analyze the practices of the four teachers in the case of the PLC: authorial readings, critical literacy, democratic interactions, literature comprehension, and race. The chapter will be organized by these codes with an initial introduction to Betty, the content of the lessons, and an overview of the frequency of code occurrences across the 9 classroom observations (Table 5.2). Some analysis of student learning products collected as part of the four designed lessons and 9 class periods of instruction was also included. The code occurrences for student work will be addressed separately from those occurrences in classroom dialogues. An overview of the code occurrences for student assessments can be found in Table 5.3.

Betty

Betty was selected as the focal teacher from the PLC in part because she has been teaching for the least number of years, only six at the time of the study. She also had the least experience teaching students in a tracked classroom and articulated the greatest desire for change in the way she approached teaching those students. Betty is a self-described introvert who became an English teacher because she wanted to "re-create the deep conversations about really good stories" she loved in the undergraduate English classes she experienced as a student. She grew up in the suburban Midwest and attended a small liberal arts college not far from home. She continued her education at the same college to get her teaching certification. She had been

teaching the 10th grade low-tracked students for just two years and found it challenging, but not

without reward. She talked warmly of her students often responding, "I love her" or "I love that

he said that" during post-observation interviews and discussions of her classroom. Part of Betty's

motivation for forming the PLC with the other three teachers was her past frustration with an

instructional coach and her desire to break away from the strictures of district initiatives. When I

first interviewed Betty, she told me she was bothered by a statement that a student we had in

common made about one of her classes. The student commented that "we never talk in that

class." She said he was right. When I asked her whether she felt that had changed in her current

classes, including the class that was the focus of this study, she said, "Oh, definitely." Her

reasoning behind the change was that "I think I used to get so caught up in having the rubric and

the standards and having the standards on the worksheet. I just don't care anymore. I also think I

have more confidence as a teacher now and that allows me to shut the door and not feel pressure

of those standards." She also said that she associated less with teachers who "valued those

rubrics and standards." In reflecting on how her experience within the PLC compared to past

PLC's that she had been a part of, she said that "that was the most she ever learned in a PLC."

and that she did not have to try to attend to every detail of every new initiative in the district."

Lesson Observations

Betty may have learned a lot through her participation in the PLC described in this study,

but all of the interpretive and instructional moves she made in the classroom could not be

causally tied to the work in the PLC; thus some of Betty's other discursive and design practices

are also described as part of this chapter and will, in part, address research question three. In this

section, the four lessons planned completely or in part through the PLC are described. These

descriptions only tell part of the story, but are included as one way to represent the content, texts,

133

instructional goals, tasks, and assessments that were observed in Betty's classroom. Table 5.1 provides a snapshot description of the lessons. The lessons in the chart appear sequentially, but the lessons did not occur back-to-back over nine school days. The lessons were conceptualized by Betty and some of the other PLC members as part of a larger unit on *Of Mice and Men*. Betty was only observed on the days which she told me she would be teaching a lesson inspired by or designed in the PLC meetings.

The first three lessons in the sequence were planned over several meetings in the PLC work. The lesson on Reggie Jordan and the Brothers and Sisters in June Jordan's (2007) class who wrote a letter of protest in AAEV occupied a great deal of time and represented significant reflection on language and instruction for the four teachers. The four of us in the PLC determined the activities of reading and responding to the letter of the Brothers and Sisters through the persona of either a public relations representative for the Brooklyn Police department or from the editor of Newsday, a local media outlet to get students to question white standards of English and their own biases related to those standards.

The lesson that follows on Richard Sherman being called a thug by multiple media sources was also designed to raise questions about White standards of English, and addressed the question Betty herself articulated in the PLC meeting on the NFL Ban of the n-word, "Who decides how we express ourselves?" The two days of this lesson involved viewing video of Richard Sherman's on-field interview with Erin Andrews, his post-game interview on being called a 'thug' for his behavior during the on-field interview, and reading an article from *Sports Illustrated* (Farrar, 2014). The students then responded to questions on a worksheet (see Appendix F) designed by Betty for the purposes of her stated objective, "To engage in discussion" in addition to her objective about societal rules of expression stated above. During

the second day of this lesson, students watched a video clip from *The Daily Show* that featured a comparison of media coverage of pop star Justin Bieber, Toronto mayor, Rob Ford and Richard Sherman. Betty created a response worksheet for this day's lesson as well (Appendix G) and she had students read and respond through mostly whole-class discussion to an article on the connotations of the word, 'thug' (Waldron, 2014).

In a lesson to connect the ideas of racial oppression, language and expression and the first three chapters of *Of Mice and Men*, Betty asked students to work in small groups to articulate parallels between the Brothers and Sisters of Reggie Jordan, Richard Sherman, and characters like Curley's Wife, Crooks, Candy, and Lennie. She began this lesson with a slide show from *Buzzfeed*, titled, "23 Things to Love about Richard Sherman" and a video of Richard Sherman interviewing people in New Orleans about the best cornerback in the NFL (Public, 2013). She prefaced showing these videos by saying, "This is just kind of fun. I saw it on *Buzzfeed* and I thought it was kind of fun." But the choice to show these texts, seemingly unrelated to the PLC work on language and oppression, is later analyzed in this chapter as part of the other literacy practices that Betty used to engage her students in democratic thinking and interpretation. Betty closed this lesson by reading aloud the first page of Toni Morrison's (1997) story "Recitatif" as a teaser for the next sequence of lessons.

For the next four days of lessons, students read, mostly aloud in small groups, the rest of Morrison's short story. They stopped and answered questions that were embedded in the text. This lesson was one directly influenced and planned by the PLC work. For the final assessment of this reading and an assessment of the multiple experiences of analyzing race and oppression, Betty had students draw a single scene from the short story. This assessment was designed in part by the PLC work, but they did not fully articulate the details of the task so Betty had to write

the prompt for what she wanted students to portray in their visual representations of the story. She gave them a choice to draw one of three conflicts between the two friends, Roberta and Twyla. Here is an excerpt of Betty explaining to her students what she wanted them to think about for this final assessment:

> What were the races of the two girls slash women? What did they look like? What were they wearing? All of this. Then the last thing is on the back of your illustration, you are going to write a full paragraph justification. Don't roll your eyes. It's okay. It's a paragraph. I ask my freshmen to do it; you guys certainly can. Um, you're not writing an essay, you're writing a paragraph. And I just put some questions down for you (reading from overhead instructions). So write a full paragraph justification of your illustration. Why did you draw what you did? What does your illustration tell us about your interpretation of the story? Why did you make the girls the race that you did? Why did you have them dressed like you did? How do these decisions represent your interpretation? I suppose I'm not asking for a formal paragraph. The reason I put a full paragraph there is that I think we have the propensity to throw down a sentence or two and think that we've explained ourselves. I'm asking you to do more than that. I'm asking to fully and thoughtfully and thoroughly explain your drawing. I'm not looking for you guys to be amazing artists, but I am looking for you to put some effort into explaining how you see these scenes.

The drawings and rationales that Betty assigned will be analyzed as part of the section in this chapter on student demonstrations of learning. The small group discussions of "Recitatif" (Morrison, 1997) are analyzed as part of the literacy practices of the focal classroom.

After these lessons on "Recitatif," Betty used several instructional days to have students

finish reading the novel, *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937). She invited me back to her

classroom for the final assessment of the novel, student performances of scenes from *Of Mice*

and Men using methods of Boal's (1992) *Theater of the Oppressed*. This lesson was discussed

in the PLC work, but only as a past practice of two of the teachers, Mellie and me. Betty showed

interest in this practice and asked me for some materials on *Theater of the Oppressed*. She then

decided to use these lesson materials as an appropriate culminating activity for the themes and

conversations about oppression that the PLC helped design and for the conversations she had

with her students about *Of Mice and Men*.

In the next sections, these four lessons and nine instructional periods will be analyzed

according to the same codes used to analyze the 5 PLC meetings: authorial readings, critical

literacy, democratic interactions, literature comprehension and race talk in the classroom.

Through these analyses, the literacy practices of the students, tracked for low motivation, and

Betty will be described with greater detail to gain insight on the dimension and variety in their

interpretations of acts of oppression and privilege.

Table 5.1 Lesson Sequence and Description

Lesson Focus	Texts	Instructional Content or Skill	Task	Assessment of Task/Content/Skill
Reggie Jordan and response letters	Brooklyn Police and Newsday worksheets (created by PLC with student letter from June Jordan article)	To engage in discussion (teacher) To question white standards of English and how they oppress others who speak in dialect AAEV (PLC)	Students discuss and write letter response to student protest letter. Students engage in class discussion of shared letters and standards of English	1.Students write response to students from assigned persona (Police or Newsday) 2. Students write reflection on writing task.
Language	Richard	Language	Students	Discussion-whole

Analysis using examples of Reggie Jordan and Richard Sherman	Sherman article (Farrar, 2014) Richard Sherman on-field interview (video)	Analysis-Motivations for writing letter (PLC)	discuss what white values are in language expression and how those values are used to judge Richard Sherman and Reggie Jordan	class and small group
"Thug" Language (Day 2)	"Thug language" article (Waldron, 2014) Clip from Daily Show episode on Rob Ford, Justin Bieber, and Richard Sherman (video)	To engage students in discussion on how white standards of behavior and expression are used to privilege some white celebrities and oppress celebrities of color (PLC)	Students answer discussion questions analyzing language used to judge Rob Ford, Justin Bieber, and Richard Sherman	Worksheet for discussion and analysis of language in episode of *The Daily Show*
Transition lesson from language instruction to "Recitatif"	Buzzfeed's *23 things to love about Richard Sherman*, Richard Sherman man-on-the-street interviews (video), "Recitatif" by Toni Morrison	To draw thematic connections between oppressed characters and content over the past several days (Teacher)	Students are asked to make thematic or symbolic connections between characters in Of Mice and Men and language instruction lessons (Richard Sherman and Reggie Jordan)	Group discussion making connections across texts and characters and "Recitatif" reading packet
Guided Reading "Recitatif"	"Recitatif" (Morrison, 1997) reading packet	To closely read and analyze relationships, characters, and themes of oppression in	Students must respond to questions in close reading packet.	Written answers in text packet and discussion in small groups.

		short story (Teacher).		
Guided Reading "Recitatif" (Day 2)	"Recitatif" (Morrison, 1997) close reading packet	To closely read and analyze relationships, characters, and themes of oppression in short story (Teacher).	Students respond to questions during small group and whole class discussion	1.Written responses in packet 2.Small group discussion and whole-class discussion
"Recitatif" Drawing Assessment, (Days 3 & 4)	"Recitatif" (Morrison, 1997) close reading packet	To visually represent through a paper drawing one of three reunions between characters, Twyla and Roberta in short story (PLC).	Final discussion of 'Recitatif.' Students begin working on drawings	Drawing of one of three reunions between Roberta and Twyla and written defense of drawing
Theater of the Oppressed Final Assessment (Day 1)	3 original scenes from *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937)	I can understand how performance can help us be better thinkers and readers (Teacher). And I can identify and re-envision acts of oppression in *Of Mice and Men* (Teacher)	Students must act out a scene where characters are oppressed in the novel, *Of Mice and Men*. Students make interpretive choices about the roles they play and delivery of lines.	1. Small group discussion and preparation of scenes. 2.Whole-class discussion of how to revise and re-enact scenes
Theater of the Oppressed Revised Scenes (Day 2)	3 original scenes from *Of Mice and Men* and student revised scripts	I can act out revised scenes to stop oppression or empower oppressed characters (Teacher).	Students plan and act out revised scenes to eliminate oppression.	Group planning and performances

Interpretive Practices of Focal Classroom

In the previous section, the lesson and materials used in Betty's 10th grade classroom were described to show the sequence of texts, objectives, interpretive tasks, and assessments that were used to fulfill the classroom portion of the goal articulated by the PLC. Because the goal was to raise both teacher and student consciousness about power and race in the English classroom, the same code families were used to analyze the classroom transcripts as the PLC transcripts. The motivation for using the same code families was to show parallels in themes of analysis across the two related cases. In chapter four, authorial readings and democratic interactions were addressed first. These two codes were defined by the central pedagogical text of the PLC, *Authorizing Readers: Resistance and Respect in the Teaching of Literature* (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998). *Authorial readings* consist of those interpretive acts that individuals make as they try to understand the author's intention, that is, interpretive efforts at trying to understand the ideal audience, those readers the author had in mind when writing the text. *Authorial readings* also include interpretive efforts of "feeling the pain" of the text and its characters and recognition of *interpretive possibility*, the idea that a literary text has ambiguity, and part of reading involves the negotiation of meaning with other readers of the text. As indicated in Table 5.2, authorial readings had notable occurrence in the transcripts of the lessons in Betty's classroom. The table shows that 36% of the transcripts were coded with one of the subcodes for authorial readings. As mentioned in chapter four, the frequency counts and percentages used in Table 5.2 are reported to show relative significance of the different interpretive practices applied during the observed class periods. Democratic interactions are those dialogic behaviors used during discussions of literature such as *shared difference*, inviting or provoking a differing opinion or interpretation; *relating lived experiences,* telling personal

narratives in order to make meaning with the text; and *seeking moral insight* from a text as a way of seeing the author's world and words as providing windows of instruction for the readers' real life experience. Democratic interactions counted for 10% of the codes marked in the passes through the classroom transcripts.

Table 5.2 Code Frequency for Interpretive Practices of Focal Classroom

Code	Frequency	Percentage
Authorial Readings	328	36%
Critical Literacy	211	23%
Democratic Interactions	90	10%
Literature Comprehension	235	26%
Race	56	6%

The critical literacy practices of *authorial criticism*, *language analysis,* and *transforming norms* were applied to account for the other critical interpretations of texts and tasks in Betty's classroom. They occurred in 23% of the coded instances of interpretation. These critical practices were based on definitions created by Freebody and Luke (1999; Luke, 2012) and indicate when the students or teacher raised questions about an author or speaker's construction of text, analyzed words and phrases for power, and articulated ways to change existing normative thinking or behavior.

Additionally, literature comprehension was coded using two subcodes of basic and advanced literature comprehension. They occurred in 26% of the coded interpretive practices of Betty and her students. These codes were based on Hillocks and Ludlow's (1984) taxonomy of skills in reading fiction. These codes did not account for critical interpretations in Betty's 10th grade classroom, but are included to describe other ways in which the students make sense of the texts and tasks assigned.

Finally, race codes related to goals that the PLC set out for the individual lessons they designed

were also analyzed and amounted to 6% of the total interpretations coded. As mentioned in

chapter four, race was an issue addressed throughout all four lessons. So the 6% only accounts

for any instances of interpretation that could not be coded by the other critical literacy practices.

The race code in initial passes through the data became so prevalent that it lost meaning. In later

passes through the data, the code was further defined to represent specific ways in which race

was addressed for the goal of understanding institutionalized oppression as this was not

accounted for by the other critical interpretation codes of authorial readings and critical literacy.

Other measures of student work not described in the classroom transcripts, such as the written

responses to the Brothers and Sisters' letter, the reflection on the motivation for writing, the

impromptu writing reflection "quick write" on the motivation of the Brothers and Sisters, the

viewing guides for analysis of the Richard Sherman press conference and *The Daily Show*

episode, and the "Recitatif" images and rationales were coded with the same five codes of

authorial readings, democratic interactions, critical literacy, comprehension, and race. The

frequency of these codes in the student assessments is displayed in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Code Frequency Interpretive Practices Demonstrated in Student Assessments

Assessment	Authorial Readings	Critical Literacy	Democratic Interaction	Literature Comprehension	Race	TOTALS
Quick Write Reggie Motivation	21	6	3	0	5	35
Reggie Jordan Letters. Newsday	34	22	0	0	2	58
Reggie Jordan letters. Police	33	20	0	0	11	64
Sherman & Daily Show responses	0	22	1	0	24	47
"Recitatif" Images	16	0	7	0	33	56

TOTALS:	104	70	11	0	75	260

As Table 5.3 illustrates, the *authorial readings* codes were consistently seen across all three

lessons from on writing responses to the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan and analyzing

their motivations for writing the letter of protest. Critical literacy codes were also applied with

consistency across these three student assessments. Additionally, critical literacy was evident in

the student viewing guides reacting to and analyzing Richard Sherman's press conference and

The Daily Show's comparison of Rob Ford, Justin Bieber, and Richard Sherman. Democratic

interactions and literature comprehension codes were infrequently applied or not applied at all in

student assessments. Codes for capturing any race analysis outside of the authorial readings code

or the critical literacy codes show the greatest concentration in the assessments of the viewing

guide for the Richard Sherman press conference and The Daily Show and the assessment of the

"Recitatif" drawings and rationale. This concentration is likely attributed to the fact that these are

the only two assessments where students are asked directly to compare Black and White

characters. Further analysis of the code occurrences by code family will be addressed in the

remaining sections of this chapter.

Authorial Readings

As Rabinowitz (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998) argues his perspective on what an authorial

reading's purpose is his, he draws distinction between interpretations that engage participation

and interpretations that provoke discussion. He contends that questions about the *authorial*

audience, that is, the audience the author had in mind as he or she was writing can compel

conversation from students in an engaging way, but that it maintains the hierarchy of teacher as

knower and students as seekers of knowledge. He then argues that a more democratic approach is

only possible when there is criticism about the author's intentions as this invokes greater

interpretive possibility. The dialogue in Betty's classroom conveyed both aspects of interpretation, those that engage participation, but maintain the traditional hierarchy, and those that provoked inquiry for all interpreters of the text, including Betty. Table 5.4 reveals the frequency of the three characteristics of *authorial readings*, author's intention, humanizing the text world, and interpretive possibility, in the nine days of observed classroom discussions, both small group and whole-class.

Table 5.4 Code Frequency for Authorial Readings in Classroom Talk

Instruction	Author's Intention	Humanizing Text World	Interpretive Possibility	TOTALS
Reggie Jordan response letters	16	5	2	23
Language analysis of Reggie Jordan and Richard Sherman	22	6	0	28
"Thug" language analysis	29	0	3	32
Transition "thug" connection to *Of Mice and Men*	0	12	6	18
"Recitatif" small group guided reading	0	14	5	19
"Recitatif" guided reading, day 2	9	0	7	16
"Recitatif" lead to final discussion & assessment	4	8	5	17
"Recitatif" final assessment day 2	0	0	2	2
Theater of Oppressed , day 1	0	106	3	109
Theater of Oppressed, revised scenes, day 2	2	63	0	65
TOTALS:	82	214	33	329

Author's Intention

As illustrated in the code frequencies table for authorial readings (Table 5.4), the first three days of instruction related to the response letters to the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan and the media labeling of Seattle Seahawks' cornerback, Richard Sherman, as a "thug" show the most instances of talk identifying an author's intention. In large part this was the purpose of the first lesson on the killing of Reggie Jordan and the interpretation of the protest

letter written by Reggie's biological brother, Willie, and his classmates at one of the state

universities of New York. Betty's prompt on the worksheet for the student group did not

initially ask for the author's intention (see Appendix F), the worksheet only asked students to

read the protest letter, give initial reactions, and then craft a response to the authors from the

persona (Newsday or Brooklyn Police Department) that they were assigned. However, on the

reverse side of the worksheet, Betty asked the students to complete some reflection: "How/why

did you decide to write what you did?" and then she asked the students to respond to the

following prompt for discussion: "Identify and explain three different motivations. Why would

this group of people choose to write this way? What was their motivation?" Both of these

questions, the reflection question for the small groups to analyze why they wrote their response

to the Brothers and Sisters the way they did and the individual prompt for thinking about why the

Brothers and Sisters wrote what they wrote are questions that directly prompt inquiry into

author's intention. The first prompt compels inquiry into Betty's student's intentions for writing

and the second prompt compels inquiry into the Brothers and Sisters' intentions for writing.

Table 5.6 shows the frequency of the authorial readings interpretations in the student work

collected during the two days of lessons on the shooting of Reggie Jordan and the letter written

in protest of the shooting. As students worked in small groups to discuss and complete the

response letters, there was some overlap in what the students said in small groups and what they

articulated in their written work so the numbers reported in the code frequency tables for both the

classroom talk (Table 5.4) and the student assessments (Table 5.5) are not meant to represent

discrete instances when an authorial reading was observed. The numbers do show each time the

student or teacher articulated some inferential thinking about an author's reason for constructing

his/her argument. The data sources of the classroom transcripts, the student group written work,

and the individual reflections during the "quick write" are reported to show triangulation of data

and present a more substantial case of the students using authorial readings in Betty's classroom

activities.

Table 5.5 Code Frequency of Authorial Readings in Student Assessments

Student Assessment	Author's Intention	Humanizing Text World	Interpretive Possibility	TOTALS
Quick Write on Motivation of Brothers & Sisters	20	1	0	21
Reggie Jordan letters (Police)	20	13	0	33
Reggie Jordan Letters (Newsday)	29	5	0	34
Student work: Sherman & Daily Show responses	0	0	0	0
"Recitatif" Images & Rationales	15	1	0	16
TOTALS:	84	20	0	104

Excerpts of student authorial readings illustrated moments of reflection on their own

authorial intentions and the intentions of the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan. In the first

excerpt, students DaSheriff and Deputy (pseudonyms were student-selected) expressed difficulty

in trying to articulate the intentions in writing a response as members of the Brooklyn Police

Department:

> DaSheriff: We feel for your loss. Uh…We feel for your loss of …we feel for your
>
> loss…we feel for your loss of
>
> Deputy: We feel for your loss over…
>
> DaSheriff: Over what?
>
> Deputy: I was trying to think.
>
> DaSheriff: I was trying to think, too. I was going to say like, "The acts and harm
>
> against Reggie. The officers who attacked Reggie and caused harm to him

	will be dealt with…" I gotta reword it.
Deputy:	So you're saying like, however… However, there will be consequences for what the police officers did.
DaSheriff:	So what you say?
Deputy:	(everyone writes as Deputy dictates) "However, there will be consequences for what the police officers…"

Deputy and DaSheriff are working together to think about the police department response to a shooting they are being blamed for. In this articulation of the response, they apologize to the Brothers and Sisters for their loss; they acknowledge harm was done to Reggie; and they agree to enact consequences for the police officers responsible.

In a group assigned the persona of editors at *Newsday*, Amber articulates the newspaper's position on publishing the Brothers and Sisters' letter of protest: "Yeah… We will publish your letter, but in addition to publishing the letter we will also publish what happened because people deserve to know the full story." In this example, the students of a newspaper group agreed to publish the letter, but added that publishing the letter alone seemed like an unsatisfactory or incomplete protest and so they want to also publish the details of Reggie's death "because people deserve to know the full story." These examples from both the police department group and the newspaper group are interesting in that neither one rejected the letter outright either in their written response or in their group discussion. Both groups also articulated action-oriented responses beyond just acknowledging the validity or seriousness of the letter.

Later in the class period after students shared their group work in whole class discussion, Betty revealed to her students that the letter was written intentionally in Black English (Jordan, 2007) or AAEV (Lee C. D., 2006):

This letter was written by college-educated students who were perfectly capable of

writing in what we're calling textbook English. They decided to write in this way

intentionally. Even though they knew they weren't going to get published, that they

weren't going to get a response from the police department that they weren't going to get

published in Newsday. They weren't going to get any kind of coverage of this unjust act.

That's where this personal reflection comes in right here, ladies and gentleman. It says in

the question on power point "Identify and explain three different motivations. Why

would this group of people choose to write this way? What was their motivation?"

This information prompted an immediate response from one of Betty's students, Handsome:

"Wait so were the brothers and sisters of Reggie like actually well-educated college students?"

Betty responded in the affirmative and reiterated her prompt for the students to answer why. This

question from Betty directly provoked inquiry into authorial intentions. But even though Betty

has read the full essay by June Jordan (2007) detailing the motivations of the students in her

SUNY class, Betty entertained and accepted other possible motivations during discussion. The

following excerpts were taken from the whole-class discussion of the Brothers and Sisters'

motivations for writing at the beginning of the second day of the lesson.

Betty: Ok, did you guys hear that?

Class: No.

Betty: Should she be louder?

Class: Yes

Betty: Well, she started to say, to see how English impacts, how would you finish that

       sentence for her?

Tamika: To see how different types of English influence

Betty: To see how different types of English influence what?

Tamika: Other people's thinking

Betty: Okay, other people's thinking. What was something else we talked about as a

potential motivation? Handsome?

Handsome: That they want to see how the police department reacts …. stereotypically

like ignorant Black people…. like stereotypically uneducated Black people

Tamika's response of "to see how different types of English influence other people's thinking" is

a somewhat neutral, but reasonable inference about the Brothers and Sisters' intention for

writing. Handsome's response gets at the original intention, as articulated in Jordan's (2007)

article, much more directly and in a less neutral way. He inferred and described the racism

evident in police officers' anticipated reaction to Black English as a stereotype of "uneducated

black people." Because Handsome articulated the "right answer," Betty could have stopped the

conversation about authorial intention, but she didn't and students offered other more complex

ways of thinking about the motivations behind the letter. Among these responses was one from

Roger, who argued that the language used was an expression of pride in who they are: "Okay so

um, right in the middle they say "Be who we been," and to me that means "We are black," and

that's why I understand they wrote it in Black English, to like emphasize this is who we are

we're not going to change." Another student response from DaSheriff indicated further

implications of racial oppression: "Because…because… What I said was like. They recognize

that what's going on is… racism, so they decided to uncover it." And a second more elaborate

response from Handsome suggested that he saw camaraderie in the language choice of the

authors: "Yeah, if they're acting how they would have acted around Reggie, and I think that

might have been how Reggie actually might have been, they're representing him and the way

that he would have talked and sound." This conversation continued for a total of fifteen minutes where students discussed in the whole class setting different ways of seeing and inferring what might be authorial intentions behind the letter written in AAEV and this was a continuation from the previous day's lesson which had students engaged in 48 minutes of discussion about their own intentions for writing responses and their inferences about the Brothers and Sisters' reasons for writing their letter.

In the second half of this same class period, Betty introduced a video clip that the students were going to watch, the clip of Richard Sherman being interviewed on the field after a game. She gave the students some brief background on Richard Sherman, what team he played for, and that in the game prior to the clip, he made a "really, really, really great play" and that because of that play his team was going to the Super Bowl. Then she instructed the students to give their initial response to what they viewed in the clip (Appendix G). The students shared their responses in a brief class discussion they described Sherman as "pumped," "excited," and "fun." Then Betty shared that following this interview, Richard Sherman was called a thug by reporters. She showed a second video clip, this time of Richard Sherman at a press conference, addressing this issue of being called a thug. Students were then asked to respond in small groups to questions about Richard Sherman's responses during the press conference. A brief classroom conversation ensued where students said that as they understood it Sherman did not want to be called a thug because "it brings up his past," "it takes him back to a place he no longer wants to be," and because he thinks it's the "modern day n-word."

In the final day of the lesson on Richard Sherman being called a thug additional complexity was added to the conversation when Betty introduced the video clip for the day's lesson. She offered brief background again, this time on Toronto mayor Rob Ford, (students

150

already knew Justin Bieber and had inquired about his name on the worksheet) and told the students to fill out the chart on their worksheet about each of these three people (Richard Sherman, Rob Ford, and Justin Bieber) and how they are portrayed in the video. The students then shared their understanding of how Jon Stewart and the *Daily Show* portrayed these three men.

Betty: This is leading me to the second question how does the story portray these people? Cori and DaSheriff, you were working together. How do you think they portrayed Rob Ford?

DaSheriff: As a clown.

Betty: Why do you think they were portraying him as a clown?

DaSheriff: Dancing. They played funny music.

Betty: They portrayed him as kind of playful. It's just playful if I want someone beat up in prison? I'm a bad boy if I want someone beat up in prison? Is that serious, strong language?

Kiana: They should have chose a different word than bad boy 'cause bad boy has so many meanings.

Betty: Maybe it's not accurately representing what these men did wrong potentially. You guys got to get more into that. Anything else about how these men were portrayed?

Kiana: Crazy and wild.

Betty: Rob?

Kiana: Wild.

Betty: But you're talking about Rob Ford?

Kiana: Yeah.

Tamika: A Joke

During this conversation students DaSheriff, Kiana, and Tamika were able to offer several descriptions of Rob Ford's portrayal and how they determined those portrayals. Kiana even questioned the portrayal and the use of the phrase "bad boy" to describe Rob Ford and Justin Bieber's behavior. This moment is actually an instance of authorial criticism, as Kiana is expressing disagreement with *The Daily Show's* choice to use this phrase in their portrayal of the two men. Other instances of authorial criticism will be addressed in the critical literacy section of this chapter's findings. Students finished this segment of the lesson by answering Betty's discussion question on the parallels among Richard Sherman and Rob Ford and Justin Bieber:

Betty: All right, so these are the two questions I really want to talk about. This one has to do with understanding kind of what Jon Stewart is trying to point out. Why did he go through the trouble to present this? What is he trying to teach us? What is he trying to show us? What is his ultimate message? Stan, what do you think?

Stan: Um his ultimate message is that the media portrays people differently than they are in real life.

Betty: Um, media portrays people differently than they are in real life. Does anybody literally want to add onto this sentence?

Tamika: No!

Betty: Stop saying no and start thinking. Let's live in a yes world. Isn't there a book …like a Yes!?

Handsome: No.

Betty: I don't know what I'm talking about.

152

Handsome: There's a movie about that.

Betty: So the media portrays people differently based on…?

Handsome: Race.

Tamika: He's trying to point out the bias and racism.

Betty: All right, Adrian?

Adrian: When a highly educated black guy speaks loudly right after a game he is called

out for it, but when a white uneducated person commits felonies and hires people

to beat others in prison they are forgotten about the next day.

In this final discussion in the sequence of lessons on language as a system of oppression, Adrian

captures exactly how Jon Stewart tried to reveal this very lesson in a two-minute television

segment. These students showed that they could identify Stewart's intention, just as they

identified the Brothers and Sisters' intention for writing their letter in the previous day's lesson.

This articulation of authorial intention to expose institutionalized racism by students in Betty's

class was consistent with the PLC's goal of raising student consciousness about race and power.

The student assessment where they must draw one of three racial conflicts from the story,

"Recitatif" was also coded a significant number of times (15) for authorial reading codes and

author's intention in particular. Students addressed author's intention repeatedly in their

rationales for why they had drawn the conflict in the story as they did. Two student excerpts are

worth examining further for analysis of author's intention.

Figure 5.1 is Hank's vision of Twyla and Roberta's reunion at a grocery store. Hank

articulates several readings he inferred about how the characters looked and acted. What seems

most interesting in terms of authorial readings was his written defense of his interpretation of

Twyla and how that related to the author, Toni Morrison's lesson as he inferred it:

153

Figure 5.1

> I pictured Twyla always being frale [sic] because of her past, being alone with nobody to look to for help. Maggie represents the mother figure in this story. Twyla and Roberta wanted to kick her because she reminded them of their mothers. My interpretation of the story is being lonely as a child will not mean you will forever be lonely. Twyla and Roberta were lonely kids that never had anybody to look to for help, now they are both happily married and have children. I think this story is about resiliency.

In his defense of the picture, Hank argued that Morrison wants us to see hope and resiliency in the story of the two central characters, Twyla and Roberta, who once were lonely children, taking their aggression toward their mothers out on the orphanage cook, Maggie, but who now lead happy lives.

Figure 5.2

In this second example from Nenny (Figure 5.2), the central characters appear at a Howard Johnson's catching up over coffee. In Nenny's rationale for her drawing she also addressed author's intention:

> I drew that scene because I was interested in how they got caught up and what they looked like when they grew up. The author is trying to show that blacks and whites can still be friends and people can change for the good or the bad. The author left the race difference because it shows a lesson on how if you're black, good things happen to you. Also shows that the author is trying to make the reader figure out or make up whoever is the different race. Maggie in this story represents the thing between their friendship that ruins them or makes them argue.

Nenny's defense of her drawing showed really unique insight into the author's intentions. There is a great deal of ambiguity over the two central characters' races and this is an intentional choice

155

for readings and "misreadings" of race that literary critics have articulated about Morrison's short story (Kumamoto Stanley, 2011). Nenny understood on some level this idea of the need for the reader to "figure out" and/or "make up" whoever is the different race. I think that Nenny tried to argue that the reader inserts himself or herself and his/her racialized identity into one of the characters and then based on that reader's identity he/she figures out or even fabricates who the character of the other race is. That is, they otherize the character they do not identify with. Obviously, Nenny didn't articulate this idea with the same clarity, but she did recognize that there is purposeful intention behind Morrison's choice not to specify race in the story. These excerpted examples from the "Recitatif" drawings are the most literary examples of authorial readings in the five collected student assessments.

Students in Betty's classroom were able to identify or infer author's intention within their own writing, the writing of students intentionally altering their language expression to challenge normative standards of English, within a social satire show, and within a piece of ambiguous literature. These examples demonstrate the variety of texts and contexts in which Betty asked her students to infer author's intention.

Humanizing the Text World

The purpose in coding for humanizing the text world was to track instances where the students and teacher "feel the pain of the text" or identified with the characters' emotions and reactions. As far as the lesson observations, the lesson on *Theater of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1992), day 1 showed the most instances of emotional experience of the text with some instances in the "thug" connection lesson and the first day of guided reading in "Recitatif." As for student assessment of work, the students who wrote the responses to the Brothers & Sisters letter from the persona of the Brooklyn Police articulated the most frequent instances of emotional response

156

to the text world and there were almost no other instances of humanizing the text world in the other student assessments. To better understand instances of humanizing the text, examples were selected from each of the aforementioned contexts. The reason for the excessively high number of instances of humanizing the text world in the *Theater of the Oppressed* lesson is that the majority of the period consisted of students practicing in character one of three scenes from *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937). In almost every utterance recorded in the transcript by students is an attempt to play a character, that is, to become with voice, gesture and movement one of the characters the students had been reading about for the past few weeks of class. This is perhaps the most literal interpretation of humanizing the text world evident in the study. Some students became so immersed in the activity that they had to encourage others to immerse themselves to bring full dimension to all parts of the scene. When Betty observed Stefani's group, the students showed how much they imagined all aspects of the fictional world:

Stefani: Yeah…Okay, so we're sitting down, right?

Deputy: Yeah.

Stefani (points to Deputy to start rehearsing scene): Okay-go!

Deputy (in voice of character): "…. your goddam wife. What do you expect me to do about it? Lay offa me."

DaSheriff (in voice of character): "I'm just trying to tell you."

Stefani: You gotta (makes loud throat clearing noise to instruct Sheriff to do the same). "I'm just trying to tell you I…(in affected voice of Sheriff's assigned character)."

DaSheriff (in voice of character): "I'm just trying to tell you I didn't do nothing. I didn't mean nothing. I just thought you might've saw her."

Stefani: (in voice of character): "Whyn't you tell her to stay the hell home where she

belongs."

Betty: If you can get through this without laughing, I like what you're putting into it. However, you have five people, you need to stand up and start reading these how you're going to perform them.

Deputy: Yeah we're all sitting. That's how we envisioned the scene.

Betty: Oh…so you're all sitting on your bunks?

Deputy: Yeah we're all sitting and then he starts fighting him so he stands up.

Betty: Oh, okay (moves on to observe next group).

The students have humanized the text world by having specific voices for their characters, by having expectations of how other characters are feeling or portraying their feelings, and by envisioning the setting the characters act in and the movements that correspond with their character's feelings or motivations. All the while, students in this group, Deputy, DaSheriff, Jazzmin, and Stefani were having fun. They laughed and teased, but their playfulness and characterization didn't begin and end when they were practicing their lines. I also observed students continuing to stay in character to interact with other groups. For example, Hank from a neighboring group pointed to Stefani while she's in character and said, "Shut yer damn mouth," in his character's voice. In another moment, a student walked across the room through Stefani's group's scene and Deputy warned him, "You're stepping on a horse." These attempts at maintaining the fictional text world as a 3-D world are characteristic of Sipe's (2008) description of the performative level of response to literature where readers take some aspect of the fictional world and then allow their imagination to transform that world for their own pleasure. Other examples of this performative response included DaSheriff pretending to threaten another student as Curley, the character he was playing.

158

But, humanizing the text world did not always manifest itself with such an air of playfulness. When students humanized the world of Willie Jordan's Brothers and Sisters, the feelings were real, but they were much more somber. Multiple student groups expressed how sorry they felt for their loss. More than one group also wrote that they would do everything they could to make the Brothers and Sisters feel safe again. But, one of the most powerful responses came when Mariana reflected on why she wrote her response letter to the Brothers and Sisters the ways she did:

> **Your group's response to authors:**
>
> We will look into this case more. We won't know for sure what happened until we do.
>
> We will definately [sic] investigate the police officers involved in this.
>
> -Brooklyn Police Department
>
> **Briefly explain your response. How why/did you decide to write what you did?**
>
> I responded this way b/c saying sorry @ any time might be token[sic] in the wrong sense.
>
> Being straight forward would be the better thing.

Mariana's decision to express a kind of neutral detachment seemed in keeping with an official response from a police department and when she reflected that "saying sorry might be [taken] in the wrong sense" she might have been attending to her persona of the police officer and protecting their reputation, but she may also have been expressing some empathy for the Brothers and Sisters' feelings, knowing that an apology might feel inauthentic coming from the police department.

Several other instances of humanizing the text world actually came from Betty's instruction. When she decided to start the last day of the "thug" language analysis lesson with *Buzzfeed's* "23 Things to Love about Richard Sherman" and the man on the street interviews he

159

did for *Bleacher Report*, she is humanizing Richard Sherman as a multidimensional character, a human being with idiosyncrasies well beyond stereotype. Here's what Betty said to her students right after showing the interview Richard Sherman did on the streets of New Orleans:

> That was just for fun because I think Richard Sherman is adorable…uh and you kinda see a different side of him. Right? That post-game clip was played over and over and over again. How many have seen that post-game clip before I showed it? Alright, three? Not that many. How many of you have seen that? All right. So I mean we don't see these depictions, that's what we saw.

This moment in Betty's lesson was entirely unexpected. The videos that she played were never discussed in the PLC, nor was any effort ever made by the four teachers to consider humanizing Richard Sherman beyond his football persona. When I asked Betty after the lesson why she showed those clips she said,

> I thought it was engaging and fun and I thought they would enjoy it. I wanted those who weren't familiar with him to see how different and fun he was as compared to the on-field interview. I think in a way it justified or helped in addition to the press conference what we were trying to get them to think about. It was just a, "See kids this is just one moment of how he behaved, but here is all aspects of his personality…." I felt nervous about the lesson. What we did in that PLC were all of these topics of racism and oppression and I had to really think about it. So I wanted to show this to help them get it since it was new to me.

The fact that Betty showed these videos out of nervousness also seemed both human and empathetic. She wanted to humanize discussions in her classroom about racism, by showing Richard Sherman the human being, not just images and content related to Richard Sherman as

160

portrayed most commonly by the media. This is a lesson that none of the PLC meetings designed

or anticipated, but one that factors centrally in Betty's ability to raise awareness about race and

oppression and how to humanize individuals as opposed to suppressing or siphoning their

humanity.

Interpretive Possibility

Betty's interpretive move to show Richard Sherman from a lens yet unseen by her

students conjures notions of divergent thinking and interpretive possibility, but the actual

articulation of interpretive possibility in the student work and in the classroom dialogues was

almost non-existent. Most common in these few instances of interpretive possibility were Betty's

statements during whole class instruction where she admitted she was confused or she was

looking for multiple interpretations to a question she asked. Here are some examples from her

conversations about the puzzling and ambiguous story, "Recitatif."

> Betty: Here is an opportunity if I got to read this story in a group to kinda stop and think
> a little bit, okay. What are some ideas we have about what it means to dance all
> night? 'Cause I think there's multiple… It doesn't come out and say. We don't
> know. What are some ideas that we might have?

> Betty: No. In this story they're never going to tell you which is which. Okay and what
> we will be talking about is is this important to know? What does this tell us? You
> may be looking for clues based on what you know to determine which is which.

> Betty: Okay, ladies and gentlemen. How many people are willing to admit that this
> whole thing with Maggie is confusing? (hands go up) I myself am confused. I've
> read this story several times. Each time I've read it I come up with a different
> interpretation or understanding. We should be confused, okay?

161

In each of these examples, Betty reassured her students that the story doesn't have a single

answer, that she doesn't have a single desired answer, that she's confused, that they can be

confused together as a class. In these repeated moments, Betty is vocalizing the idea that she was

seeking knowledge in the same way that her students were seeking knowledge. This repeated

behavior of surrendering her interpretive authority was one of the ways in which Betty

demonstrated other literacy practices that contributed to a more democratic classroom.

Table 5.6 Code Frequencies for Democratic Interactions in Classroom Talk

Instruction	Home Knowledge	Moral Insight	Lived Experience	Shared Difference	TOTAL
Reggie Jordan response letters	0	0	0	4	4
Language analysis of Reggie Jordan and Richard Sherman	0	2	3	4	9
"Thug" language analysis	0	30	2	2	34
Transition "thug" connection to *Of Mice and Men*	3	0	2	0	5
"Recitatif" small group guided reading	1	0	0	11	12
"Recitatif" guided reading, day 2	4	0	1	1	6
"Recitatif" lead to final discussion & assessment	0	0	0	4	4
"Recitatif" final assessment day 2	2	0	5	0	7
Theater of Oppressed , day 1	0	0	1	3	4
Theater of Oppressed, revised scenes, day 2	0	0	3	2	5
TOTALS:	10	32	17	31	90

Democratic Interactions

Four major codes of the study were created from what Rabinowitz and Smith (1998) call

"democratic interactions." These are *sharing difference* or "positive opposing," which is the

provocation to disagree, *soliciting home knowledge*, which is any knowledge from experience,

relating life experiences, or sharing personal stories to make connection to or make sense of a literary dilemma, and *seeking moral or psychological insight* from the fictional world. Such interactions were only noted more sporadically throughout the classroom interactions than the other code families. As illustrated by Table 5.6, the greatest concentration of these democratic interactions were instances of seeking moral insight and inviting shared difference. These two codes and examples of those codes will be addressed in this section. In addition to these examples, a few others democratic behaviors of note will be addressed to describe in more precise ways the ways Betty promoted multivocality (Bakhtin, 1984) in her classes.

Seeking Moral Insight

The majority of instances where students were consulting a text to discuss moral or psychological insight occurred during the third day in the classroom when students were watching the video clip of *The Daily Show* episode where Jon Stewart shares parallels among Justin Bieber, Rob Ford, and Richard Sherman. The point of the clip is to report the criminal behavior of Bieber and Ford, two White men, and the lack of indicting language in media coverage of their behavior in contrast with the media portrayal of Sherman, a Black man, as a 'thug,' who committed no crime, but acted passionately in an on-field interview. Betty prefaced showing this video by asking students to "listen for who the person is and what the person did wrong." She said that she emphasized this aspect so that students would be able to "see how the media treated [Richard Sherman]." Because Betty prompted students to look for what Bieber, Ford, and Richard Sherman did wrong, she set the path for seeking moral insight. Much of the talk that proceeded was focused on wrongdoing and making judgments about Bieber and Ford's behavior. In student reactions to a clip of Ford making fun of a state official who was issued a driving while intoxicated indictment, they said things like "He's tweakin'" and "He was acting

163

like a grown man shouldn't be acting." In reactions to Justin Bieber beating up a bodyguard and egging someone's house, several students said he was acting like a kid. When Betty asked the students to consider the comparison of how Bieber and Ford were portrayed by media and how Richard Sherman was portrayed, Kiana summed things up: "I don't think that 'cause you're still a person...If you do something wrong, you did something wrong and Richard didn't do anything wrong. All he did was basically talk and these men actually like broke the law." In this regard, students were able to articulate how wrongdoing, that is, criminal activity was interpreted and portrayed differently for White celebrities and mayors than it was for a Black professional football player who was only observed talking loudly after a game. Kiana articulates that the actual criminals did wrong, not Richard Sherman.

Shared Difference

There were not many examples of outright debate in Betty's classroom. The examples of shared difference or provoking oppositional statements are noted, but are not prevalent throughout the classroom transcripts. There is some range from simple interactions that Betty shares with individual students like "Sure. Disagree with me. That's fine," to more unifying statements announced to the class like " If you are sitting in your seat wondering about the significance of Maggie, you are like every other person in this room, including me and I've read this story several times." In the first example, when Betty encourages a student, who is hesitant to disagree with her, to disagree, Betty is communicating to that student that she is comfortable with opposition. It's possible that in that same moment, she is communicating this to other observant students in the class, too. But, when Betty tells the entire class that she is uncertain about an interpretation of the character Maggie, in Morrison's "Recitatif," she is indicating that she is not the *primary knower* in the class and that all of the students are *possible knowers*

164

(Aukerman, 2007)*.* She is as Aukerman contends, "ceding her authority" to the students, as other

capable, knowledgeable interpreters of the classroom texts.

The students, too, demonstrate some difference in interpretation, but they don't "cede the

authority" of their interpretation as easily as illustrated in this small group work on "Recitatif."

Deputy: Should we put confused for number…this one… since she keeps leaving her?

DaSheriff: (rereads question) "How would you describe Twyla's feelings toward her

mother, Mary? Use information from pages 5 and 6 to support your answer."

She's like she's happy to see her mother she's like very happy to see her, but at

the same time…Yeah, we'll just put confused.

Jazzmin: Why is she confused?

DaSheriff: Because she says that she could kill her right now. It says that.

Deputy: I said she was confused because she didn't understand why her mother was

leaving her.

Jazzmin: That's not because she's confused. She's mad.

DaSheriff: She's mad, but she's happy.

Jazzmin: Mad…

DaSheriff: Mad, but happy is confused.

Jazzmin: Feeling some type of way, but…okay.

Jazzmin's final comment suggests that she was not willing to accept DaSheriff's interpretation of

Twyla's feelings toward her mother. She listened to his opinion, but continued to question his

and assert her own. This illustrated the idea articulated by Smith (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998)

that shared difference exists within a community, that is different opinions can co-exist, one

person's will does not have to surrender to another's in every case. In a democracy multiple opinions exist and have validity and support.

Relating Lived Experiences

Another way that multiple voices were honored in Betty's classroom were the shared stories that the students told to make sense of their interpretation of classroom materials. The lessons in Betty's classroom helped students to see literacy as a social practice. Building from Giroux's (1992) emphasis on writing as a way to connect personal experience to curriculum, Jones, Webb, & Neumann (2008) suggest that through such dialogic practice students "arrive at new self-understanding and a sense of connectedness with others" (p. 11). Similarly, Betty's students revealed personal stories and values through their dialogic interactions with the texts presented. In the first lesson, when students wrote responses to the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan, a student, Handsome really struggled with the idea that the Brothers and Sisters were educated. He had asked for confirmation about this fact early in the conversation and then after hearing his classmates argue motivations for writing the letter of protest in AAEV, Handsome challenged the consensus argument.

> Teacher: Yeah, so could that be a way they're representing themselves as well?
>
> Handsome: I guess
>
> Teacher: Their not representing themselves as college students. Their representing
>
>   themselves as black students.
>
> Handsome: See I get that. This is a true group of students. But as a black student, I find
>
>   that hard to identify with that. I don't speak like that nor do I write like that.
>
> Teacher: Yeah. Why would do you think that some people can and some people don't?
>
> Handsome: Some identify with the language.

Tamika: Just because you're black doesn't mean you talk like that.

The disputes that Handsome and Tamika made in regard to the assertion that the Brothers and Sisters' choice to write in AAEV was common to all Black people is an important indication of critical literacy and language analysis. Tamika and Handsome are challenging a stereotype that they individually do not identify with. Handsome's mini-story about his own experience of self-expression, how he speaks and writes as a Black student is a critical part of his counter-interpretation.

A second example of sharing a personal story to improve the interpretation of texts and ideas in Betty's classroom actually came minutes later from Tamika when the students were about to watch the Richard Sherman post-game interview. Betty had announced that people called Richard Sherman a 'thug' because of his behavior during the interview and Tamika raised her hand to share a personal story.

Tamika: Yeah…When I was in 5th grade, I fought this girl and my 5th grade teacher was like really, really cool, but he was so disappointed in me he called me a thug and stuff like that 'cause I fought her and anyway I was like being ignorant. He was disappointed because I like fought her and we used to be best friends. He was like you know so disappointed in me. He was like you know you supposed to act like a lady and stuff like that.

Teacher: I actually think that based on that, based on your personal experience with the word thug you can bring some insight into Richard Sherman's reaction. (To class) Was it positive for her to be called a thug?

Class: No.

Tamika: I was so disappointed in myself.

Teacher: I think based on your experience. You can basically infer what Richard

Sherman is saying.

Tamika showed great vulnerability in sharing this story. The fact that she repeated the feeling of disappointment from the teacher and in herself showed that this was a difficult life experience for her. She shared the story unprovoked and I think that this impromptu story, told with such circumspection was a much better introduction to the clip about Richard Sherman and the subsequent analysis than Betty could have provided with the most careful planning. The personal reflection and personal interpretation of what it felt like to be called a thug became an important ancillary text to consider as the students watched and analyzed the other clips about Richard Sherman being called a thug.

Other Democratic Practices

Beyond these heartfelt stories, there were still other observed practices though that struck me as powerfully democratic. In fact, what made Betty's practice far more interesting as a case study, were the other ways, outside of the identified democratic interactions (*sharing difference*, *soliciting home knowledge*, *relating life experiences*, and *seeking moral or psychological insight*) that she encouraged democracy. These other democratic practices are included in this section because they resonant with Rabinowitz and Smith's (1998) authorizing readers theory, but show more precisely other behaviors, habits, and routines that helped her students see the value of their interpretive efforts. Because these additional actions were noted within Betty's practice, they are admittedly actions that may have been consistent with her beliefs. Prior studies of teacher beliefs indicate that the truest indication of a teacher's beliefs are not those that she self-reports, but those observable in classroom interactions (Speer, 2008).

Borrowed Words and Ideas

Many of Betty's classroom practices resonated with the idea that dialogic interactions are essential to better interpretations. For example, Betty developed as part of her classroom culture the borrowing of words and ideas from classmates to accomplish the thinking task assigned. When students are engaged in a discussion of why the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan wrote their letter in "Black English" or AAEV, Betty gave the following instruction for discussion of each other's quick writes:

Teacher: Especially if you have one sentence of thought down, take someone else's words, ideas. What are the students, the people who responded, what are they saying in this quotation?

Stefani: Call on Roger.

Teacher: Well, Stefani why didn't…Did you hear what Roger said. Did you enjoy what he said?

Stephanie: Call on Roger, he has a really good one. I want him to say it 'cause he has like a whole paragraph.

Teacher: Roger, will you share? Stefani was impressed. Will you share what you thought this quotation meant?

Roger: Okay, so um, right in the middle they say "Be who we been," and to me that means "We are black," and that's why I understand they wrote it in Black English, to like emphasize this is who we are, we're not going to change.

Teacher: Can someone agree, disagree, add on to what Roger said?

In her final instruction before students share what they wrote with a neighbor, Betty tells them to "take someone else's words, ideas." This directive might appall some teachers who are inclined

169

see this as an act of plagiarism, but Betty was encouraging a kind of interdependence in terms of the thinking that needs to be done in class. She was not only comfortable with borrowed ideas, she was encouraging the borrowing, even "taking" of another's ideas. When it was time to share ideas in a whole-class discussion, Stefani, the first student to speak, told her teacher to call on Roger, the student with whom she shared ideas. Stefani's reaction was to give Roger credit for his ideas; she even wanted Roger to take the floor and share the ideas he authored himself. Before Roger read his response, Betty and Stefani take the time to compliment Roger's ideas. Roger heard that Stefani enjoyed what he said, that it was "really good" and that she was impressed. In this exchange, Roger was repeatedly affirmed for his insight. Roger then shared his response and Betty opened the discussion further by asking other students to "agree, disagree, or add on to what Roger said." I observed that Betty used the phrase repeatedly during whole class discussions on multiple days of the research study. I mentioned it here because I saw a kind of democratic interaction here that wasn't accounted for in the literature on critical literacy or authorial readings. Betty's last question, asking if others can agree, disagree, or add on in some ways honors what Smith and Rabinowitz (1998) call shared difference or" positive opposing." Students were invited to disagree with each other's interpretations, but nowhere was it suggested to encourage students to take each other's ideas for the reasons related to intellectual property mentioned earlier, but it turned out to be such a lovely moment of encouragement and shared appreciation for another student's ideas that I found it rich with significance. And as I observed and analyzed more and more of the classroom data and student data, I realized that this positive interdependence was evident in other aspects of the classroom practices as well.

Impressively, students practiced the behavior of borrowing each other's ideas and words and giving their peers credit. In this lesson, I collected the "quick write" responses and on several

170

students' sheets, I would find notes of what their peers' said or wrote. Here is an example from

Tomia's "quick write":

> The quote means that there on reggies side no matter what. They are legit about what
>
> they are saying & will always be that way.
>
> Kiana: "Be who we been" meaning that they are black and they will be themselfs.

The first two sentence in Tomia's example shared her own idea and interpretation of the Brothers

and Sisters' motivation for writing in "Black English" or AAEV, but she also recorded what her

classmate, Kiana said as her interpretation. This second example showed that multiple students

in the class honor the culture of sharing knowledge and giving credit where it is due.

Tomia's inclusion of Kiana's ideas on her own "quick write" response may not express

the same enthusiasm as Stefani and Betty's vocalized praise for Roger's thinking, but other

moments of student-to-student encouragement during group work for the lessons on *Of Mice and*

Men (Steinbeck, 1937) and the Theater of the Oppressed (Boal, 1992) were observed. Students in

one group repeatedly encouraged a shy student, Jazzmin, to read her lines with more moxie. And

in the same group, Stefani tried repeatedly to encourage experimentation with different voices

and movement for her group members' assigned roles. These examples, though not democratic,

by Rabinowitz and Smith's (1998) definitions conveyed a sense of communal support and

interdependence.

Critical Literacy

Table 5.7 Code Frequency for Critical Literacy in Classroom Talk

Instruction	Authorial Criticism	Language Analysis	Transform Norms	TOTALS
Reggie Jordan response letters	30	37	1	68
Language analysis of Reggie Jordan and Richard Sherman	0	36	1	37

"Thug" language analysis	3	26	0	29
Transition "thug" connection to *Of Mice and Men*	0	1	0	1
"Recitatif" small group guided reading	0	2	0	2
"Recitatif" guided reading, day 2	0	9	0	9
"Recitatif" lead to final discussion & assessment	0	0	0	0
"Recitatif" final assessment day 2	0	0	0	0
Theater of Oppressed , day 1	1	23	1	25
Theater of Oppressed, revised scenes, day 2	28	15	0	43
TOTALS:	62	149	3	214

Table 5.8 Code Frequency for Critical Literacy in Student Assessments

Assessment	Authorial Criticism	Language Analysis	Transform Norms	TOTALS
Quick Write Reggie Motivation	0	6	0	6
Reggie Jordan letters. Police	4	17	1	22
Reggie Jordan Letters. Newsday	8	14	4	26
Sherman & Daily Show responses	0	22	0	22
"Recitatif" Images	0	0	0	0
TOTALS:	12	59	5	76

Authorial Criticism

The greatest concentration of authorial criticism codes was observed in the student group

work on the responses to the Willie Jordan letters (Tables 5.7, 5.8). Many student participants

who were role-playing staff from the Newsday only agreed to publish the letter if they could "fix

the grammar." This presented an interesting dilemma in the study. It many ways the students'

desires to "fix" or correct the grammar seems to be in direct contrast to the teachers' intentions

behind the lesson. The four teachers in the PLC, wanted the students to be able to "To raise

student and teacher consciousness about power, race, and socioeconomic status through

172

discussion of literature and non-fiction," however, the students were not recognizing or honoring the intent of the lesson or the intent of the letter writers, "the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan." Notably, the teachers in the PLC did anticipate this as a likely response from the students, especially since this lesson appeared so early in the designed sequence on language and race and power. But, as I coded I also realized that because the teacher did not share the context and the fact that the authors intentionally wrote in Black English (Jordan, 2007) or AAEV (Lee C. D., 2006), that the authorial criticism by the students is intended to be helpful. Some students even wrote that they wanted to revise the language "so that that people take this matter more seriously." To further complicate the findings, the very same student, Seid, who wanted to "fix the grammar so that people take this matter more seriously," also wrote on the same worksheet that the students wrote the letter the way they did because of racism and, "Because maybe they thought they would prove a point by showing how they wouldn't get a response for their grsammer [sic]" This showed an immediate change in Seid's interpretation of the Brothers & Sisters' intentions for composing the letter. Seid saw that the language choices were proving a point about language expectations and the White expectations of language will lead to the letter being rejected by the police, the newspaper, and others who read the letter.

Interestingly, even students who had a more positive intention to help the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan, still wanted to change the language. A student, Joker, wrote, "We will publish this but we feel this needs a few alterations to spice it up, to intrigue the audience." Joker's request to change the language is for the purpose of "intrigue[ing] the audience," which meant he wanted the letter to get attention, but he still felt the need to alter the original language choices. In a similarly abrupt change in interpretation, Joker wrote in his reflection after finding

173

out that the letter was written in AAEV on purpose that the Brothers and Sisters' intention was to "show the injustice of how people take proper textbook english and not textbook english." Both of these immediate changes showed the influence of the context on interpretation and author intention.

Another aspect of authorial criticism observed during these lessons was student doubt expressed about the validity in the details of the story. One student, Bangz, writes in his response letter, "We appreciate you updating us on this event. We have decided to publish your article but we will need to add the full story." His expression of needing to "add the full story" was an awareness of differences between what the police reported and what the Brothers and Sisters of Reggie reported. But, his doubt in the accuracy of details, doesn't lead him to doubt the impact of the event. He defends his letter by saying, "It affects more than just the family and friends of the victim. This also should effect community and let them know whats been going on [sic]." Bangz' defense showed his understanding of the larger implication of missing information, that this event and the lack of details or resolution had a ripple effect on lives of people, even those distantly related to Reggie Jordan.

Another student in Bangz' group, Amber, wrote a similar letter and defense, but when asked to reflect after Betty revealed the letter was written in AAEV intentionally she wrote, "to explain how when you speak a certain way you get treated a certain way." This could indicate that she had empathy for the Brothers and Sisters of Reggie Jordan before she knew the intentional language choices, but that after she found out, she indicated that a major motivation for the letter was "to show how they were discriminated against" and that she now saw how language expression is a source for racial prejudice.

Language Analysis

174

Classroom conversation and student work that was coded for language analysis was at times predictable based on the planning and preparation of lessons from the PLC and at times utterly unanticipated. One of the conversations that developed about language that was purposefully planned was provoking student reactions to the Brothers and Sisters' protest letter. As mentioned in the authorial criticism section, many student groups said that they would "fix the grammar" before publishing the letter. In the whole-class dialogue that follows, the students are asked by Betty to defend their choice to correct the grammar. The students initially responded that the grammar was incorrect and "not proper." Betty challenged this assertion with a new question:

So this is the question I want to ask you guys (goes to the white board). What does it say if you can speak text book English? What does it mean about a person if they do not? (writes question on white board) We keep using the word proper. Right? Well, that's not proper English. What does it tell you about the person that speaks proper English and what does it say if you can't?

Students provided multiple interpretations in response to this question. A few students said that it shows you're educated or uneducated, but other students offer more complex responses. Tad offers this response: "I feel like people get treated different. Like if people speak well and can understand you, they'll look up to you and think you're some great kind of person, but if you can't they'll just look down upon you like you're almost like a homeless person." In a follow up response Tad admitted that he really meant wealth, that speaking proper English means you are wealthy. Amber followed Tad's comment with the idea that how you speak says a lot about who you are and where you come from. This seemed to be a comment about identity or culture, but it was so vague that it was hard to tell the implication. Amber's comment led Betty to ask

175

questions about English dialects that are understandable, but don't sound like the English they know. Students offered examples of English from the South and out West and say things like "Howdy" to confirm that they knew what Betty is talking about when she asked about other English dialects. Just after this conversation, Handsome suggested that the relaxed grammar is not related to identity or culture, but something more psychological or physiological, "Uh I had a question. Uhh is this because he's not more educated or is it because he's overwhelmed? Because kinda like when people are mad and they're like texting or typing they can easily overlook grammar." Handsome was offering a keen insight, he used prior experience and some understanding of the emotion with which the protest letter was written to suggest that the authors' emotions just got the better of their need for being grammatically correct. In a rather funny and ironic moment at the very end of this class, Betty referenced the letter from the Brothers and Sisters one last time and while doing so, she misread the salutation saying, "Yo Cops!" instead of "You Cops."

Without hesitation, Tamika called Betty out on her mistake, "They did not say no, "Yo Cops," Ms. Ross."

Betty made the mistake a second time, trying to correct herself, but repeating, "Yo Cops!" and not "You Cops." She showed self-deprecation at the mistake and the bell rang dismissing students. I asked Betty how she felt about this mistake in an interview after it occurred. Here's what she said,

> I felt a little embarrassed about that 'cause I was like oh this is how black people talk, like "Yo Cops." Maybe that was my subconscious. I mean I think it's funny they called me out on it I think that's them picking up on language and maybe we should have discussed it like why do you think I said that?

The fact that Betty saw her mistake as related to her own stereotypes of race and language and further, that she saw Tamika's flagging of that language as a sign of good analysis of language showed how willing Betty was to surrender her own pride and authority in favor of better truths. She allowed her students to criticize her own use of language because that fit the objective she set for the lesson and because they knew with more certainty and accuracy the language of the letter.

The other lesson where there were a high incidence of language analysis codes were the two days performing *Theater of the Oppressed*. Because the students had to revise the original scene they performed from *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) to eliminate oppression, many of the critical activities involved close readings of the scenes and making suggestions for how to change language that was oppressive or dehumanizing. The most powerful of these moments came when a student Tomia, playing the character of Curley's wife, has to call Crooks, a black man the n-word. Instead of using the word in the scene she substituted the word, "nagger," and conveyed it with the same venom that her character is supposed to say the actual racial slur. After the scene was over, a student from the audience asks her if she said the n-word. Tomia responds, "I said nagger." This seemed like a clever way for Tomia to remain in character as the woman who is so lonely that she is set on making others feel as low as she does. It also seemed well received in class. Tamika even shouted after the scene, "I likes that!" But the greatest confirmation that the substitute was accepted came when a second group assigned to act out the same scene has Curley's Wife say "nagger" as well. Without discussion or negotiation, nagger became the acceptable way to portray a racist character who implies, but does not use a racial slur.

In one final instance of students sharing interpretations by using each other's language, DaSheriff and his group members are trying to read and answer some of the questions in the "Recitatif" reading packet. DaSheriff had great confidence in one of his answers and his group members had not completed the assigned reading like he had.

DaSheriff: All right page sixteen question b, I said the first time she was on dirt, which

means bogus with Twyla.

Deputy: I did not know that.

Jazzmin: Me neither.

Deputy: She was on dirt? I'll put that down.

DaSheriff: On dirt. And then the second time she was more open to her…You have to put

bogus in parentheses in case Ms. Teacher don't know what that means. Dirt.

Bogus…The second time he was more open to her.

Cori: Say it again.

DaSheriff: Was more open to her.

Jazzmin (can see DaSheriff staring at her paper): Can I help you?

DaSheriff: Yeah, I'd like two McChickens, a cheeseburger…

Deputy: You need to be talking to Tamika.

DaSheriff: (laughs) Come on Jazzmin, (reads question from packet) "When Twyla and

Roberta catch up over coffee, Roberta retells the story of what happened to

Maggie and…

Deputy: Oh my God, that thing (timer) is about to go off.

(Timer buzzes.)

DaSheriff: (laughing)…Twyla is suspicious of its accuracy. Why do you think the story

of Maggie matters so much to Twyla?"

Deputy: Maybe she doesn't want to believe it happened because it was so bad. She was in

dirt.

DaSheriff: In dirt? On dirt.

Deputy: On dirt.

This moment illustrated a very sincere interpretation of how Roberta treated Twyla. DaSheriff

showed confidence in the accuracy of his interpretation and was willing to explain and provide

further definition for what the phrase, 'on dirt' meant. He even suggested that his peers provide a

synonym of 'bogus' on their worksheets in case the teacher needed further definition. And he

later helped Deputy with his acuity by correcting his misuse of the phrase. This example seemed

to show a different aspect of language analysis. Here the students are using phrases that may be

unfamiliar or considered as breaking the rules of Standard English, but they are doing in an

intentional way, perhaps not out of protest like they saw in the letter about Reggie Jordan, but

out of identity expression and sense-making of the text-world they were interpreting.

Transform norms

The code occurrence for transforming norms was slight, only three instances in the

classroom transcripts. I think once again that this was partially a limitation of the study and the

coding of the different features of analysis described in detail in this chapter. This issue will be

addressed in the discussion in chapter six.

Comprehension

Table 5.9 Code Frequency for Comprehension in Classroom Practices

Instruction	Advanced Comprehension	Basic Comprehension	TOTALS
Reggie Jordan response letters	0	0	0
Language analysis of Reggie Jordan and Richard Sherman	0	10	10

"Thug" language analysis	0	16	16
Transition "thug" connection to *Of Mice and Men*	14	11	25
"Recitatif" small group guided reading	6	35	41
"Recitatif" guided reading, day 2	20	26	46
"Recitatif" lead to final discussion & assessment	9	5	14
"Recitatif" final assessment day 2	0	4	4
Theater of Oppressed , day 1	1	32	33
Theater of Oppressed, revised scenes, day 2	0	46	46
TOTALS:	50	185	235

As mentioned previously, the comprehension codes were analyzed to account for any interpretive talk that involves sense-making, but their occurrences were not a critical interpretation move like those listed in authorial readings, democratic interactions, and critical literacy. This may help to explain why there were so many fewer indications of advanced comprehension in the classroom dialogues than there were indications of basic comprehension. It also should not be assumed that the higher instance of basic comprehension indicates that the talk and meaning-making was low-level or surface-level. Again, these codes were discussed during inter-rater reliability sessions to be coded if and only if the critical interpretations were not evident in the turn being coded. It should be noted as significant, however, that these basic comprehension efforts were made during Betty's classroom activities as necessary sense-making strategies that would be familiar in other 10th grade ELA classrooms. In reviewing the turns coded for basic comprehension, most commonly these consisted of simple inferences or basic comprehension checks of what was said in one of the videos, of what can be inferred about a character's emotional state. Basic comprehension codes also consisted of questions about recall of what was said in the story, "Recitatif" and questions of clarification about some of the videos

180

like, "Where is he mayor?" in reference to Rob Ford. There are also student verifications in small

groups of what to write down or record for their assessments. Again, these may be coded as basic

comprehension, but they are all important instances of helping to move the conversation and the

thinking forward toward bigger, more ambiguous or complex questions.

Race Talk

Table 5.10 Code Frequency for Race Talk in the Classroom

Instruction	Goal: Understanding Institutionalized Racism	Race
Reggie Jordan response letters	1	10
Language analysis of Reggie Jordan and Richard Sherman	21	12
"Thug" language analysis	25	2
Transition "thug" connection to *Of Mice and Men*	1	4
"Recitatif" small group guided reading	0	0
"Recitatif" guided reading, day 2	0	14
"Recitatif" lead to final	0	14
"Recitatif" final assessment day 2 discussion & assessment	0	0
Theater of Oppressed , day 1	0	0
Theater of Oppressed, revised scenes, day 2	0	0
TOTALS:	48	56

Race is addressed throughout the lessons featured in this case study of Betty's classroom, but all

talk about race could not be accounted for by the four critical codes of authorial readings,

democratic interactions, and critical literacy. Additional codes were applied to note other

instances of race talk, particularly those that seemed to meet the PLC goal to raise awareness

about institutionalized racism and oppression. In one of the last segments of discussion on

Richard Sherman, Betty raised the following question: "So who decides? If we're saying that

he's being called a thug because he's being too loud… according to who? That's question

number two. He says I'm talking loud I'm talking like I'm not supposed to. Like Kiana said he's expressing himself. Who's deciding how we get to express ourselves?" This was a question that Betty articulated directly in the PLC meeting where the four teachers developed this lesson. Betty had asked this question as a central method for provoking discussion about institutions of oppression, including standards of English. Here is how the students responded to her question at the end of the two days of discussion:

Tamika: The media

Nenny: Like people

Betty: People in society.

Kiana: I think it's the media.

Betty: Why do you think it's the media?

Kiana: Media can make your life go down if the media puts stories out there for people to see. He has to have a press conference to tell people he's not a thug.

Betty: I agree the media has an influence, but still who's deciding talking loudly is not how you're supposed to talk.

Tamika: White people

Betty: Why do you say that?

Tamika: 'Cause it's true.

Betty: Can someone who agrees with Tamika explain to me. Tamika's saying it's White culture who determined that what he said was appropriate or inappropriate. Why do you agree or disagree with that?

Nenny: It's kinda like how there's white English and Black. It's not normal to like talk normal instead of yell or be so aggressive in your tone.

Betty: Can someone else build on what she said. What did she just say? Deputy, were

you listening?

Deputy: Black culture and white culture and how they're different from each other. It's

like using Black English is improper I guess.

Betty: I really couldn't hear. Can you say it again quickly?

Deputy: Black English was frowned upon and it's more proper to use white English…

Betty: According to?

Deputy: Like society

Tamika: White people

Betty: The white people in society. Your connection was interesting. You said there's

different cultural acceptances. There are different ways in which we culturally

behave depending and so who's deciding that being loud is a bad thing? Tamika,

say it again.

Tamika: White people!

Betty: It may be white culture that does not value that talk.

Handsome: But he didn't use stereotypical black language

Tamika: Yes, he did.

Kiana: He was just loud.

Handsome: Right, he was just loud

Tamika: I don't want to hear it.

This excerpt of classroom talk was peppered with comments about how standards of language

and behavior are interpreted differently through the lens of race. There was genuine

disagreement among Tamika, Handsome, and Kiana regarding why Sherman was called a thug.

Tamika kept reasserting that it is white standards of behavior and English that are making the media and society interpret Sherman as a thug. Handsome zeroed in on the issue of language and argued that Sherman was not interpreted as a thug because of his language. Kiana seemed to support this idea saying that it was Sherman's volume, not his language that incurred the media's indictment. To this assertion, Tamika just said, "I don't want to hear it." The conversation essentially ended after Tamika's comment and the class moved on to a new activity without much resolution. The resolution of this issue however is not important, what is more noteworthy was that Betty had provoked multiple responses and interpretations that considered the systems of oppression that label Richard Sherman, an NFL player in a post-game interview, as a figure to be feared.

The classroom conversations and student assessments provided further insight into the dimensions of literacy practices in an environment where critical practices are encouraged. The examples of authorial readings, democratic interactions, and critical literacy show the frequency and depth of the students' articulations about oppression related to race. The code occurrences also show how the language of critical literacy was developed in myriad ways over the course nine lessons in one month. In the next chapter, the implications and limitations of these findings will be discussed as will the need for further research on these critical ELA classroom practices.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe the dimensions of critical literacy practices employed by four teachers in a PLC and by a focal teacher and her tracked students. Previous research from McLaughlin & DeVoogd (2004) warn that teachers and students cannot just "become critical." They insist that teachers must develop these critical skills over time and that the process involves "theoretical, research, and pedagogical repertoires." Important to this research was trying to capture the ways in which teachers employed a variety of literacy practices and texts in order to develop the skills of becoming critical. Additionally important were the ways in which those measures of becoming critical manifested in the focal classroom interactions over the nine days of observation. To examine these practices, I coded for occurrences of three different critical theories: critical literacy (Freebody & Luke, 1999), authorial readings (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998), and race talk (Attwood, 2011) in the classroom. I also coded occurrences of literature comprehension (Hillocks & Ludlow, 1984) as other ways of making meaning with the texts and ideas that weren't accounted for by the critical literacy theories.

The findings reported in chapter four, the case of the PLC, and five, the case of the focal classroom, showed, with specific examples and numerical representations the occurrence of these critical literacy practices. This chapter discusses those findings, the implications for professional development, classroom practices, and greater equity in how schools and teachers view tracked students.

Implications for Professional Development

This dual case study has important implications for professional development. Especially for the canned, activity-based professional development that pervades many of those programs marketed to school districts and administrators. As Boud and Hager described such programs, they warned:

> "Formal professional development arrangements have gradually mimicked this model of delivery of content decided by outside 'experts.' It has come to convey the image of professionals being 'up-dated' by absorbing pre-packaged material supplied by developers. Formal professional development thus becomes like a set of commodities to be consumed. One outcome of this is the idea of professional development as an organic unfolding process has been lost" (2012, p. 20).

The case of the four member-PLC showed how over the course of a year the three teachers and I worked to develop only a few activities and student products, a total of four lessons, but significantly developed our knowledge of how curriculum, assignments, texts, and topics could oppress people of color and convey privileging of Whiteness. This awareness became the catalyst for reflections on our own past and current practice including the language standards that we had emphasized during past instruction, our evaluations of characters like Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and our interpretations of student behaviors during discussion. Our informed awareness was an inspiration for change in the classroom. Betty reflected on this very idea during the year-end PLC meeting:

> I feel as though if we were more concerned with keeping…I feel …it was the conversations that inspired the lessons and not lessons that inspired the conversations. It was what we talked about because of the articles we read that I said, "Oh I want to

change my final discussion on *To Kill a Mockingbird.* I want to change the questions." It was let's talk about these big ideas and take some of those ideas and form them in their own ways. If we were in a group that was more concerned about… if we were in a group that felt as though like they had to have data and product that would have been an obstacle for us.

Betty reflected that it was the ideas and the discussion that inspired change in her teaching practices, not the creation of lessons. At the end of her comment she even specified that lesson creation with 'data and product' in mind would have been a detriment to the professional learning community. Betty was speaking from past experiences with teachers and administrators who would have insisted on data and product, but she was arguing that 'big ideas,' 'talk,' and development of ideas 'in their own ways' was more transformational for her and the other teachers. This perspective is in contrast with some enduring research that indicates that PLC's are unproductive when teachers do not focus on *knowledge for practice* that is informed by research-based teaching strategies (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), but the development of ideas and talk as Betty described also fits with the more organic description of professional development that Boud and Hager (2012) described.

Additionally the discussion and dialogic practices of this case study are important to consider as part of the theory building on PLC's since the establishment of communities of practice are widespread, but the theories on them are still in formation (Sleegers, den Brok, Verbiest, Moolenaar, & Daly, 2013). The sustained practice of critically examining their own roles in upholding systemic racism and then working to develop discussion that challenges those practices is rare and generally not emphasized in American professional development (Liebermann & Pointer Mace, 2010). The four of us tackled issues of systemic racism and

oppression head-on and did not maintain "safe" (Leonardo & Porter, 2010) distances from the racism in our own instructional practices. Together, we examined racism in text selection, in the way we positioned different characters in classroom discussions, and in the way we perceived of student participation and expression during those discussions.

Thomas (2015) argued that there is "limited research about *how* everyday classroom teachers handle conflicts and disconnections about race…" (p.155). The case of the PLC showed how four teachers engaged with texts and each other in order to become more "critically conscious" (Thomas, 2015) of the ways in which the four of us upheld standards of language, standards of interpretation, standards of emotional expression, and standards of literature that represented a legacy of White privilege. In large part, these reflections were a result of a sustained inquiry into our beliefs about systemic oppression of tracked students and students of color. And this motivation actually supports the existing research on what an "inquiry as stance" model looks like in professional development. So (2013) cited multiple studies to clarify that such a stance is "a habitual and continuous attitude and perspective-a disposition, a mode of living, or state of being" (p.189). There seems to be two implications that the case of the PLC raises in regard to this definition of inquiry as stance. One is that if teachers exhibit an inquiry as stance model it is the result of not just a single or limited endeavor into a problem of practice; it is a "state of being." In other words, our teacher attitudes and dispositions toward the tracked students prior to the formation of the PLC mattered as it motivated our inquiry into other ways in which schools, and more particularly, English Language Arts as a discipline was its own intricate system of oppression.

A second implication is that a "mode of living" or a "state of being" cannot be enforced through professional development. The implication here is that if schools want PLC's and

teachers that engage in transformative inquiry they need to invite teachers to direct their own inquiry. To some degree, Roosevelt High School supported the teachers' inquiry in that the chair offered to let PLC's select and purchase a central pedagogical text, but if the real transformative work of the PLC came as Betty suggested from "the talk" about contemporary issues related to racism and oppression and that this talk was informed by the everyday texts that Mellie suggested were more influential, then schools or teacher preparation programs need to do more to invite teachers to explore the beliefs and attitudes that motivate their teaching and they need to acknowledge that those beliefs are in part formed outside the walls of the school. But they also need to allow teachers to confront systemic issues which may be indicative of both national and local politics and discrimination.

Everyday Texts

Another implication of the research is the role that everyday texts played in both the PLC discourse and the classroom discourse. Other critical literacy studies have examined the importance of inviting students to examine the texts around them (Grace & Tobin, 2002; Gutierrez K. D., 2008; Kendall, 2008; Schieble, 2012) as this is a means of honoring Freire's notion of "reading the word and the world" (Freire, 2014). The teachers read multiple genres and modalities of texts during the PLC meetings, texts ranging from social commentary, to sports commentary, to televised satire, to more academic texts. The everyday texts of the articles on the NFL ban of the n-word and the videos of Richard Sherman in his on-field interview with Erin Andrews were central to the teachers' reflection about their own literature instruction and when and how the n-word had been discussed in various literary texts they taught. This deep reflection on an issue that has the potential to oppress real students was provoked through a discussion of what was going on in the NFL because Betty is a big football fan. This is a rather unpredictable

189

provocation for a discussion about instructional practices, but it merits the consideration of inviting teachers to consult a variety of texts, those predictably pedagogical and those that might seem distantly related to the classroom in order to inform classroom practice.

This idea seems to honor the idea that Street (2003) has addressed in terms of New Literacies. Teachers have access to a multitude of texts just by accessing the internet and this access is an important resource for the issues that matter in their lives and that matter in the lives their students. Because we as teachers in the PLC experienced deep engagement with the texts on the NFL ban and on the texts we consulted related to Richard Sherman being called a "thug," we decided to scaffold lessons about these issues into lessons examining oppression in language. These articles, videos, and TV shows (*The Daily Show*) added dimension to the literacy practices of both the teachers and the students. Using these multimedia did not take away from the use of literary texts or literary instruction. If anything, the students offered very literary readings of some of these non-fiction texts. Humanizing the text world is a key feature of authorial reading according to Rabinowitz and Smith (1998), but the idea of "feeling the pain of the text" has been written about by other literary critics (Barthes, 1974; Hernstein Smith, 1988; Scholes, Protocols of Reading, 1989) and significant occurrence of "feeling this pain of the text" was observed in Betty's students' response letters to the Brothers and Sisters of Willie Jordan, a non-fiction text. In this way, Betty and the other teachers' use of contemporary and nonfiction texts may have evoked more humanizing interpretations and ultimately rather literary readings of various contexts.

Implications for Classroom Practices

To some degree the case of the PLC challenges the thinking that professional collaboration must be focused solely on data about student learning (Vescio, Ross, & Adams,

2008). This isn't to say that the four members of the PLC ignored student data. On the contrary, the teachers focused on knowledge of our students in order to develop and deliver the lessons. Betty, the focal teacher demonstrated understanding of her students when she designed the lessons and when she discussed the texts of the lessons, but she and the other teachers did not rely on skills-based data to determine the design of those lessons. We designed the lessons because we desired to disrupt the oppressive traditions of the English classroom.

In order to create these meaningful and potentially contentious lessons, Betty and the other teachers relied on their knowledge of themselves and their beliefs in relation to the topics of race, language, and power, a knowledge that they actively researched and developed over the course of an entire year. The four teachers also relied on their knowledge of the particular students in their classrooms and a willingness to honor, even privilege student knowledge.

Betty conceded that sometimes privileging student knowledge can be difficult, but it is crucial in a democratic classroom. In the year-end PLC meeting, when Betty was asked about that moment when she mistakenly quoted the classmates of Willie Jordan as saying "Yo cops!" instead of "You cops!" She admitted embarrassment over expressing language that is racially stereotyped and even admitted that the student, Tamika, who called it to her attention made her feel embarrassed. But she also found other significance to the moment: "…I think that's them picking up on language" and immediately connected this observation to a reflection on practice: "Maybe we should've discussed like why do you think I said that?" Betty's admission of embarrassment likely stemmed from her desires to be in line with more inclusive, critically literate pedagogy as that was a core value in the PLC work, but her conclusion that this moment was an opportunity for student insight on the central goal of the PLC, to examine oppression in language, shows her exaltation of student voice, and her regret that she didn't invite more voices

191

to analyze her own internalized views of stereotypical language. This reflection indicated her desire for democratic process in the classroom. She wanted to hear from more students and she wanted to engage in conversation about her mistake.

Betty's willingness to make self-critique of language a point of discussion in class upholds notions of the democratic classroom. She is inviting positive opposing (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998), a democratic behavior coded for in the study, but she is also showing her humility and admitting flaw in her own language choices. This move changed power relationships in her class. Betty became, in terms defined by Aukerman (2007), *a possible knower*, but not the *primary knower*. The student, Tamika, assumed this same role as possible knower. Thus interpretive status was shared by both Betty and Tamika. Shared interpretive status is an uncomfortable position for many teachers, but as Aukerman (2013) asserts more equal power structures have important implications for comprehension. Betty's efforts to equalize teacher-student power structures resonate with what Beach et al. (2010) have called "emancipatory pedagogical projects," classroom efforts that honor the belief that literacy is freedom and access.

Furthermore, Betty demonstrated her beliefs regarding student as knower when she instructed students to take what someone else said when they don't have any ideas of their own. This practice was not discussed in the PLC, but was observed during multiple days in Betty's classroom. Undoubtedly, many teachers might see this as a kind of plagiarism, taking someone's ideas and using them for your own credit. However, Betty explained in an interview that she started using the strategy to prevent students saying, "I don't know," if called on to participate. Betty's motivation was to invite more voices into the classroom conversation, but an implication of this classroom procedure is actually representative of shared dialogic comprehension (Aukerman, 2013). Betty was not privileging or isolating students who have the answers; she

192

was demonstrating that shared understandings are more important than individual learning. Of course, most impressive were the moments when Betty's students recorded what their peers said on some of their class worksheets, again, crediting the student who came up with the idea, but using those ideas to show their own understanding. Most impressive about this occurrence was that Betty had never instructed her students to do this. I even asked about the incidence of this practice on written work and Betty said no, indicating genuine surprise when I showed her that some students did this on the assessments collected for this study. She said that the oral instruction during discussions to take something they heard another student say was a result of direct instruction, but that she never prompted students to do this on their written work. Again, the fact that students carried this practice of crediting others ideas to their written work was a way of showing shared understanding that led to equalizing power structures in the classroom. Betty made her students feel and see their own authority on topics that mattered outside and inside school.

Implications for Critical Literacy Instruction

Some researchers have argued that when students read from a critical stance they "use their background knowledge to understand relationships between their ideas and the ideas presented by the author in the text. In this process, readers play not only the role of code-breakers, meaning makers, and text users, but also the role of text critics" (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, p. 52). But the observations of this research study and context seem to raise questions about the extent of an individual's background knowledge and cultural knowledge. In fact, there were times when the students did not rely on background knowledge alone to become a text critic. When Handsome criticizes the Brothers and Sisters for writing as college-educated students in AAEV, he wasn't only relying on background knowledge to critique the text. He saw

193

his own identity as an educated Black student being undermined by that intentional choice to write the letter in AAEV. Additionally, the teachers did not model this process in the PLC conversations or collaborations. Instead, students and teachers seemed to need to be provided with or actively seek out texts that informed contrasting opinions or challenged cultural norms in order to critique language conventions and text credibility. This is an important addition to many critical literacy studies that want to honor or emphasize student knowledge or home knowledge. I agree that these examples of knowledge are often oppressed in academic situations and that by doing so, there is a denial of identity and a narrowing of and privileging of conventional sources of knowledge. As such, I do not want to suggest that students' or teacher's lived experiences or home knowledge is unhelpful. I simply want to suggest that it may not be enough to take a critical stance in reading texts.

One other implication related to critical literacy is the question of authorial readings in critical literacy study. The four resources theory (Freebody & Luke, 1999) argues that authorial intention doesn't matter; however, it does require examination of many sources of authority related to questions about language, text consumption, and text construction. In this way, where I saw difference before conducting the study between Freebody & Luke's (1999) model of critical literacy and Rabinowitz and Smith's (1998) theory of authorial readings, I see more resonance between the two. The pivotal point here is that teachers and students need to question the authority that is sanctioning a particular use of language, a particular position, a particular stereotype, etc. Furthermore, it's crucial to examine the various sources of authority enacting these constructions or positions. This is evident in the PLC teachers' reflections on all the sources of authority, the discipline of English, language standards, literary analysis, canonical literature, teacher authority that are acting upon a student in a classroom. This is also important

194

to consider in the classroom lessons on language standards. The students' critical examination of language standards looked at standards of English, media use of language, racialized language, and other voices of authority, like the Brooklyn police, to consider all of the ways in which language can oppress individuals and groups. These sources of oppression are perhaps more specific or more contextualized than Baldwin's (1963) list of administrations, but they each carry oppressions that do violence against students and other persons of color.

Implications for Instruction in Tracked Classrooms

Applying Aukerman's (2007) idea that "dialogue with multiple others, past and present voices" is what influences a reader's assumptions about purpose and meaning has significant relevance to the two cases in the research I presented. The multiple voices that contribute to meaning- included the four teachers and the 24 students of the study, but it also involves the past voices, voices of oppression, critique, and liberation that the teachers and the students have experienced. In this way, past readings and misinterpretations of teachers, of students, of curriculum, of language, and of race are essential to the two cases presented. I hesitate to even write a separate section on instruction for tracked students because I believe that the instructional practices described in the case of Betty would apply to many classrooms, tracked and non-tracked, and the point of the study is to expose some of the misinterpretations of students tracked like those in her classroom for low motivation.

The sad truth remains that ability tracking exists in 80% of high schools (Rui, 2009) and many teachers see tracked students from deficit perspectives (Oakes, Stuart Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997; Triplett, 2007). Even those teachers who admit to the narrowed social and scholastic opportunities that come with tracking, are not always willing to see students for who they are individually or what the offer intellectually. In such deficit models, teachers also

195

maintain a position of authority and emphasize "drill and skill" procedures like vocabulary study

and test-taking strategies. This top-down model of teacher as primary knower (Aukerman, 2007)

of language and literacy acuity can be silencing, oppressive, or worse as research has suggested

that it has lasting impact on self-image (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Such misinterpretations of tracked students as "deficit learners" often are based on

teachers' prior beliefs and cultural models of what students branded "low ability" are capable of

achieving (Oakes, Stuart Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997; Triplett, 2007). This dual case study

differs in that the teachers first examined their own prejudices and insecurities in order to design

lessons that perhaps appealed to the interests of the students, but that addressed issues and topics

that were challenging to both the teachers and the students. Such opportunities for rich

discussion are rare in tracked classrooms, despite evidence that discussion has a greater

correlation with student achievement in English classes (Caughlan & Kelly, 2004). In Betty's

classroom of students tracked for "low-motivation," not only are the students engaged in the

discussion, they are instructed and encouraged to engage in positive opposing, seeking difference

in opinions. This requires rigorous analytical work on the part of the listener and speaker, as well

as a desire to find or assert a better answer. Students, Jazzmin and DaSheriff demonstrated this

level of commitment and drive when disputing Twyla's, (the character from Morrison's

"Recitatif") feelings toward her mother. Neither student relented in pursuit of a more accurate

description of how and why Twyla was experiencing simultaneous feelings of confusion and

anger at the mother who abandoned her. A similar moment of impassioned disagreement was

observed in the discussion among Handsome, Kiana, and Tamika when Betty asked her signature

question, "Who is deciding how we express ourselves?" There was great disagreement and

identity conflict among these three Black students who did not want to concede their informed

positions in regards to Richard Sherman being called a "thug." Tamika repeatedly insisted that it was "White People" who imposed this expectation while Handsome and Kiana wanted to argue that it was a volume standard that cut across racial lines that Sherman betrayed.

Such vigorous discussion does not seem characteristic of students labeled 'low motivation' and neither do the observations of Betty's students when engaged in writing and rewriting letters to mourning families of police violence. When Bangz and his group and DaSheriff and his group worked to find the right words, the best way to express sorrow and empathy, they were actively anticipating their readers' responses and considering the power of words to convey the emotions they were feeling. Such careful consideration again seemed to indicate high interest and motivation to discuss and specify with accuracy their interpretation of Reggie's situation from the perspective of an assigned persona. The desire for accuracy of interpretation was also observed during the group preparation for the scenes from *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937). Stefani modeled movement, gesture, and intonation for her group members to try to convey her interpretation of characters and their relationships. DaSheriff and Deputy practiced their characters' laughs and fighting stances for audience reaction and for accuracy. In these examples of the letter writing and the class performances, the desire and the enactment of revising, re-doing letters and scenes in order to convey with greater precision interpretation of characters, emotions, and relationships seemed consistent with the characteristics of ambition, rather than complacency or apathy. This occurrence seemed inspired and creative, features of classrooms that have been described by Grace and Tobin (2002) as empowering students with their own authority as they blur the hierarchies of power. Betty's students demonstrated high occurrence of critical literacy discourse, including authorial criticism, language analysis, and humanizing the text world. Because both the qualities of

intellectual discourse and creative play were observed, this study contributes to the small, but important group of studies situated in tracked classroom where innovative and imaginative practice is evident.

Limitations of the Study

This is a dual case study, which strengthens the validity of the study (Yin R. K., 2004). However, this is still a case study which provides depth of study, but not the breadth of studies that look a more diverse sampling for their data analysis. As such, a limitation is that this is one case of one PLC and one focal classroom and a replication study would be needed to prove more generalizable results.

Another limitation of the study is the profile of the teachers. They are all White; they all grew up middle class, and they all have advanced degrees of study. There is some range to their teaching experience, but not a lot. Even though research shows that White, female teachers from a middle-class background represent the majority of teachers in the classroom (National Education Association, 2010), this is still a limitation of the study. With a greater diversity of race and/or ethnicity, experience, and educational background there may have been very different outcomes in the PLC discussions and in the activities of the focal classroom.

The profile of the students, the fact that they represent a disproportionate number of students of color in a classroom may be consistent with existing research on low ability tracked students (Ansalone, 2010; Losen, 1999; Oakes, Stuart Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997;), but this is still a possible limitation of the study. Some may argue that such a population is too narrow a learner characteristic to apply to other classrooms. They may also argue that a classroom with such a disproportionate number of students of color would offer different insights during discussions of oppression and race. I agree with this statement. I think that having these

198

conversations in classrooms that are predominately one race or ethnicity would vary a great deal and that has been shown in prior studies (Anagnostopoulos, Everett, & and Carey, 2013; Beach, 1997; Lee C. D., 2006)

Implications for Further Research

The work of the four teachers in the PLC showed the dimension of discussions and literacy practices employed when addressing issues of oppression, but seemed to raise questions about the English Language Arts discipline as source of oppression as well. The teachers in this study were reflective about this issue, but I'm not sure that all teachers would be, as it might feel as unsafe as other "hot button topics" that researchers have suggested make teachers uncomfortable (Glazier, et al., 2000; Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). However, these issues are real have real consequences and further research is needed to design professional development that draws attention to this issue and compels White teachers not only to reflect on these issues, but transform their curriculums and practices to put an end to these sources of oppression.

Additional research is also needed on the conceptual and instructional challenges implied by shared dialogic comprehension (Aukerman, 2007). Affordances of such an approach were suggested in the discussion of results, but these are not experimental findings, nor were they intentional aspects of the research design. I think that further research on shared dialogic comprehension practices would address limitations in comprehension studies and in would address some of the oppression of student knowledge in the classroom.

Finally, further research is needed in tracked classrooms and on the issue of tracking as a racist and classist system. If 80% of schools are still using tracking (Rui, 2009), there must be systemic advantages that schools see in this practice or systemic disadvantages of de-tracking. More research is needed to expose these advantages as they are corrupting teachers and other

school officials' ability to see the value of these students. Arguments supporting tracking as differentiation have really only proved academically advantageous for students in high-track (honors or gifted) classes (Ansalone, 2010) and do not lead to academic improvement for students in low-tracked classes. Additionally, the case of Betty and her students shows multiple ways in which students tracked for low motivation are capable of critical literacy practices and are also capable of advanced performative (Sipe, 2008) interpretations of literature. The students in Betty's class also demonstrated understanding of academic protocols like citing others' ideas in both discussion and written work. Finally, the case showed that the students participated in a variety of interpretive tasks, including oral, written, performed, and drawn demonstrations of learning. Such flexibility and commitment to academic tasks indicate the need for a larger discussion about how Betty and the other teachers in the PLC examined their own biases and bigotry in order to remove limitations in their instruction and positioning in the classroom. More research is needed to see how professional development related to systemic oppressions has impact on student achievement.

Conclusion

In the chapter, "Discourse and sociocultural studies in reading," Gee states:

The moral is this: Thinking and using language is an active matter of assembling the situated meanings that you need for action in the world (Barsalou, 1992; Bruner, 1996; Clark, 1996). This assembly is always relative to your socioculturally defined experiences in the world and, more or less, routinized ("normed") by the sociocultural groups to which you belong and with whom you share practices (Gee, 1992)." (Gee, 2000, p. 199)

In the two cases of this study, the teachers "assembled meanings for action" in their tracked classrooms. In order to do so they critically examined the ways in which their literacy instruction was privileging language and literature that had real repercussions for students of color. Their examinations included authoritative readings of literary texts, language standards or ideologies, and interpretations of racialized identities. They offered texts and contexts that raised questions about media, language, and fiction in order to raise awareness about oppression and in doing so they provided support for the "right and necessity to examine everything" (Baldwin, 1963) and made a commitment to see their students as collaborators in the fight for educational equality. Access and freedom in school require constant examination, collaboration, and re-examination; otherwise, our schools remain unbalanced, oppressive systems that limit the literacies of democracy.

Appendix A: Teacher Participant Semi-Structured Interview

A. Classroom events

    1. Will you describe what happened in the classroom today?

    2. How did you feel about the class, how did it go?

    3. What did you hear or observe when students were in small groups?

    4. What, if anything, would you do differently?

B. Follow-up questions

    1. Why did you say….(question clarifying intention of instruction)?

    2. Why did you ….(question about sequence)?

    3. What did you think when (question about student contributions to discussion)?

Appendix B: Lesson Plan #1- Writing to Explore Language and Power

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

Critical Literacy Focus: Students will examine how language conveys power and affects social relationships

Content	Language Arts/English, Critical Literacy, Writing, Authorial Reading
Topic/Theme (essential questions)	How is language a tool of power? Who determines how we get to express ourselves? How can words be used to fight back or stand up to those who have power?
Materials (texts)	Letter from students enrolled in June Jordan's Black English class (Jordan, 2007) Richard Sherman post-game interview with Erin Andrews
Reading Strategies	Analysis of diction, syntax, and context to interpret how language is used to convey power or assert authority, or convey bias, racism
Writing Strategies	Participant uses reasons from discussion and examples from the text to support their claim.
Goals (I Cans)	I can identify examples of characters or individuals using language to control or assert authority over someone. I can find my own examples of language as power in a short story. I can express my interpretation of those examples in writing.
Learning Product	Position-taking letters addressed to the Brothers & Sisters of Willie Jordan, either from the perspective of the Brooklyn police or Newsday, a media outlet

Procedure	1. Teacher begins by dividing students into small groups of 3-4 students. Teacher gives each group, the excerpt of the letter from June Jordan's Black English class that begins "You Cops!" Groups have 5-7 minutes to respond to the question, "If you were the Brooklyn Police Department how would you respond to this letter and why?
	2. Students return to large group. Teacher asks for them to share group discussions. Teacher, anticipating negative response, also asks questions about the value or advantages of the letter and the way it is written.
	3. Teacher then passes out second letter, written by Willie Jordan, member of Jordan's class and brother of Reggie Jordan, the boy killed. This second letter is written in formal White English. Students have time to read the letter and respond to question, "If you were the Brooklyn Police Department how would you respond to this letter and why?" Students respond to question during whole class discussion. After hearing from several students, teacher explains that community of students in a Black English class had the choice of which letter to submit and submitted the "You Cops!" Black English version. Teacher then poses the question, "Why do you think they did that? Why make that choice?" Students respond in whole class discussion. Teacher has excerpts from June Jordan article on the features of Black English to have students read if they want more specific knowledge of the student community's choice to write the letter to police as they did.
	4. Teacher leaves debate open. No consensus or conclusions need to be iterated, if anything teacher may review points that were made during student contributions, but leaving the debate unresolved will be important to similar debates that will emerge in conversations about Morrison's short story, "Recitatif."

Appendix C: Lesson Plan #2- Analyzing Media Bias and Language That Oppresses

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

Critical Literacy Focus: Students will examine how language can be used in media to oppress and stereotype people of color

Content	Language Arts/English, Critical Literacy, Writing, Authorial Reading
Topic/Theme (essential questions)	How is language a tool of power? Who determines how we get to express ourselves? How is the media's language expression different when describing differ races?
Materials (texts)	Richard Sherman post-game interview with Erin Andrews (video) Richard Sherman on being called the n-word (video) Richard Sherman: "Thug is the Accepted Way to Call Someone the N-Word" (Waldron, 2014) Daily Show clip of media portrayal of Justin Bieber, Rob Ford, and Richard Sherman (video
Reading Strategies	Analysis of diction, syntax, and context to interpret how language is used to convey power or assert authority, or convey bias, racism
Writing Strategies	Participant uses reasons from discussion and examples from the text to support their claim.
Goals (I Cans)	I can identify examples of characters or individuals using language to control or assert authority over someone. I can find my own examples of language as power in a short story. I can express my interpretation of those examples in writing.
Learning Product	Position-taking letters addressed to the Brothers & Sisters of Willie Jordan, either from the perspective of the Brooklyn police or Newsday, a media outlet

Procedure	1. Teacher begins by dividing students into small groups of 3-4 students. Teacher gives each group, the excerpt of the letter from June Jordan's Black English class that begins "You Cops!" Groups have 5-7 minutes to respond to the question, "If you were the Brooklyn Police Department how would you respond to this letter and why? 2. Students return to large group. Teacher asks for them to share group discussions. Teacher, anticipating negative response, also asks questions about the value or advantages of the letter and the way it is written. 3. Teacher then passes out second letter, written by Willie Jordan, member of Jordan's class and brother of Reggie Jordan, the boy killed. This second letter is written in formal White English. Students have time to read the letter and respond to question, "If you were the Brooklyn Police Department how would you respond to this letter and why?" Students respond to question during whole class discussion. After hearing from several students, teacher explains that community of students in a Black English class had the choice of which letter to submit and submitted the "You Cops!" Black English version. Teacher then poses the question, "Why do you think they did that? Why make that choice?" Students respond in whole class discussion. Teacher has excerpts from June Jordan article on the features of Black English to have students read if they want more specific knowledge of the student community's choice to write the letter to police as they did. 4. Teacher leaves debate open. No consensus or conclusions need to be iterated, if anything teacher may review points that were made during student contributions, but leaving the debate unresolved will be important to similar debates that will emerge in conversations about Morrison's short story, "Recitatif."

Appendix D: Lesson Plan #3-Examining Power and Racial Stereotypes

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

Critical Literacy Focus: Students will examine their own racial biases and ways of reading text from cultural stereotypes

Content	Language Arts/English, Critical Literacy, Visual Literacy
Topic/Theme (essential questions)	What systems of power are evident in the story friendship? In what ways do our understanding of cultural and racial stereotypes influence our reading of Roberta, Twyla, and Maggie?
Materials (texts)	"Recitatif" (Morrison, 1997)
Reading Strategies	Authorial Readings, Characterization, Critical Literacy
Goals (I Cans)	I can identify systems of power in a short story. I can explain how those systems of power relate to systems of power in the real world. I can infer meaning based on stereotypes and reflect on the limitations of that knowledge. I can create images or symbols to convey my interpretation of characters' feelings.
Learning Product	Student drawing of one of three racial conflicts between the main characters, Twyla and Roberta. Written rationale of drawing
Procedure	1. Students are given drawing prompt and asked to submit with written defense of how their drawing represented the race of the characters, their relationship, and other images or representations of conflict in their drawing.

Appendix E: Sample Lesson Plan #4-Re-imagining Power Structures

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Critical Literacy Focus: Students will identify how individuals become victims and oppressors through analyzing character relationships in a literary text.

Content	Language Arts/English, Critical Literacy, Acting
Topic/Theme (essential questions)	What is oppression? Can it be reversed? What causes individuals to become oppressed? What causes individuals to become oppressors? Once you are a victim are you always a victim? Once you are an oppressor are you always an oppressor?
Materials (texts)	Text: Select scenes from *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck turned into script form.
Reading Strategies	Analysis of character relationships. How do authors convey to us that some characters are victims and some are oppressors?
Goals (I Cans)	I can identify characters in the novel that are oppressors and characters that are victims. I can identify how an author conveys this idea of victim/oppressor relationships in a text. I can use my knowledge of a character relationship to put an end to the victim/oppressor relationship.
Learning Product	The learning product is the performance of the *Of Mice and Men* scenes. These prompts are meant to guide students in the performance of these scenes. Prompt 1 provides some insight into interpretation of characters and motives. Prompt 2 provides insight into interpretation of power structures and how to change those power structures. Acting Prompt 1: You and your group have been assigned a short scene from *Of Mice and Men*. You must perform this scene using your entire group. Rely on some

	of the acting instruction your teacher provided like conveying emotion through your voice, facial expression, and body movement. Acting Prompt 2: Now you and your group must rewrite your scene to put an end to the oppression in your scene. You can rewrite/revise actions or words of one characters or multiple characters. There must be a notable change in the scene so that the audience that saw your first scene will see and understand the changes in this newly revised version. You will perform this in front of the class.

Procedure	1. Teacher begins by explaining oppressors and victims using a bullying example. Teachers then explain that Francisco Boal, a theater teacher and activist in South America used to use theater to raise the public's consciousness about oppressive regimes in their countries. He would perform these scenes in public, portraying the oppression, then having players stop the scene and revise it impromptu style in order to show how to stop oppression.
	2. Teacher provides some instruction on different ways to express emotion and meaning in acting. Teacher engages students in a 5 minute warm-up.
	   a.) Students stand in a large circle (Desks should be pushed out of the way to accommodate this activity.) Teacher asks students to warm up body and face as part of preparation for acting.
	   b.) Teacher leads students in shaking each arm and leg to a count of 8.
	   c.) Next have students engage in stretching their facial muscles by doing "Big Mouth Frog and Little Mouth Frog." The goal in big mouth frog is to make facial features as big as possible (teacher models) and the goal in little mouth frog is to make them as small as possible (teacher models).
	   d.) The final phase of the warm-up is to try to encourage students to think about their whole bodies when conveying an emotion. Ask students to use their feet to show "shy" feet and to show "a warrior's stance." Use hands only to show "evil or plotting." Use posture or shoulders only to show "eager" and to show "disappointed."
	3. Students are dismissed to their small groups to prepare the original version of their scenes from *Of Mice and Men*. Students also prepare Acting Prompt 2.
	4. Students perform both versions of the scene in front of class. Students should have class time to practice scenes, but scenes do not have to be memorized. Students can use scripts.
	5. After each scene is performed, teacher asks students in audience to respond in brief discussion on the following questions, "What changes did you see in the second version of this scene? Why do you think this group made those changes? Were they effective in

	stopping oppression of some characters? How did the changes create new power structures?

Appendix F: Willie Jordan Group Work-To Brooklyn Police Department

On Octobers 25, 1984, two Brooklyn police officers shot and killed 25 year-old Reginald Jordan. The officers claimed that Reggie had attacked them, but the autopsy revealed that the eight gunshot wounds entered his back from point blank range. The officers were never prosecuted. His brother, Willie along with several other concerned community members wrote the following letter to the Brooklyn police department.

You Cops!

We the brother and sister of Willie Jordan, a fellow Stony Brook student who the brother of the dead Reggie Jordan. Reggie, like many brother and sister, he a victim of brutal racist police, October 25, 1984. Us appall, fed up, because that another senseless death what occur in our community. This what we feel, this from our heart, for we ain't stayin' silent no more (Jordan, 2007).

You, the members of the Brooklyn police department public relations team have just received this letter. What is your reaction to the letter? Give a response to these authors based on your reaction.

Reactions to letter notes (NO need for full sentences):

Your group's response to authors:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Briefly explain your response. How/why did you decide to write what you did?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Individual Reflection (Question on PowerPoint)

1. Motivation-

    Explanation-

2. Motivation-

    Explanation-

3. Motivation-

    Explanation-

APPENDIX G: Richard Sherman Press Conference

1. What is/was your initial reaction to the Richard Sherman clip?

2. In your own words, what is Richard Sherman's message during the press conference? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

3. Richard Sherman says, "So I'm talking loud; I'm talking like I'm not supposed to." What does he mean when he says "that he's not supposed to"? Who decides how we express ourselves?

4. How is Sherman defining "thug"? What about the people who were calling Richard Sherman a thug? How were they defining him?

5. What do think about Richard Sherman's comparison to hockey players? Why do you think he uses this as a comparison in this context?

6. Read article about Richard Sherman being called a thug. What does culture seem to value about expression? How is that evident in both the press conferences AND the article?

Appendix H: "The Daily Show" (Stewart, 2014)

1. As you watch, fill in the chart below.

	Rob Ford	Justin Bieber	Richard Sherman
Who is the person?			
What did the person do "wrong"?			
What *language* is used to describe the person?			
How do the stories portray the person?			

2. Why does Jon Stewart use Rob Ford and Justin Bieber as comparisons?
3. What is Jon Stewart trying to point out?
4. Are all three of these people being held to the same standard? Should they be? Why or why not?

Appendix I: Coding Manual

Unit of Analysis: One conversational turn. A turn is defined here as any comment on a single topic. Once the speaker turns to a different topic or subject, it counts as a new turn and can be coded. If the speaker is interrupted and after the interruption continues to speak on same topic, it still counts as one conversational turn.

Code Category	Sub Codes & Symbol	Definition	Examples
Authorial Readings (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998)	**AI**-Author's intention	This code applies to any effort to infer the author's intention. Subject would show knowledge and understanding that a person with intentions created/composed the text and there are motivations behind human intentions	Why did the author write the story without identifying race? I don't understand why the author would have made Roberta say she hated when Twyla touched her hair.
	HTW-Humanizing Text World & Characters	Rabinowitz says that this is an attempt to "feel the pain of the text." A reader would make statements trying to understand the feelings of the characters or the situations or dilemmas the characters face.	I'm not understanding why she would kick a mute person. That's just mean.
	I-Interpretive possibility	A person makes a claim to offer meaning or further understanding of the text or an idea in discussion, but suggests doubt or variability in their assertion.	I don't know if Twyla is black or white. I think she could be either. It says here that she has big hair, but it also says she has a butler.
Critical Literacy (Luke, 2012)	**AUC**-Authorial Criticism	This code applies when the individual raises questions about an author or speaker's choice in a text or film or video. The critique is evidence that the student or teacher realizes the text is	As a black student, I don't identify with that type of English. I don't speak that English. I understand that others do, but I don't identify with the way the author wrote this student's

		constructed and that he/she finds flaw in that construction.	language.
	LANG-Language Analysis	This code exists as it was a named goal/primary objective for the PLC and is central to both literary analysis and critical literacy. Any specific word level or phrase-level analysis of language as power. This analysis will likely include an inference about the speaker or writer's intention.	It's interesting that he uses the word, thug, here. When he uses that word, thug, he seems to suggest a kind of bravado, a bragging.
	TRAN-Transform Norms	This code is also a central part of Luke's definition of critical literacy. This code should be applied to any communication that offers intentional re-creation or revision of normative values or behaviors.	It shouldn't be that way. The media shouldn't silence a black football player's voice and put their own spin on it.
Democratic Interactions (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998)	**SD**-Sharing difference or "positive opposing"	This is characterized by any opportunity or provocation to sharing differing opinions. I will likely involve at least two conversational turns to show the opposing opinions.	S1: Just because you're black doesn't mean you talk that way. S2: But some people talk that way.
	HK-Solicit knowledge from home institutions	This is the invitation or inspiration to use knowledge from experience. Some researchers have called this accessing students' "funds of knowledge"	She's on dirt. On dirt that means bogus. You gotta write that down in case Ms. Ross don't know what on dirt mean.

REFERENCES

National Governors Association. (2010, June). *Appendix A: Research supporting key elements of the standards*. Retrieved October 30, 2010, from Common Core State Standards Intiative: http://www.corestandards.org

Agee, J. (2000). What is effective literature instruction? A study of experienced high school English teachers in differing grade- and ability-level classrooms. *Journal of Literacy Research, 32*(3), 303-348.

Alexie, S. (2007). *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian.* New York: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

Allington, D. (2012). Private experience, textual analysis, and institutional authority: The discursive practice of critical interpretation and its enactment in literary training. *Language and Literature, 21*(2), 211-225.

Alvermann, D. (2001). Reading adolescents' reading abilities: Looking back to see ahead. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 676-690.

Anagnostopoulos, D. (2003, November). Teaching and student engagement with literature in urban classrooms: A multi-layered perspective. *Research in the Teaching of English, 38*(2), 177-212.

Anagnostopoulos, D., Everett, S., & and Carey, C. (2013). 'Of course we're supposed to move on, but then you still got people who are not over those historical wounds': Cultural memory and US youth's race talk. *Discourse and Society, 24*(2), 163-185.

Anderson, L. H. (1999). *Speak.* Harrisonburg: RR Donnelly & Sons.

Anderson, R., & Biddle, W. (1975). On asking people questions about what they are reading. In

    G. Bower (Ed.), *The psychology of learning and motivation* (pp. 90-132). New York:

    Academic.

Anderson, R., & Pearson, P. D. (1984). A schema theoretic view of basic processes in reading

    comprehension. In P. D. Pearson, R. Barr, M. Kamil, & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), *Handbook*

    of reading research (pp. 255-291). New York: Longman.

Ansalone, G. (2000, July 31). Keeping on track: A reassessment of tracking in the schools. *Race,*

    Gender, and Class, 7(3), 1-18.

Ansalone, G. (2010, December). Tracking: Educational differentiation or defective strategy?

    Educational Research Quarterly, 34(2), 3-17.

Applebee, A., A., L. J., Nystrand, M., & Gamoran, A. (2003). Discussion-based approaches to

    developing understanding: Classroom instruction and student performance in middle and

    high school English. *American Education Research Journal, 40*(3), 685-730.

Asselin, M. (2000). Confronting assumptions: Pre-service teachers beliefs about reading and

    literature. *Reading Psychology, 21*, 31-55.

Attwood, P. F. (2011). The power of collaboration: Learning to teach antiracist content.

    Multicultural Perspectives, 13(3), 122-129.

Aukerman, M. S. (2007, August). When reading it wrong is getting it right: Shared evaluation

    pedagogy among struggling fifth grade readers. *Research in the Teaching of English,*

    42(1), 56-103.

Aukerman, M. S. (2013). Rereading comprehension pedagogies: Toward a dialogic teaching

    ethic that honors student sensemaking. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online*

    Journal, 1, A1-A30.

Avalos, B. (2011). Teacher professional development in Teaching and Teacher Education over

    ten years. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*, 10-20.

Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics.* (C. Emerson, Ed., & C. Emerson, Trans.)

    Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

Baldwin, J. (1963, December 21). A talk to teachers. *The Saturday Review*.

Barnett, T. (2000, September). Reading "Whiteness" in English studies. *College English, 63*(1),

    9-37.

Barone, D. M. (2004). Case-study research. In N. K. Duke, & M. H. Malette (Eds.), *Literacy*

    Research Methodolgoies (pp. 7-27). New York: Guilford Press.

Barthes, R. (1974). *S/Z.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Beach, R. (1997). Students' resistance to engagement in responding to multicultural literature. In

    T. Rogers, & A. O. Soter (Eds.), *Reading Across Cultures: Teaching Literature in a*

    Diverse Society (pp. 69-94). New York: Teachers College Press.

Beach, R., & Hynds, S. (1991). Research on Response to Literature. In R. Barr, M. Kamil, P. B.

    Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research* (Vol. II, pp. 453-

    489). White Plains, New York: Longman Publishing.

Beck, I., & McKeown, M. (1981). Developing questions that promote comprehension: The story

    map. *Language Arts*, 913-918.

Beck, I., & McKeown, M. (2006). *Improving comprehension with questioning the author: A*

    fresh and expanded view of a powerful approach. New York: Scholastic.

Behrman, E. H. (2006). Teaching about language, power, and text: A review of classroom

    practices that support critical literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 49*(6),

    490-498.

Bernhardt, P. E. (2014, Spring). Making decisions about academic trajectories: A qualitative study of teachers' course recommendation practice. *American Secondary Education, 42*(2), 33-50.

Biancarosa, G., & Snow, C. (2004). *Reading next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York.* Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Blake, R., & Cutler, C. (2003). AAE and variation in teachers' attitudes: A question of school philosophy? *Linguistics and Education, 14*(2), 163-194.

Boal, A. (1992). *Games for actors and non-actors* (2nd ed.). (A. Jackson, Trans.) London: Routledge.

Boud, D., & Hager, P. (2012). Re-thinking continuing professional development through changing metaphors and location in professional practices. *Studies in Continuing Education, 34*(1), 17-30.

Bourke, R. T. (2008). First graders and fairy tales: One teacher's action research of critical literacy. *The Reading Teacher, 62*(4), 304-312.

Brindley, R., & Laframboise, K. L. (2002). The need to do more: Promoting multiple perspectives in preservice teacher education through children's literature. *Teaching and teacher education, 18*, 405-420.

Burbank, M., Bates, A., & Ramirez, L. (2012, Fall). Critically reflective thinking in urban teacher education: A comparative case study of two participants' experiences as content area teachers. *The Professional Educator, 36*(2).

Carver, R. P. (1992). Effect of prediction Activities, prior knowledge, and text type upon amount

    comprehended: Using rauding theory to critique schema theory research. *International*

    Reading Association, 165-172.

Caughlan, S., & Kelly, S. (2004, August). Bridging methodological gaps: Instructional and

    institutional effects of tracking in two English classes. *Research in the Teaching of*

    English, 39, 20-62.

Cazden, C. B. (1988). *Classroom Discourse: The Language of Teaching and Learning.*

    Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Clarke, L. W., & Whitney, E. (2009). Walking in their shoes: Using multiple perspectives texts

    as a bridge to critical literacy. *The Reading Teacher, 62*(6), 530-534.

Coates, T.-N. (2014, March 5). Politics and the African-American Human Language. *The*

    Atlantic.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (1999). Relationships of knowledge and practice: Teacher

    learning in communities. *Review of Research in Education, 24*, 249-305.

Cook, D. (2013). Adorno, Foucault and Critique. *Philosophy and Social Criticism, 39*(10), 965-

    981.

Corbett Burris, C., Wiley, E., Welner, K., & Murphy, J. (2008, March). Accountability, rigor,

    and detracking: Achievement effects of embracing a challenging curriculum as a

    universal good for all students. *Teachers College Record, 110*(3), 571-607.

Costa, A. L. (2009). *Habits of mind across the curriculum: Practical and creative strategies for*

    teachers. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Crosman, R. (1980). Do readers make meaning? In S. R. Suleiman, & I. Crosman (Eds.), *The Reader In The Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (pp. 149-164). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Crumpton, H. E., & Gregory, A. (2011). "I'm not learning": The role of academic relevancy for low-achieving students. *The Journal of Educational Research, 104*, 42-53.

Cupchilk, G. C., Leonard, G., Axelrad, E., & Kalin, J. (1998). The landscape of emotions in literary encounters. *Cognition and Emotion, 12*(6), 825-847.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Richardson, N. (2009). How teachers learn. *Educational Leadership, 66*(5), 46-53.

Delpit, L. (2012). *"Multiplication is for white people": Raising expectations for other people's children.* New York: The New Press.

Dewey, J. (1944). *Democracy and Education.* New York: Free Press.

Dooley, C. M., & Assaf, L. C. (2009). Contexts matter: Two teachers' language arts instruction in this high stakes era. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 354-391.

Dooner, A.-M., Mandzuk, D., & Clifton, R. A. (2008). Stages of collaboration and the realities of professional learning communities. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*, 564-574.

Fairbanks, C. M. (1998). Nourishing conversations: Urban adolescents, literacy, and democratic society. *Journal of Literacy Research, 30*(2), 187-203.

Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical discourse analysis. In T. A. Van Dijk, *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (pp. 258-284). London: Sage.

Farrar, D. (2014, January 22). *Richard Sherman says it's really disappointing to be called a thug.* Retrieved from Sports Illustrated: http://www.si.com/nfl/audibles/2014/01/22/richard-sherman-seattle-seahawks-super-bowl-xlviii

Fecho, B. (2004). *Is this English?: Race, Language, and Culture in the Classroom.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Fecho, B., Coombs, D., & McAuley, S. (2012, March). Reclaiming literacy classrooms through criical dialogue. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 55*(6), 476-482.

Fish, S. (1980). *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities.* Cambridge: Harvard.

Franzak, J. K. (2006, Summer). Zoom: A review of the literature on marginalized adolescent readers, literacy theory, and policy implications. *Review of Educational Research, 76*(2), 209-248.

Freebody, P., & Luke, A. (1999, October 26). *Further notes on the four resources model.* Retrieved from Reading Online:

http://www.readingonline.org/research/lukefreebody.html

Freebody, P., & Luke, A. (2003). Critical literacy/socially perceptive literacy: a study of language in action. In G. Bull, & M. Anstey (Eds.), *The Literacy Lexicon* (pp. 51-66). New South Wales: Pearson Education Australia.

Freedman, L., & Johnson, H. (2000-2001). Who's protecting whom?I hadn't meant to tell you this: A case in point confronting self-censorship in the choice of young adult literature. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 44*(4), 356-369.

Freire, P. (1987). The importance of the act of reading. In P. Freire, & D. Macedo (Eds.), *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (pp. 5-11). South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey.

Freire, P. (2014). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (30th Anniversary ed.). New York: Bloomsbury.

Galda, L., & Beach, R. (2001). Theory into practice: Response to literature as a cultural activity. *Reading Research Quarterly, 36*(1), 64-73.

Gee, J. (2000). Discourse and sociocultural studies in reading. In M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, P. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (pp. 195-207). Mahwah, New Jersey: Erlbaum.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* Chicago: Aldine.

Glazier, J., McVee, M., Wallace-Cowell, S., Shellhorn, B., Florio-Ruane, S., & Raphael, T. E. (2000). Teacher learning in response to autobiographical literature. In N. J. Karolides (Ed.), *Reader Response in Secondary and College Classroom* (pp. 287-3110). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Goleman, J. (1995). *Working Theory: Critical Composition Studies for Students and Teachers.* Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Goswami, D., Lewis, C., Rutherford, M., & Waff, D. (2009). *Teacher Inquiry: Approaches to Language and Literacy Research.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Grace, D., & Tobin, J. (2002). Butt jokes and mean teacher parodies: Video production in the elementary classroom. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Teaching Popular Culture: Beyond Radical Pedagogy* (pp. 42-62). London: Routledge.

Graesser, A., Singer, M., & Trabasso, T. (1994). Constructing inferences during narrative text comprehension. *Psychological review, 101*(3), 371-395.

Grant, M., Lapp, D., Fisher, D., Johnson, K., & Frey, N. (2012, September). Purposeful instruction: Mixing up the "I," "we," and "you". *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 56*(1), 45-55.

Gray, E. S. (2009). The importance of visibility: Students' and teachers' criteria for selecting African American literature. *The Reading Teacher, 62*(6), 472-489.

Greco, N. (1992). Reading and writing against the text. *Language Arts Journal of Michigan, 8*(1), 28-46.

Greenleaf, C., & Hinchman, K. (2009). Reimagining our inexperienced adolescent readers: From struggling, striving, marginalized, and reluctant to thriving. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 53*(1), 4-13.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 1105-117). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Gutierrez, K. (2008). Developing a sociocritical literacy in the third space. *Reading Research Quarterly, 43*(2), 148-164.

Gutierrez, K. D., & Rogoff, B. (2003, June/July). Cultural ways of learning: Individual traits or repetoires of practice. *Educational Researcher, 32*(5), 19-25.

Hadar, L. L., & Brody, D. L. (2012). The interaction between group processes and personal professional trajectories in a professional development community for teacher educators. *Journal of Teacher Education, 64*(2), 145-161.

Hall, L. A., & Piazza, S. V. (2008). Critically reading texts: What students do and how teachers can help. *The Reading Teacher, 62*(1), 32-41.

Hansfield, L. J. (2011). Disruptive comprehension: Deconstructing, resituating, and rewriting texts. *Theory Into Practice, 50*, 125-132.

Harris, J. (1989). The idea of community in the study of writing. *College Composition and Communication, 40*, 11-22.

Hernadi, P. (2001). Literature and evolution. *SubStance, 30*(94/95), 55-71.

Hernstein Smith, B. (1988). *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical*

   Theory. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hillocks, j. G., & Ludlow, L. (1984). A taxonomy of skills in reading and interpreting fiction.

   American Educational Research Journal, 7-24.

Hirsh, S., & Hord, S. M. (2010, August). Building hope, giving affirmation: Learning

   communities that address social justice issues bring equity to the classroom. *Journal of*

   Staff Development, 31(4), 10-17.

Holmlund Nelson, T., Deuel, A., Slavit, D., & Kennedy, A. (2010). Leading deep conversations

   in collaborative inquiry groups. *The Clearing House, 83*, 175-179.

Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative*

   Health Research, 15, 1277-1288.

Jenlink, P. M., & Jenlink, K. E. (2008). Creating democratic learning communities. *Theory into*

   Practice, 47, 311-317.

Jewett, P. (2007). Reading knee-deep. *Reading Psychology, 28*, 149-162.

Johannessen, L. R. (2004). Helping "struggling" students achieve success. *Journal of Adolescent*

   and Adult Literacy, 638-647.

Johnson, E., & Vasudevan, L. (2012). Seeing and hearing students' lived and embodied critical

   literacy practices. *Theory into Practice*, 34-41.

Johnson, L. R., & Rosario-Ramos, E. M. (2012). The role of educational institutions in the

   development of critical literacy and transformative action. *Theory Into Practice*, 49-56.

Jones, L., Webb, P. T., & Neumann, M. (2008). Claiming the contentious: Literacy teachers as

    leaders of social justice principles and practices. *Issues in Teacher Education, 17*(1), 7-

    15.

Jones, S. (2013). Critical literacies in the making: Social class and identities in the early reading

    classroom. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 13*(2), 197-224.

Jordan, J. (2007). Nobody mean more to me than you and the future life of Willie Jordan. In D.

    Trimbur, & J. Trimbur (Eds.), *Reading Culture: Contexts for Critical Reading and*

    Writing (pp. 160-169). New York: Pearson/Longman.

Kaye, C., & Ragusa, G. (1998). Boal's mirror: Reflections for teacher education. *Annual Meeting*

    of the American Educational Research Association (pp. 1-15). San Diego, CA: American

    Educational Research Association.

Kendall, A. (2008). Playing and resisting: Rethinking young people's reading cultures. *Literacy,*

    2(3), 123-130.

Kenney, J. (2013). Fostering critical thinking skills: Strategies for use with intermediate gifted

    readers. *Illinois Reading Council Journal, 41*(2), 28-39.

Kumamoto Stanley, S. (2011, Summer). Maggie in Toni Morrison's 'Recitatif': The Africanist

    presence and disability studies. *MELUS: Multi-ethnic literature of the U.S., 36*(2), 71-88.

Kumra, N. (2011, January). Social semiotics and Efl pedagogy: A semiotic visit to the enemy

    within the Heart of Young Goodman Brown. *Ekev Academic Review, 15*(46), 405-420.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field

    like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*(1), 7-24.

Laframboise, K. L., & Griffith, P. L. (1997). Using literature cases to examine diversity issues

    with preservice teachers. *Teaching and teacher education, 13*(4), 369-382.

Langer, J. A. (1994). *A response-based approach to reading literature.* SUNY University at Albany. Albany: National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning.

Lapp, D., & Fisher, D. (2010). Critical literacy: Examining the juxtaposition of issue, author, and self. *Multicultural Perspectives, 12*(3), 156-160.

Lazar, A. M., & Offenberg, R. M. (2011). Activists, allies and racists: Helping teachers address racism through picture books. *Journal of Literacy Research, 43*(3), 275-313.

Lee, C. D. (1995). A culturally-based cognitive apprenticeship: Teaching African american high school students skills in literary interpretation. *Reading Research Quartely, 30*(4), 608-630.

Lee, C. D. (2006). 'Every good-bye ain't gone': Analyzing the cultural underpinnings of classroom talk. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 19*(3), 305-327.

Lee, H. (1982). *To Kill a Mockingbird.* New York: Warner Books.

Leonardo, Z., & Porter, R. K. (2010, July). Pedagogy of fear: toward a Fanonian theory of 'safety' in race dialogue. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(2), 139-157.

Levine, S. R. (2013). *Making interpretation visible with an affect-based strategy.* Learning Sciences. Evanston: Northwestern University.

Loh, C. E. (2009, September). Reading the world: Reconceptualizing reading multicultural literature in the English language arts classroom in a global world. *Changing Education, 16*(3), 287-299.

Losen, D. J. (1999, Summer). Silent segregation in our nation's schools. *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*.

Luke, A. (2012). Critical Literacy: Foundational Notes. *Theory Into Practice*(54), 4-11.

Manfield, K. C. (2015). Giftedness as property: Troubling Whiteness, wealth and gifted

    education in the United States. *International Journal of Multicultural education, 17*(1), 1-

    18.

Marshall, J. D. (1988). Classroom discourse and literary response. In B. F. Nelms (Ed.),

    Literature in the Classroom: Readers, Texts, and Contexts (pp. 45-57). Urbana, IL:

    National Council of Teachers of English.

Marshall, J. D., Smagorinsky, P., & and Smith, M. (1995). *The Language of Interpretation:*

    Patterns of Discourse in Discussions of Literature. Urbana, IL: National Council of

    Teachers of English.

McBee Orzuluk, M. J. (2015). Disinviting deficit ideologies: Beyond "That's standard," "That's

    racist," and "That's your mother tongue". *Research in the Teaching of English*, 176-198.

McCormick, P. (1985). Feelings and fictions. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 43*(4),

    375-383.

McIntosh, P. (1989, July/August). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Peace and*

    Freedom Magazine, pp. 10-12.

McLaughlin, M., & DeVoogd, G. (2004, September). Critical literacy as comprehension:

    Expanding reader response. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 48*(1), 52.

McVee, M., Baldassarre, M., & Bailey, M. (2004). Positioning theory as lens to explore teacher

    beliefs' about literacy and culture. In C. Fairbanks, J. Worthey, B. Maloch, J. Hoffman, &

    D. Schallert (Ed.), *53rd Yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (pp. 281-295).

    Oak Creek: National Reading Conference.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San

    Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mizokawa, D. T., & Hansen-Krening, N. (2000, September). The ABC's of attitudes toward

    reading: Inquiring about the reader response. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy,*

    44(1), 72-79.

Modica, M. (2015). "My skin color stops me from leading": Tracking, identity, and student

    dynamics in a racially mixed school. *International Journal of Multicultural Education,*

    17(3), 76-90.

Moje, E. B., & Lewis, C. (2007). Examining opportunities to to learn literacy: The role of critical

    sociocultural literacy research. In C. Lewis, P. E. Enciso, & E. B. Moje (Eds.), *Reframing*

    Sociocultural Research on Literacy: Identity, Agency, and Power (pp. 15-48). Mahwah,

    New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Moje, E.B., Young, J., Readence, J., & Moore, D. (2000). Reinventing Adolescent Literacy for

    New Times: Perennial and Millennial Issues. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*,

    400-410.

Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using

    a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice, 31*(2),

    132-141.

Moller, S., Mickelson, R. A., Stearns, E., Banerjee, N., & Cecilia, B. M. (2013). Collective

    pedagogical teacher culture and mathematics achievment: Differences by race, ethnicity,

    and socioeconomic status. *Sociology of Education, 86*(2), 174-194.

Monsma, B. J. (1996, Autumn). "Active readers...obverse tricksters": Trickster texts and cross

    cutural reading. *Modern Language Studies, 26*(4), 83-98.

Morrison, T. (1997). Recitatif. In H. Rochman, & D. Z. McCampbell (Eds.), *Leaving Home* (pp.

    201-228). New York: HarperCollins.

Morson, G. S. (1998). Sideshadowing and tempics. *New Literary History*, 599-624.

National Education Association. (2010). *Status of the American ublic School Teacher 2005-2006.* Washington: National Education Association.

Nelson, T. H., Deuel, A., Slavit, D., & Kennedy, A. (2010). Leading deep conversations in collaborative inquiry groups. *The Clearing House, 83*, 175-179.

New London Group. (1996). A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies. *Harvard Educational Review, 66*(1), 60-92.

Nieto, S. (2000). Placing equity front and center: Some thoughts on transforming teacher education for a new century. *Journal of Teacher Education, 51*(3), 180-187.

Nietzsche, F. (1956). *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals* (1st Edition ed.). (F. Golffing, Trans.) New York: Anchor Books.

Nurenberg, D. (2011, Spring). What does injustice have to do with me? A pedagogy of the privileged. *Harvard Educational Review, 81*(1), 50-63.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2010). *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities.* Princeton: Princeton University.

Nystrand, M. (2006). Research on the role of classroom discourse as it affects reading comprehension. *Research in the Teaching of English, 40*(4), 392-412.

Oakes, J., Stuart Wells, A., Jones, M., & Datnow, A. (1997, Spring). Detracking: The social construction of ability, cultural politics, and resistance to reform. *Teachers College Record, 98*, 482-510.

Palinscar, A., & Brown, A. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities. *Cognition and Instruction, 1*(2), 117-175.

Pang, V. O., Colvin, C., Tran, M., & Barba, R. H. (1992). Beyond chopsticks and dragons: selecting Asian-American literature for children. *The Reading Teacher, 46*(3), 216-224.

Public, N. O. (2013, February 2). Richard Sherman finds out who's the best shutdown cornerback on Bourbon Street. (R. Sherman, Interviewer) Bleacher Report Studios. Retrieved from http://bleacherreport.com/articles/1512316-richard-sherman-finds-out-whos-the-best-shut-down-cornerback-on-bourbon-street

Purcell-Gates, V. (2004). Ethnographic Research. In N. K. Duke, & M. H. Malette (Eds.), *Literacy Research Methodologies* (pp. 92-113). New York: Guilford Press.

Rabinowitz, P. (1992). Against close reading. In M.-R. Kecht (Ed.), *Pedagogy is politics: Literary theory and critical teaching.* Urbana, Illinois.

Rabinowitz, P. J., & Smith, M. W. (1998). *Authorizing Readers: Resistance and Respect in the Teaching of Literature.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Raphael, T. (1982). Question-answering strategies for children. *The Reading Teacher, 36*, 186-190.

Raphael, T. E., Kehus, M., & Damphousse, K. (2001). *Book Club for Middle School.* Lawrence, MA: Small Planet Communications.

Reidel, M., & Draper, C. A. (2011). Reading for democracy: Preparing middle-grades social studies teachers to teach critical literacy. *The Social Studies, 102*, 124-131.

Rogers, R. (2002, May). "That's what you're here for, you're suppose to tell us": Teaching and learning critical theory. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 772-787.

Rogers, R. (2014). Coaching literacy teachers as they design critical literacy practices. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 30*(3), 241-261.

Rogoff, B., & Angelillo, C. (2002). Investigating the coordinated functioning of multifaceted cultural practices in human development. *Human Development, 45*, 211-225.

Rorty, R. (1989). *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosenblatt, L. (1978). *The Reader, The Text, and The Poem.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Rosenblatt, L. (2004). The transactional theory of reading and writing. (R. B. Ruddell, & N. J. Unrau, Eds.) *Theoretical models and processes of reading*, 1363-1398.

Rubin, B. C. (2008). Detracking in context: How local constructions of ability complicate equity-geared reform. *Teachers College Record, 110*(3), 646-699.

Rui, N. (2009). Four decades of research on the effects of detracking reform: Where do we stand? A systematic review of the evidence. *Journal of Evidence-Based Medicine, 2*, 164-183.

Rumenapp, J. C. (2016). Analyzing discourse analysis: Teachers views of classroom discourse and student identity. *Linguistics and Education*(35), 26-36.

Schaedler, M. T. (2010, Spring). Boal's Theater of the Oppressed and how to derail real life tragedies with imagination. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 141-151.

Schieble, M. (2012, November). Critical conversations on Whiteness with young adult literature. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 56*(3), 212-221.

Scholes, R. (1982). *Semiotics and Interpretation.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Scholes, R. (1989). *Protocols of Reading.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Schor, N. (1980). Fiction as interpretaion/interpretation as fiction. In S. Suleiman, & I. Crosman (Eds.), *The Reader In The Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (pp. 165-182). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., & Buchanan, J. (2008 йил May). Enhancing teacher education

  practice through professional learning conversations. *European Journall of Teacher*

  Education, 31(2), 215-227.

Shor, I. (1980). *Critical Pedagogy and Everyday Life.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sims Bishop, R. (1990). Fifty years of exploring children's books. In E. J. Farrell, & J. R. Squire

  (Eds.), *Transactions with Literature: A Fifty Year Perspective* (pp. 1-10). Urbana, IL:

  NCTE.

Sinnema, C., Sewell, A., & Milligan, A. (2011, August). Evidence-informed collaborative

  inquiry for improving teaching and learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education,*

  39(3), 247-261.

Sipe, L. R. (2008). *Storytime: Young Children's Literary Understanding in the Classroom.* New

  York: Teachers College Press.

Sleegers, P., den Brok, P., Verbiest, E., Moolenaar, N. M., & Daly, A. J. (2013, September).

  Toward conceptual clarity: A multidimensional, multilevel model of professional

  learning communities in Dutch elementary schools. *The Elementary School Journal,*

  114(1), 118-137.

Slouka, M. (2009 йил 29-September). Dehumanized. *Harper's Magazine*, pp. 32-40.

Smagorinsky, P. (2001). If meaning is constructed, what is it made from? Toward a cultural

  theory of reading. *Review of Educational Research, 71*(1), 133-169.

Smagorinsky, P. (2008, July). The methods section as conceptual epicenter in constructing social

  science research reports. *Written Communication*, 389-411.

Smith, J. P., & Girod, M. (2003, April). John Dewey and psychologizing the subject matter: big ideas, ambitious teaching, and teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 19*(3), 295-307.

Smith, M. W., & Wilhelm, J. D. (2002). *"Reading don't fix no Chevys": Literacy in the lives of young men.* Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Snow-Gerono, J. L. (2005). Professional development in a culture of inquiry: PDS teachers identify the benefits of professional learning communities. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21*, 241-256.

So, K. (2013). Knowledge construction among teachrs within a community based on inquiry as stance. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 29*, 188-196.

Speer, N. (2008). Connecting beliefs and practices: A fine-grained analysis of a college mathematics teacher's collections of beliefs and their relationship to his instructional practices.". *Cognition and Instruction, 26*, 218-267.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Stallworth, B. J., Gibbons, L., & Fauber, L. (2006 йил March). It's Not on the List: An Exploration of Teachers' Perspectives on Using Multicultural Literature. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 49*(6), 476-489.

Stearns, E. (2004). Interracial friendliness and the organization of schools. *Youth & Society, 35*(4), 395-419.

Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*(5), 797-811.

Steinbeck, J. (1937). *Of Mice and Men.* New York: Penguin.

Stewart, J. (Performer). (2014, January 30). *The Daily Show.* Retrieved from

    http://www.cc.com/video-clips/iuwskp/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-2-broken-guys

Stotsky, S., Traffas, J., & Woodworth, J. (2010). *Literary Study in Grades 9, 10, and 11: A*

    National Survey. Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers.

Street, B. (2003, May 12). What's 'New' in New Literacy Studies? Critical Approaches to

    Literacy in Theory and Practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education, 5*(2), 77-91.

Tatum, A. W. (2008, Spring). Toward a More Anatomically Complete Model of Literacy

    Instruction. *Harvard Educational Review, 78*(1), 155-180.

Thein, A. H., Beach, R., & Parks, D. (2007, November). Perspective-taking as transformative

    practice in teaching multicultural literature to white students. *English Journal, 97*(2), 54-

    60.

Thomas, E. E. (2015 йил November). "We always talk about race": Navigating race talk

    dilemmas in the teaching of literature. *Research in the Teaching of English, 2*, 154-175.

Thornton, S. G., & Romano, R. M. (2007). Beyond oppositional thinking: Radical respect.

    Philosophical Studies in Education, 38, 199-209.

Tierney, R., & Cunningham, J. (1984). Research on teaching reading comprehension. In P.

    Pearson, R. Barr, M. Kamil, & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (pp.

    609-655). New York: Longman.

Tobin, V. (2009). Cognitive bias and the poetics of surprise. *Language and Literature, 18*(2),

    155-172.

Todorov, T. (1980). Reading as Construction. In S. R. Suleiman, & I. Crosman (Eds.), *The*

    Reader in The Text (pp. 67-82). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Triplett, C. F. (2007). The social construction of "struggle": Influence of school literacy contexts, curriculum, and relationships. *Journal of Literacy Research, 39*(1), 95-126.

Turski, W. G. (1994). *Toward a Rationality of Emotions.* Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.

VanDeWeghe, R. (2005, July). Tracking, cultural models, and achievement. *The English Journal, 94*(6), 81-85.

Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*, 80-91.

Waldron, T. (2014, January 22). *Richard Sherman: 'Thug' is 'Accepted way of calling someone the n-word'.* Retrieved from Think Progress: http://thinkprogress.org/sports/2014/01/22/3194121/richard-sherman-thug-acceptable-version-word/

Walker, A. (2006). *The Color Purple.* New York: Mariner Books.

Watanabe, M. (2007). Lessons from a teacher inquiry group about tracking: Perceived student choice in course-taking and its implications for detracking reform. *Teachers College Record, 109*(9), 2136-2170.

Watanabe, M. (2008, March). Tracking in the era of high-stakes accountability reform: Case studies of classroom instruction in North Carolina. *Teachers College Record, 110*(3), 489-534.

Welton, A. D. (2013, November). Even more racially isolated than before: Problematizing the vision for "diversity" in a racially mixed high school. *Teachers College Record, 115*, 1-42.

Wollman-Bonilla. (1998, April). Outrageous viewpoints: Teachers' criteria for rejecting works of children's literature. *Language Arts, 75*(4), 287-295.

Wood, D. R. (2007). Professional learning communities: Teachers, knowledge, and knowing. *Theory into Practice, 46*(4), 281-290.

Wood, S., & Jocius, R. (2013). Black males and critical literacy. *The Reading Teacher, 66*(8), 661-669.

Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2004). *The case study anthology.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Young, T. (2010, June 27). *Lechugeros.* Retrieved July 1, 2010, from Flash Fiction Blog: http://www.flashfictionblog.com/?p=106

Zancanella, D. (1991). Teachers reading/readers teaching: Five teachers' personal approaches to literature and their teaching of literature. *Research in the teaching of English, 25*(1), 5-32.

<div align="center">**Vita**</div>

<div align="center">**Kierstin H. Thompson**</div>

Research Interests

Critical literacy, teacher beliefs about literature instruction, professional learning communities, democratic interaction and interpretation, critical discourse in tracked classrooms, enactment in literature instruction

Education

University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL
    Ph.D. Candidate, Literacy, Language & Culture, expected 2016
    Dissertation: 'The Right and Necessity to Examine Everything': Interpretation in a PLC and ELA classroom

University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
    M.A. in Teaching English, 1999

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
    B.A. in English (Rhetoric) and French, 1998

Université des Sciences Humaines, Strasbourg, France
    Second Language Level Degree, 1997

Teaching Experience

University of Illinois at Chicago. Fall 2013. Teaching Assistant: CI 546—Children's & Young Adult Literature (Master's level course)

School District 99, South High School, Downers Grove, IL. August 1999-Present.   Teacher of English & Communications: English I, English I Honors, English II, English II Literacy Block, Literature and Film, Composition, Written Communication Skills, and AP Literature.

Curie Metro High School, Chicago, IL. January- April 1999. Student-teacher

Licenses/Certification

 Illinois Type 09 6th-12th grade Teaching Certificate

Publications
Teale, W. H., & Thompson, K. (2015). Literatura y educación secundaria en Estados
    Unidos: Tendencias actuales en currículum, materiales y enseñanza (pp. 193-206). In
    ¿Qué leer? ¿Cómo leer? Lecturas de Juventud. Santiago de Chile: Ministerio de

Educación República de Chile.

Thompson, K. (2014). Beyond the stacks: Why high school English teachers should be talking about books. *English Journal,* 106, (pp.38-44).

Thompson, K., & Welch, J. R. (2005). From what to how: Developing procedural knowledge in the English classroom. In T. McCann, L. Johannessen, E. Kahn, P. Smagorinsky, & M. Smith (Eds.), *Reflective Teaching Reflective Learning: How to develop critically engaged readers, writers, and speakers* (pp. 189-206). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Presentations

Thompson, K. (December 2015). Revolutionary actors in a tenth-grade tracked classroom. Paper presented at Literacy Research Association Annual Conference. Carlsbad, CA.

Thompson, K. (January 2014). Teacher Beliefs about Complex Texts. Paper presented at National Council of Teachers of English Assembly for Research, Elmhurst, IL.

Thompson, K. (December 2014). Teachers engaged in critical reading, dialogue, and pedagogy: A case study of the discourse that informs classroom practice. Paper presented at Literacy Research Association Annual Conference. Marco Island, FL.

Teale, W. H., & Thompson, K. (2014, December). Literature and the U.S. high school curriculum: Current trends in curriculum, materials, and instruction. Paper presented at Seminario Internacional ¿Qué leer? ¿Cómo leer? Lecturas de Juventud. Santiago, Chile.

Cullerton, A., Podmokly, M. E., & Thompson, K. (2012, November). Yearning to breathe free: Literature and literacy that gives voice to current immigration issues. Paper presented at National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention, Chicago.

Thompson, K. (November 2012). Navigating literacy and social contexts through discussion. Paper presented at Conference on English Leadership, Chicago, IL.

Thompson, K. (2010, December). Peering toward the horizon: Reconciling teacher and student perspectives on studied literature texts in anticipation of Common Core Standards. Paper presented at Literacy Research Association Annual Conference. Fort Worth, TX.

Roloff Welch, J. & Thompson, K. (November 2005). Creating Curiosity in the High School English Classroom: Teaching writing through inquiry-based activities. Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English. Pittsburgh, PA.

Kass, D; Podmokly, M E, & Thompson, K. (October 2004) Developing task-oriented

reading lessons. Paper presented at the Illinois Association of Teachers of English. Oakbrook, IL.

Roloff Welch, J. & Thompson, K. (October 2003). How will my students remember what I taught them?: Metacognition in the English classroom. Paper presented at the Illinois Association of Teachers of English. Oak Brook, IL.

Roloff Welch, J. & Thompson, K. (November 2001). Teaching logic for practical application inside and beyond the classroom. National Council of Teachers of English. Baltimore, MD.

Thompson, K. (October 2000). How do I do a whodunit? A unit on writing detective fiction. Paper presented at the Illinois Speech & Theatre Association. Peoria, IL.

Professional Committees
ACE/Writing Advisory Council Member for General Educational Testing Development Service, 2007-2011
Pearson/ Content Committee Member for General Educational Testing Development Service, 2011-2012

Service
Graduate Reviewer, *Research in the Teaching of English*

Awards/ Grants
Teacher Researcher Conference Scholarship, National Council of Teachers of English, Assembly for Research, January 2014.
Qualifying Exams, Passed with Distinction, Fall 2013.
District 99 Education Foundation Grant, Secured funding for eight classroom to have document readers, Spring 2009.

Professional Affiliations
Literacy Research Association
National Council of Teachers of English
National Council of Teachers of English, Assembly for Research

Skills/Interests
2015-Present   Trained as national S.E.E.D leader through Wellesley Center for Women, Wellesley College and facilitated monthly professional development seminars on equity and diversity.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (MC 672)
203 Administrative Office Building
1737 West Polk Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7227

Approval Notice

Continuing Review

February 15, 2016

Kierstin Thompson, Ph.D

Curriculum and Instruction

610 Jonquil Ave.

Lisle, IL 60532

Phone: (630) 969-9632 / Fax: (312) 413-8083

RE: Protocol # 2013-1047

"Writing, Drawing, and Enacting Against the Text: How Modality and Critical Literacy Influence Students' Interpretive Skills"

Dear Ms. Thompson:

> **Please note that this research did not have Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from midnight February 6, 2016 until February 13, 2016. Any research activities conducted during this time were done without IRB approval and were not compliant with the UICs human subject protection policies, The Belmont Report, UICs Assurance awarded by the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) at HHS, and with the federal regulations for the protection of human research subjects, 45 CFR 46.**

Your Continuing Review was reviewed and approved by the Expedited review process on February 13, 2016. You may now continue your research.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: February 13, 2016 - February 12, 2017

Approved Subject Enrollment #:   103 (data analysis from 40 subjects)

Additional Determinations for Research Involving Minors: The Board determined that this research satisfies 45CFR46.404, research not involving greater than minimal risk. .

Performance Sites: UIC, Downers Grove South School/Library

Sponsor: None

Research Protocol(s):

     a)   Writing, Drawing, and Enacting against the Text: How Modality and Critical Literacy Influence Students' Interpretive Skills; Version 3; 02/01/2014

Recruitment Material(s):

     a)   N/A-Limited to data analysis only.

Informed Consent(s):

     a)   N/A-Limited to data analysis only.

Your research meets the criteria for expedited review as defined in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) under the following specific categories:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes., **(7)** Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including but not limited to research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Please note the Review History of this submission:

Receipt Date	Submission Type	Review Process	Review Date	Review Action

| 02/01/2016 | Continuing Review | Expedited | 02/13/2016 | Approved |

Please remember to:

→ Use your **research protocol number** (2013-1047) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with all requirements on the enclosure,

"**UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects**"
(http://tigger.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/research/protocolreview/irb/policies/0924.pdf)

Please note that the UIC IRB has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 413-9680. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

Sincerely,

Jovana Ljuboje

IRB Coordinator, IRB #2

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

cc: Danny B. Martin, Curriculum and Instruction, M/C 147
      William Teale, Faculty Sponsor, M/C 147