

**1961 Cuban Literacy Campaign Participants' Socio-Political Development from a Critical
Literacy Stance**

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THESIS

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To my son Victor.

To Humanity.

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RS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OC:	Educación de Obreros y Campesinos
ER:	Ejército Rebelde or Rebel Army
FMC:	Federation of Cuban Women (funded 08/28/1960)
ICAP:	Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos or Cuban Institute of Friends
INRA:	Agrarian Reform
IRB:	Institutional Review Board
AJR/JR:	Asociacion Jovenes Rebeldes (Rebel Youth Association)
MINFAR:	Ministerio de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Cuba (Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces)
MNA:	Museo Nacional de Alfabetización (National Literacy Museum)
OEA:	Organización de los Estados Americanos Organization of American States
UNC:	University of North Carolina
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization
USSR:	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

SUMMARY

This study aims to examine the 1961 Cuban Literacy Campaign (CLC) from the perspective of participants, (i.e. students, teachers, and organizing committee members) of the literacy campaign and analyze how their participation impacted their socio-political processes. I dissected historical events, from the inception of the Cuban Revolution (1959) through the Year of Education (1961) as well as the literacy campaign curriculum components, to determine the aspects that may have influenced participants' socio-political processes. I adopt Paulo Freire's epistemology and the concepts of critical literacy, critical pedagogy, and generative words to analyze what many consider a triumphant Latin American literacy campaign in the 1960s.

The study's findings indicate that most participants perceived their campaign involvement in the CLC as an act of love that targeted the accomplishment of political and literacy goals toward the creation of the new Cuban man/woman. This act of love, which can be explicated in the *horizontal*ity of political relationships (Gutstein, 2003b), was noticeable among the participants. Cuban Revolution leaders constructed a vertical relationship to communicate with the revolution's adherents, which participants also perceived as an act of love.

Additionally, the majority of participants expressed that their participation as volunteer teachers or activists in political organizations (AJR, FMC, and CDR) at the local level during the Cuban Revolution gave them a sense of ownership and empowerment, but most importantly, inculcated their agency. The dynamic process that permitted participants to reach this state of agency happened through *culturing*, an ongoing process of finding the relationship between the self, the group, and other power holders. Agency, as described by some participants, was the hope to continue learning new skills (i.e. sewing), the desire to continue volunteering, the aspiration to continue studying as a high school or college student or learning/refining workers'

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trade skills (i.e. fishing, agriculture, technology, etc.) in foreign nations allied with Cuba during the Cold War. The 1961 CLC instilled in participants a desire to become cultured through the process of culturing.

This study adopted an anti-colonial approach in the review of documents and in its process of interviewing participants (students, teachers, and committee members) in an attempt to analyze the CLC from the Cubans' stance. In fact, 90% of the information was obtained from Cuban institutions and from Cubans who took part in the CLC and currently live in Cuba. This study has documented a research stance from the Global South, contrasting the approach of research as a commodity in the Global North.

CHAPTER 1: Why Wasn't a 76% Literacy Rate Enough?

The 1953 U.S. Census for Cuba indicates that the illiteracy rate was 23.6% (Lorenzetto & Neys, 1964). The high literacy rate of 76% placed Cuba as the fourth most literate country in Latin America at that time (*American Experience Documentary*, 2005). The revolutionary project of creating a new man/woman in Cuba with newer life views under new conditions required an understanding of the population and how this project would impact it, especially under the post-Revolutionary times in which the country was divided. Both Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, leaders of the Cuban Revolution, believed education and consciousness would go hand-in-hand (Guevara, 1964; 2000), placing teachers and teaching in a pivotal role; However, teachers opposed to the 1959 Cuban Revolution left the country, resulting in a shortage of industry professionals. Additionally, the number of non-literate and part-literate Cubans in the rural areas was four times higher than in the urban areas, making it necessary to increase the number of teachers who worked in the countryside under challenging conditions.

I adopted Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and critical literacy frameworks to understand the CLC from his epistemological perspective. I discussed his concept of culture and the interactive, never-static nature of culture or *culturing*, the term I use in this study, which coincides with some aspects of Martí's notion of culture. Freire's culturing would not exist without the reflective process. This is praxis. Therefore, this study investigated the experiences of students, teachers, and organizing committee members and how they understood those experiences. Secondly, I examined the aspects contributing to participants' socio-political processes. I interviewed 24 participants: 11 were students, 10 were teachers, and four were part of the organizing committee. I obtained additional research participants, beyond the 24 participants polled, from the oral history archives at University of North Carolina Library. As a

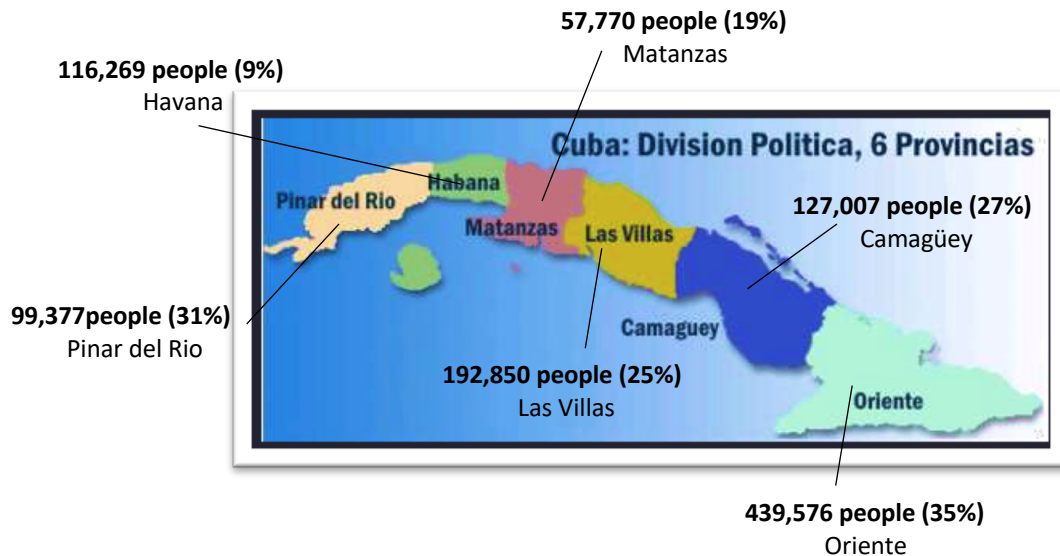
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researcher, I associated methodological aspects that would cause ambiguity with each research community/country, adopting a distinct approach toward the research ethics. Negotiating with my foreign collaborators was key to enabling my access to participants.

I concluded that my study located the aspects impacting participants' socio-political development, such as the unstable historical and political context of Cuba and the U.S. in the first years of the revolution, as well as the massive, collective participation of all Cubans as a result of the grassroots movement that anchored the entire campaign and shaped their socio-political processes. Research participants' involvement materialized through volunteering—a concept from the Cuban Revolution introduced by Guevara—which shifted the consciousness of giving, not from a savior standpoint to the incapable, but as a social responsibility toward their fellow Cubans.

The number of non- and part-literate Cubans in 1959 was 1,032,849. After the campaign, 707,212 Cubans became literate and 271,995 remained non- or part-literate (Lorenzetto & Neys, 1963). Figure 1.1 maps the number of non-literate and part-literate Cubans per province in 1959. The number of non-literate and part-literate Cubans in the countryside was reported as three to four times higher than in the towns in the provinces of Oriente, Camagüey, and Pinar del Rio, and about two times higher than in Las Villas and Matanzas. The Havana Province was the only countryside province to display four times fewer non-literate students than the other towns.

Figure 1.1. Number of Non-literate/Part-literate per Province in 1959



Literacy Campaigns: Historical Antecedents

CLC Historical Background - 1959-1961

Then the intense period that followed the victory of the revolution: the first revolutionary laws, in which we were absolutely loyal to the commitments we'd made to the people, carrying out a really radical transformation in the life of the country ... things that followed, one after another, such as the start of imperialist hostility; the blockade; the slander campaigns against the revolution as soon as we started to do justice to the criminals and thugs who had murdered thousands of our fellow citizens; the economic blockade; the Girón invasion; the proclamation of the socialist nature of the revolution; the struggle against the mercenaries; the October [1962 missile] crisis; the first steps in the construction of socialism where there was nothing—neither experience nor cadres nor engineers nor economists and hardly any technicians, when we were left almost without doctors because 3,000 of the 6,000 thousand doctors in the country left.

—Fidel Castro, 1987

The above excerpt from Fidel Castro's speech in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of Che Guevara's assassination in October of 1987 gives a brief summary of the challenges faced by Cubans in the first three to four years of the Cuban Revolution (Guevara, 1989). Cuba, like many Latin American countries,¹ has a long history of being colonized by powerful nations. In the early 1500s, it became a Spanish colony. Cuba gained independence during the Spanish-American War in 1898 with the support of the U.S.; However, as Cuba gained freedom from Spain, it became economically and politically dependent upon the U.S. with the passage of the 1901 Platt Amendment² that determined the U.S.'s right to intervene when Cuba threatened to become independent (Pérez, 1988). This Amendment, aimed to preserve Cubans independence, maintain the government protection of life, property and individual liberty. It took effect in May of 1934.

Cuba drastically increased its political and economic relations with the U.S. They backed the military coup, which placed Fulgencio Batista as president for a second term from 1952 to 1959, this time as a dictator. Cuba was known for being a location for American businessmen "to expand their enterprises and to escape the reach of the FBI and the IRS" (Farber, 2015), aiming to avoid their fiscal obligations to the American government. American media portrayed Cuba as the U.S.'s backyard, where American travelers could entertain and indulge themselves with a lifestyle of partying, drinking, smoking cigars, and occupying time with sexual workers. According to the *American Experience Documentary* (2005), there were two worlds in Cuba:

There were, however, profound inequalities in Cuban society—between city and countryside and between whites and blacks. In the countryside, some Cubans lived in

¹ Latin America is part of the American continent south of the United States. Retrieved from: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/latin-america?s=t>

² <https://loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/teller.html>

abysmal poverty. Sugar production was seasonal, and the *macheteros*—sugarcane cutters who only worked four months out of the year—were an army of unemployed, perpetually in debt and living on the margins of survival. Many poor peasants were seriously malnourished and hungry. Neither healthcare nor education reached those rural Cubans at the bottom of society. Illiteracy was widespread, and those lucky enough to attend school seldom made it past the first or second grades. Clusters of graveyards dotted the main highway along the foothills of the Sierra Maestra, marking the spots where people died waiting for transportation to the nearest hospitals and clinics in Santiago de Cuba (Faber, 2015).

The Moncada Attack in 1953 by Fidel Castro and his revolutionary comrades (or rebels) was the first attempt to oust President Batista from office. The attack failed, and the members of the group (including Fidel Castro and his brother Raúl Castro) were arrested. In their trial, Fidel Castro, who studied law, skillfully defended himself and was able to get additional trials, thereby increasing the opportunities to prove his innocence. Fidel Castro's trial date was rescheduled, allegedly, due to his health condition, an argument he later refuted. The September 2014 issue of the popular Cuban newspaper, *Granma*, revealed that Fidel Castro was brought to trial in a small hospital room instead, in a location without any public audience for this *hearing*. His defense arguments of 1953 were converted into a clandestinely released written document, *History Will Absolve Me*, in October of 1954 and contained the colossal revolutionary *program* with information about the efficient role of his female comrades, Haydée Santamaria, Melba Hernández, his wife Mirta, sister Lidia, and Naty Revuelta (Bayard, 2018). According to Bayard (2018), the uncertain direction of the M-26 Movement after Fidel's arrest was resuscitated with the loyal and exemplary support of women:

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Mirta smuggled letters out of prison for Fidel, many containing instructions for Melba and Haydée as well as much of his courtroom speech, composed in lime juice as an invisible ink, which the women ironed to reveal the hidden text ... Under Fidel's direction, Melba traveled to Mexico to meet with exiled Moncadistas, delivering funds and urging them to continue organizing ... In Havana, Melba and Haydée built alliances with other anti-Batista groups to push for amnesty (Bayard, 2018) .

Fidel Castro's sentence was shortened; As opposed to serving 15 years, he was released after just 22 months. Fidel Castro sought political asylum in Mexico, where he met Ernesto *Che* Guevara, and remained there until 1956. He returned to Cuba on the yacht *Granma* from Mexico in December of 1956 with 80 comrades. They entered from Oriente Province, the easternmost Cuban province, through one of the largest mountain ranges, Sierra Maestra, to gather and train supporters for the revolution with the aim of ousting Batista's government and his policies that perpetuated poverty. During the guerrilla war, Castro gave interviews and conducted negotiations; The literacy work in the Rebel Army (ER) was also underway.

In 1959, the Cuban Revolution triumphed. With the experience gained from ER literacy efforts, the Cuban Revolution launched its literacy groundwork that culminated in The Year of Education, 1961). In 1960, the Cuban government launched the Agrarian Reform. Mass organizations, such as the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), Committee for Defense of the Revolution (CDR), and Rebel Youth Association (AJR) were created. In some cases, small organizations combined to form larger ones. The organizations' roles of providing support to women and youth, and to protect the revolution against the thugs and Cuban opposers of the Revolution, included the Cuban Revolution literacy program and foundational moral values for nation building.

The CLC was launched in 1961. One critical turning point was the historical Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) invasion in April of 1961. The failure of this U.S.-supported attack strengthened the Cuban Revolution ideals. The literacy campaign continued during and after this attack. The continuous attacks on the CLC instructors, or *Brigadistas*, filled many Cubans with feelings of uncertainty. Brigadista was the title given to the literate young people and civilians (male and female) who volunteered as CLC literacy workers. The murders of three young brigadistas (ages 18-22) was broadly publicized by the media, which portrayed the counterrevolutionaries as the enemy. These and other historical events shaped the minds of the Cubans remaining in the country. In 1961, Fidel Castro declared Cuba a socialist country.

The Ideology of Socialism in Cuba

During my interviews with students, teachers, and organizing committee members, many participants mentioned their unfamiliarity with socialism before the Revolution. In fact, Cuba announced its socialist status as a country in April of 1961, after the U.S. attack of the Bay of Pigs. Four years after Cuba declared itself a socialist country, and six years after the 1959 Revolution, Che Guevara wrote an article conceptualizing Cuban socialism titled, *Socialism and Man in Cuba* (1965). In his characterization of Cuban socialism, Guevara wrote:

We socialists are freer because we are more fulfilled; we are more fulfilled because we are freer. The skeleton of our complete freedom is already formed. The flesh and the clothing are lacking; we will create them. Our freedom and its daily sustenance are paid for in blood and sacrifice. Our sacrifice is a conscious one: an installment paid on the freedom that we are building. The road is long and, in part, unknown. We recognize our limitations. We will make the human being of the 21st century—we, ourselves. We will forge ourselves in daily action, creating a new man and woman with a new technology. Individuals play a role in

mobilizing and leading the masses insofar as they embody the highest virtues and aspirations of the people and do not wander from the path. Clearing the way is the vanguard group, the best among the good, the party (Guevara, 1964).

Additionally, Guevara provided an overarching description of the individual living under the socialist regime. He acknowledges the challenges present in the transition to the new regime:

The place to start is to recognize his/her quality of incompleteness, of being an unfinished product. The vestiges of the past are brought into the present in individual consciousness, and a continual labor is necessary to eradicate them. The process is two-sided. On the one side, society acts through direct and indirect education; on the other the individual submits himself to a conscious process of self-education (Guevarra, 1965).

In his book, *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction*, Young (2001) describes Guevara as one of the few people committed to the “new men” and to gender equality³ in revolutionary Cuba (p. 209). Guevara’s wife Hilda greatly influenced his political views on gender. Guevara often displayed his vulnerabilities and was not afraid to talk about his feelings in politics. His socialist views included human values and love. According to him, humanity is the antidote for the germs of corruption; “Corruption is the hardening of the heart and the loss of contact with ordinary individuals and their aspirations” (p.209).

Guevara conceptualized the importance of working and studying for the new man/woman under socialism. I discuss the role of education as the means for attaining consciousness, as well as volunteering as a means to achieve fulfillment and humanism.

³ Guevara referred to equal rights between the genders rather than gender identity, the concept associated with choosing or defining gender.

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The first reform of the Cuban Revolution was the 1960 Agrarian Reform. The 1961 CLC, also known as the Year of the Education, was the next social initiative implemented in the country. Nevertheless, the plans for CLC were underway in 1959 (Gutiérrez, 2007), which I detail in the following section.

The Goals of the CLC

The 1961 CLC was part of the overall process of assisting Cubans envision and embody a consciousness that contrasted capitalist values, ideals well-articulated by Fidel Castro in his speech during the 20th anniversary of Guevara's death. Both Fidel Castro and Che Guevara believed education could facilitate a change in consciousness. (Guevara, 2007). With the Cuban illiteracy rate at 23.9% at the time of the 1959 Revolution, and the location of pre-literate and part-literate Cubans in the countryside, the CLC goal was two-fold: 1) teach pre-literate and part-literate adults, youth, and children to read and write; and 2) prepare students to understand the changes proposed by the revolutionary government already in motion since 1960. The latter goal involved knowledge acquisition in social and political spheres.

World Literacy Campaigns Aiming for Political Goals

Arnove & Graff (1987) researched world literacy campaigns dating back to the mid-sixteenth century. They discovered that the literacy campaigns of that era focused on changes in students' religious views and ideologies. Some of the campaigns of the twentieth century set distinctive goals that focused on the creation of a new culture, often associated with revolutionary upheavals. The USSR, China, Cuba, and Nicaragua were some of the countries where literacy campaigns sought such changes.

The triumph of the CLC was especially significant for economically developing countries (also known as Third World countries) intent on reducing, if not eradicating, illiteracy among their people. The CLC became a *literacy model* for what was possible, and its success propelled other developing countries to attempt to bring literacy to their non-literate adults. In proceedings at the 1975 Persepolis Conference, an international literacy conference held in Persepolis, Iran, Léon Bataille (1976), editor of *A Turning Point for Literacy – Adult Education for Development*, reported that specialists and experienced educators met with representatives of 13 countries committed to putting forth an assessment of literacy projects designed in 1965. Additionally, educators participating in the Persepolis Conference collectively created the Declaration of Persepolis, an important document listing statements about the role and utility of education as an instrument for social change. Conference participants centered the discussion on men (word-inclusive of men and women) as the center of all social improvements. Therefore, economic development should serve men and women, the people, and not institutions or the state. The Persepolis Conference concluded with discussions about the global impact that the CLC literacy initiatives had on the betterment of men and women.

The Illiterate: A Global Reconceptualization

During the Persepolis Conference, attendees revisited and redefined the concept of illiteracy. They determined that illiteracy served as the primary contributor to the marginal condition of students, not the inverse. Therefore, instead of viewing non-literate and part-literate individuals as unmotivated people of limited capacity who base their knowledge on superstition instead of the scientific and technical dimensions, attendees shifted to acknowledge non-literate and part-literate individuals as people with strong experiences and expertise, capable of thinking logically and acting responsibly as individuals and in society; in other words, strong in their

values, the *illiterate* have latent ability for action. Ultimately, attendees formally recognized the highly developed aesthetic expression of illiterate populations as evidenced in their music traditions, folk arts, and poetry.

My beliefs align with this constructive approach towards unschooled children and adults, and I struggle using the word illiterate, which carries a deficit tone about the student. Therefore, I use the term *non-literate* or *pre-literate* in this study to describe people who were unable to attend school. In addition, I prefer to use partially literate or *part-literate* for those students who had partial schooling or halted their education as a result of external systemic conditions. The phenomenon of dropping out of school (not the phenomenon of this study) is directly related to unfavorable educational conditions and the overall social and institutional structure that forces students to abandon formal schooling. Moreover, as my research adopts a critical literacy stance discussed by Freire and Macedo (1987), I posit the education system needs to change through a collective effort that includes the political will from the government and educational institutions to reduce the instance of dropping out.

In 1961, Cuba adopted the vision of including all students in their literacy campaign; no one was prevented from being part of it. Quite the contrary, the Revolution needed to convince students to become educated, or as Martí wrote, *cultured* (which will be explained later). The CLC insisted on the importance of participation in the country's economic development, an idea fully explained throughout Fidel Castro's speeches and the policies created and executed by Che Guevara⁴.

⁴ Che Guevara graduated as a physician in his home country of Argentina. He traveled throughout Latin America, where he encountered challenging conditions in which poor Latin American people lived. He joined the Guatemalans in 1954 and witnessed the overthrowing of the elected government of Jacobo Arbenz. Later, he went to Mexico and met the Castro brothers, leaving with them to Cuba to oust Batista from the Cuban government as a troop doctor. He held many important posts in the new revolutionary government. In 1965, he left Cuba for the

**Study Rationale, Statement of the Problem, Research Questions, Personal Significance of
this Study, and Positionality**

Rationale of this Study

My interest in the CLC of 1961 emerged during my visit to Cuba with a group of 15 educators from *Teachers for Social Justice*⁵ (TSJ). It was a short, 10-day visit in May of 2011, but it was such an impactful experience that I decided to research Cuba and the CLC in more depth. The visit to the National Literacy Museum in Havana impressed me the most. Luisa Campos, the museum director, welcomed us warmly and explained the historical events and details related to the campaign. As soon as we arrived, she explained the meaning of the red flag displayed at the entrance of the museum (Figure 1.1). It read, *Territorio Libre del Analfabetismo* (Illiteracy Free Territory), and it was flown in many towns and provinces throughout the country on the day that the illiteracy rate dropped to nearly to zero. It was a celebratory moment for the Revolution (Figure 1.2).

Congo, and then went to Bolivia to lead the guerrilla movement and overthrow the military dictatorship where he was captured and executed.

⁵ TSJ is a Chicago-based organization of teachers and educators committed to education for social justice.

Figure 1.2. Illiteracy-Free Territory Flag



From the MNA archives. Used with permission

Figure 1.3. Brigadistas Carrying a Message to Fidel on December 1961 Parade



From the MNA archives. Used with permission

The literacy goals of this historical campaign in Latin America were two-fold: Cubans aimed both for political literacy and reading-writing skills literacy. The political literacy goal sought to produce new Cubans, both men and women, under the new values and culture of the Revolution, which Cubans later referred to as holding a socialist ideology. Serra (2001) critiques the 1961 CLC, claiming there is no evidence of students attaining this political goal. Serra (2001) writes, “The Cuban Literacy Campaign failed to empower those [lower economic] sectors politically, which is my concern in this essay” (p.131).

Assessing political goals theoretically and concretely requires an analytical framework that genuinely assesses the components of those goals, such as length of exposure to new ideas, participants’ age, the tools used to support participants’ understanding of the content, and the conceptual understanding of the process of liberation. For instance, student-participants in this study, who were already involved in more politicized circles, were able to articulate the revolutionary ideas and could link socialist ideals with their daily life. In other cases, student and teacher-participants shared their unfamiliarity with the term socialism, but they experienced and were exposed to socialist ideals in practice. My research, therefore, intends to 1) examine the participants’ process of socio-political development, the phenomenon of this study, from a

critical literacy lens and 2) understand how the creation of a new Cuban *curriculum* was interwoven with the curriculum of basic literacy skills. A critical literacy process involves action and reflection, the *reading of the word*, *reading of the world*, and *writing of the world*, concepts that I will explain in Chapter 2.

Research Questions

Through theory interfaced with primary and secondary sources and interviews, I explored the means in which teachers, students, and organizing committee participants of the 1961 CLC changed and evolved in their views and senses related to socio-political awareness. I examined the role of the historical context and other external conditions that may have impacted participants' awareness and their transformative collective actions. I am hoping to learn details from the organizational and pedagogical components and whether the CLC indeed played a role in expanding participants' consciousness and changing motivations. My research centers on these questions:

1. How have the participants (students, teachers, and organizing committee members) understood their experiences in the CLC?
2. What aspects strongly contributed to the development of socio-political awareness/consciousness during the CLC?
 - a. How did the political context impact the development of their socio-political consciousness?

My research provides evidence that people and system transformations are possible when all the contributors are part of the process. In my interviews, I witnessed firsthand the excitement of the people who were part of the campaign. The charismatic, pragmatic, and humane features

of the revolutionary leadership played a key role; However, participation was crucial for the campaign's success. My research demonstrates the interconnection of these features.

Personal Significance of this Study

The CLC was an educational initiative seeking to dismantle Cubans' previous political, economic, and cultural patterns and ideas and replace them with new ones through education. In addition, the CLC shifted the existing culture of the reproduction and perpetuation of social inequalities through education by making provisions and creating opportunities for those being educated (farmers, peasants, and workers) to be participants in the revolutionary Cuban economic development. Prior to the Revolution, teaching and teachers were the knowledge holders. The curriculum was pre-determined by the teacher, and it was the students' decision to find meaning in the lesson for themselves. In addition, learners played a leadership role while laboring in the field, whether in the countryside or upon a fishing boat. In my study, as I utilize Paulo Freire's epistemology to study the CLC, I present evidence that students' socio-political awareness is a cyclical process of reading the word/world and writing the world. Moreover, social agency manifests in different shapes and forms, and one cannot anticipate the time in which either will take place.

Positionality

I am writing my dissertation as a quadra-lingual female, a naturalized American, and a native of São Paulo City, Brazil. I am a granddaughter of the Japanese who immigrated to Brazil between the two World Wars, born as low middle-class and raised as upper-middle class. I immigrated to the U.S. about 25 years ago, and I am an American Latina citizen.

Having reaped the benefits of my ancestors' struggles, I am aware of my privileges as a third generation or "sansei" of the Japanese immigrants in Brazil. My fluency in both Japanese

and Portuguese, for instance, has given me access to a scholarship and helped me advance as a junior researcher. The junior research experience guided me to earn my Master's degree in Japan. As I became proficient in English and Spanish over the years, my multilingualism placed me at an advantage in gaining employment in U.S. public schools in the western and northern suburbs of Chicago.

I bring my own subjectivities to this research as a Latin American citizen raised in the 60s and 70s during the period following the 1964 military coup when the Brazilian military government controlled the country. I learned as an adult that Brazil had been operating under the secret influence of the U.S. government. While in high school, I witnessed Brazilian social inequalities for the first-time volunteering in an after-school program in the outskirts of São Paulo with Afro-Brazilian children. As a college student, I was part of a team on a student-led project in a municipally funded daycare nursery, in which the majority of the children were Afro-Brazilian babies from low income families. Finally, after college graduation, I was employed by the São Paulo City municipality to provide after-school programming for low socioeconomic groups of students, mainly Afro and mixed-race Afro-Brazilians. Inspired to apply my skills from college, I committed to spend another year as a research student, this time in Japan.

Opting to study abroad in Japan with the goal of obtaining additional academic training in higher education research, my initial plan was to return to Brazil. Moreover, with this new knowledge, I intended to gradually find ways to apply what I had learned and provide alternative solutions for educational problems the Brazilian education system faced. My mid-1980s trip to Japan coincided with the political transition in Brazil from a dictatorship, reigning for almost 20 years, to a civilian government (1964-1984)⁶. This was also the time that a politically progressive

⁶ Timeline. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19359111>

government begin emerging; The Worker's Party took office in 2003 and remained for almost 20 years. Although I have a recollection of political conversations at home, most were associated with our Japanese community affairs, expanding a few years later into select topics from Brazilian communities. I recall attending a few meetings in my school organized by student political organizations. This brief process of my own socio-political awareness took place before my trip to Japan.

Illiteracy was an unexplored topic for me, as I grew up both educated and literate. As a person of Japanese descent, education was the foundation of my development as a native Japanese child, and I presume bilingualism was a legacy of my parents and grandparents as Japanese living away from their homeland. I recall when I first heard about world illiteracy and being quite curious. Since that time, I started noting that illiteracy often associated with poverty, which led me to watch for these advertisements and listen to the news on the radio.

I have been directly and indirectly associated with language and literacy during my youth and throughout my adult life. My rationale for becoming a dual-language program teacher in Spanish and English, in the north suburban area of Chicago was not a coincidence, as I had a wide exposure to language learning. I have also been unveiling my Latin America identity and its historical power relations while traveling abroad. My dormant literacy-illiteracy interest, intersecting with social-economic inequality, led me to conduct this research on the eradication of illiteracy in Latin America.

Dissertation Outline

This study's chapters are structured as follows: In Chapter 2, I describe the contributing Cuban theorists who impacted the CLC. I discuss the concept of culture, specifically the guiding thought of *being cultured* from José Martí's (1979) essay on adult education, and culturing, the

term I use to describe Paulo Freire idea of culture as a phenomenon that changes indefinitely.

Drawing from the critical pedagogy and critical literacy frameworks theorized by Paulo Freire, I describe the process of praxis, the dialogical approach, and posing education as the lessons and units of study generators. In the final section of the chapter, I provide a literature review of studies examining the 1961 CLC from Latin American and American authors I had access to. In the second part of the chapter, I share the theoretical framework that guides the analysis of this dissertation.

For Chapter 3, I describe the research methodology utilized in this study and the methods of data collection and data analysis. For the data collection, I traveled to Cuba and conducted interviews with participants in their homes or in a public location (cultural centers) accompanied by a cultural facilitator. In addition, as part of the archival research, I collected documents from archives at museums and public institutions in search of supporting artifacts and materials. For the data analysis, I relied on the content/text analysis method, in which I examined the socio-political development of participants and cross-analyzed with the materials and methods of the campaign. I end the chapter describing methodological issues I faced as a scholar conducting research internationally under different research protocols.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I share my findings. Chapter 4 describes the materials and methods utilized in the campaign from the organizational standpoint. First, I characterize the campaign after cross-referencing participants interview excerpts on the philosophical principle of Martí. Then, I analyze the instructional materials, pedagogical approaches, and the assessments used in the CLC with the critical literacy lens and how they impact and relate to reading the word, reading the world, and writing the world. I continue my analysis in Chapter 5 and draw upon participants' interviews in search of patterns in their interviews that can be identified as reading

the word, reading the world, and writing the world. I share two major themes that emerged in this chapter—horizontality eliciting humanity and volunteerism, thereby empowering participants and the protagonist role of woman.

In Chapter 6, I conclude by summarizing the most important points of this research and share the implications of this study.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework

In the first part of this chapter, I explicate the central ideas of the Cuban theorists, proponents of an education for liberation of the men/women, and Paulo Freire's educational and pedagogical epistemological framework as a tool to analyze the data in this study. Additionally, I explicate and discuss the concept of culture from José Martí stance as written in his mid-1800s essay as well as Freire's conceptualization of culture's indefinite motion. Lastly, I address the issue of cultural invasion and the metaphorical decolonization of knowledge. I devote the second part of this chapter to the literature review, in which I revisit the national literacy campaigns within two periods. I also discuss some of the turning points for literacy in the world.

The Cuban Theorists

No les digo crean, les digo lean.
—Fidel Castro, 1961

A research participant who attended one of Fidel Castro's public appearances recalled him proclaiming, "No les digo crean, les digo lean," which translates to "I won't tell you believe; I will tell you read" (personal communication, Carlito, 2018). Although Fidel Castro made public statements nearly every day and delivered his messages across the nation, many Cubans remained both politically and technically non-literate. The 1961 CLC was one of many attempts to eradicate illiteracy in Cuba, where the illiteracy rate remained at 76% for many years (Lorenzetto & Neys, 1964; Abendroth, 2005). The Cuban youth, people, and his revolutionary comrades perceived Fidel Castro as an extraordinary Cuban leader. He was astute in his decisions and had a charismatic personality, leadership requisites for success when a literacy

initiative adopts the *campaign approach* (Bhola, 1984). Leonela, one organizing committee-participant, explained her admiration of Fidel:

My main inspiration in all we are trying to do in this country has been Fidel Castro Ruiz. I can't deny that. And when one feels debilitated, one would say, if Fidel doesn't get tired, how can we get tired? This example is always present, always, always, always ... he never says "do what I say;" he demonstrated by doing! (personal communication, Leonela, 2017).

Fidel Castro's speeches reflected Cuban hero José Martí's philosophical ideas, and he often recalled Martí's principles and quotes to justify the Cuban Revolution. In fact, research participants referred to Fidel Castro as the executor of Martí's ideas.

Ser Culto es ser Libre.
Being Cultured is Being Free
— José Martí, 1884; 1979

While José Martí was the intellectual author of the Revolution and of revolutionary ideas, many teacher-participants reinforced Fidel Castro's humility as he indicated that he was only putting in motion José Martí's ideas. A major contribution worth mentioning from Martí's essay written in the mid-1800s was his conviction that literacy is attainable despite the challenges an educational program faces, whether they are restrictions of institutionalized systems or they are individual limitations. He delivers a strong message of hope and what is possible.

Martí (1884) elaborates further in his essay *Maestros Ambulantes*, making the case that teachers' expectations needed a transformation. For instance, he asserts that the issue regarding class attendance, even today, serves the teachers' availability and aims to accommodate theirs or the states' convenience, rather than students. Martí believes teachers should make themselves available based on students' schedule, or schools should be located in areas accessible to

peasants and farmers. The CLC followed many of Martí's ideas by sending brigadistas to the deep parts of the Sierras in the countryside.

Raúl Ferrér, the Countryside Educator

Raúl Ferrér, an educator with a critical role in the campaign, created the QTATA2 acronym in the final stage of the campaign in September of 1961 as part of the program's acceleration to ensure Cuba would reach the CLC's goals. The motto QTATA2, or *Que cada alfabetizador tenga su alfabetizado y que cada alfabetizado tenga su alfabetizador*, means that *each teacher is assigned a student, and each student is assigned a teacher*. Cheche, one of the organizing committee members said in the interview, "The campaign was wrapping up and people were getting isolated... so we need to ensure that each student would have a teacher (and vice-versa), even if it was only one [student]" (personal communication, Cheche, 2018). Over the course of my data collection and interaction with my participants, I gradually started realizing the influential role of Raúl Ferrér in this campaign. As an experienced teacher in the countryside, his familiarity with peasants contributed to the preparation of the materials.

In my interview with Diego Serra, the son of Matilde Serra Robledo—a former teacher and a valued organizing committee member—he highlighted his mother's role in choosing and assembling the CLC textbook content. Ferrér, who was the executive secretary during the CNA Congress in September of 1961, closely oversaw and monitored the preparation of the materials, the textbook, and the teacher manual (also known as oral readings). In fact, the information I found suggested that Matilde Robledo and Ferrér were excited to assess the suitability of the materials used in one of the pilot projects. According to the CLC's timeline, this was one of the revisions of the materials prior their publishing. I will mention Ferrér's contributions to the materials and methods in later chapters.

Ernesto Che Guevara, the Revolutionary Leader

Principled in social justice and equity, the Cuban Revolution centered the Cubans living in conditions of misery and those who were socially overlooked, especially during Batista's dictatorship years. Guevara was a medical doctor in his native Argentina before joining the Cuban Revolution. He examined the peasants and their families in a temporary *consultation station*, as he named it, despite the fact there was not enough medication to prescribe to people. He described their premature aging, especially the women due to their hard labor, and children with extended bellies from parasites and malnourishment. Additionally, Guevara noticed other conditions of people's lives:

The people in the Sierra ...wear themselves out rapidly, working without reward. There, during the consultations, we began to feel in our flesh and blood the need for a definitive change in the life of the people. The idea of agrarian reform became clear and oneness with the people ceased being a theory and was converted into a fundamental part of our being. (as cited in Young, 2009).

In my view, his observations about the people living in the Sierra probably influenced the creation of the AJR in 1960, an organization that targeted the Cuban youth that maintained as one of its membership requirements climbing the highest mountain in Cuba, Peak Turquino, five times (personal statements, Carlito, 2018; Solana, 2019).

Guevara's writings suggest his genuine concerns about the people. In his search for tactics to mobilize the masses, who were not as ideologically advanced as some leaders regarding political knowledge, Guevara highlighted the world injustices such as the struggle for liberation from foreign oppressors and the misery caused by war that always befell the people; in other words, the *explosive* topics. In addition to his developed skills, Guevara carried a

charismatic personality, noticeable in every picture taken of him. According to Young (2009), his human qualities would always stand up, "... Guevara's human qualities, his steadfastness of his beliefs in moral values, beginning with the principle of human equality and justice, his compassion, and his warm personal relations with ordinary people (p.206).

Berarda, Carmen, and Ana Maria, Rebel Army instructors and architects of the pedagogical guidelines of the CLC teacher manual, shared in the focus group interview that the ER textbook lacked the revolutionary content that would engage the ER soldiers. This experience was taken into account in the creation of the CLC materials and methods. In addition, student engagement with the text is the focal point of Freire's pedagogy, and these explosive words (mentioned by Che) may have had a similar role as the *generative* words proposed by Freire, which will be explained later in the section *The Genesis of Freire's Literacy Curriculum*.

Che Guevara theorized the Cuban socialist ideology (1968; 2009) and wrote the socialist principles to create the Cuban with a new identity, also referred as the *New Man*. Young (2009) explicates that in his article *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, Guevara raises two important points about socialism in Cuba. First, Guevara describes the importance of the presence of human values in Cuban socialism. He explains that this was lost in the Soviet Union socialism (p. 210). He disagrees with Satre's and Freud's point of views on the man/woman as an individual seeking social engagement with society as he/she feels the need. To the contrary, Guevara believes that a man/woman living under the socialist regime must participate in society to feel the fulfilled and complete; if not, he would feel isolated. Social participation is the dimension of the individual living in the socialist regime. Therefore, the socialism in Cuba demanded the people's participation, whether or not the individual felt the need to take part.

Culture, Cultured, and Culturing

The CLC's guiding principle, *Ser Culto es Ser Libre*, or *Being Cultured is Being Free*, often quoted during my interviews by research participants, grew from José Martí's ideology of literacy for adult students, as conceptualized in his essay *Maestros Ambulantes* or *Itinerary Teachers* (Martí, 1979). *Culto*, an adjective in Spanish, describes a person's possession of a comprehensive general knowledge; *Culto* lacks an equivalent English word that conveys its exact meaning, a special challenge faced when translating major concepts. In Portuguese, *culto* has a similar meaning as the Spanish term; it's an adjective conveying the general knowledge of one's community, country, and the world.

Cultured: Informed and Knowledgeable

Martí believed in an emancipatory education. He believed an emancipatory state could be attained during the process of acquiring new knowledge, either general or specific to one's occupation. This feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction is the end result of this process. The acquisition of this broad knowledge in his conceptualization is what he defines "culture."⁷

Canfux Gutiérrez, a CLC volunteer teacher and technical advisor, became a scholar and authored the book *Hacia una escuela cubana de alfabetización*, or *Toward a Cuban School of Literacy* (2007) 46 years after the campaign. He provides an analysis of the crucial role of education in Cuba during the transitional period from capitalism to socialism. In the beginning of the Revolution, Canfux Gutiérrez highlights the need to develop a cultural revolution aiming to build a new Cuba. This is how he explicates culture:

⁷ The translation of this quote "Ser Culto es Ser Libre" involves nuance of the language. The closest meaning for the expression "ser culto" means being cultured in many domains including the intellect and arts in Spanish languages. "Ser libre" means to be free.

Broadly, culture is the source in which man [and woman] would drink and gather the fruits intelligently, empowered from knowledge and science and from a systematic and compulsory education. This would allow man/woman to enjoy their freedom, and in turn, place the conditions to advance further; as the Teacher [in *Itinerant Teachers*] would say, mother nature does not close the path to anyone (p. 12).

Research-participants also shared their views on CLC students becoming cultured and the role of the literacy campaign. Teacher-participant Gutiérrez described culture from the adult learner perspective:

...that each human being able to talk about a topic, have general knowledge on current events; [each person being] able to talk, debate, share, and when men/women are able to analyze a topic in development in any given situation, he/she has a future. (Gutiérrez personal communication, 2018).

Therefore, according to Gutiérrez, culture includes adding scientific knowledge. For instance, the building the *letrina*, or bathroom, in the countryside homes that lack a waste management system exemplified a scientific-based knowledge that would reduce diseases and increase Cubans' lifespan. A large number of research-participants revealed that they lost a parent at an early age, and in some cases, they had become orphans during their teenage years from the loss both parents. The *letrina* is a practical example of a health issue.

Culturing: Continuously Creating Culture

In *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Freire (1974) explains his anthropological definition of culture as “the distinction of the world of nature and the world of culture” (p. 41). According to him, the distinctive point of culture is that man/woman on earth, literate or not, is naturally prone to interact *in* and *with* their environment. The innate desire to find a cause for

their problems will demand the interaction of many men/woman, but some will sit back and find a safe and comfortable reason such as the belief in a powerful spiritual force that decides their destiny. Refusing to believe otherwise, those individuals will choose not to interfere with this natural destiny, whether the result is positive or not. Freire, however, believed in the human being's potential to interact with reality in a manner that would help people live and engage with the present state.

Freire's (1974) explanation of this interaction with reality is described as "the active role of man/woman *in* and *with* their reality, the role of mediation which nature plays in relationships and communication among man/woman" (Freire, 1974). Additionally, he provides the following concepts within the context of culture:

Culture as the addition made by man/woman to a world they did not make; culture as a result of men's labor, of their efforts to create and re-create; the transcendental meaning of human relationships; the humanist dimension of culture; culture as a systematic acquisition of human experience; the democratization of culture; the learning of reading and writing as key to the world of written communication" (Freire, 1974).

Freire's response to the question of how he would accomplish all of this is based on three components: dialogue, program content, and the breakdown of the units and lessons.

Freire's concept of culture permits the creation of something new. Verbs containing the prefix "re", such as re-creation, re-imagination, re-invention, is a semantic representation of the meaning of newness, and possibly of cultural value changes, rather than the duplication or perpetuation of the old values. Therefore, Freire's explanation of culture conveys it as the indefinite creation new values—always in motion—a concept I refer to as *culturing*.

Decolonizing Authors, Acting, and the Cultural Invasion Process

Freire's socio-political research stance analyzes power relations between institutions and the people the institutions serve. My research adopts his socio-political stance, which should not be confused with the sociocultural approach. Freire's uses the term culture to explicate his stance on culture as a theory of change rather than a theory of reproduction. Furthermore, he addresses cultural invasion as a way that people in power impose their own view of the world by determining what is essential and impeding the invaded expression and growth. The invaders determine both what is taught and who is taught; "In cultural invasion the invaders are the authors of, and actors in, the process; those they invade are objects. The invaders mold. Those they invaded are molded (Freire 1970 & 2000). To reiterate, Freire clearly supports the theory for change in which a new culture is created. His counterproposal for a theory of change is based on the idea of praxis. Praxis or the process of action-reflection, the theory interlacing with practice, occurs simultaneously and not sequentially. This was true for the CLC.

The Cuban Revolution intended to create a new man/woman with new behaviors and beliefs, partially through the CLC, by approaching the concepts rooted in creating equitable conditions for those who struggled for many years. During Batista's dictatorship, the middle class and selected members of the government continuously received preferential treatment. The Cuban Revolutionary government understood that education was critical for people to comprehend the disparities and demand changes. Therefore, revolutionaries created strategies to reach the non-literate students, through which the revolution leaders communicated the changes taking place, the problems they faced, and the potential solutions they were adopting. Additionally, leaders designed pedagogical methodologies to teach students. Some examples of these methods were the CLC textbooks containing images, words, and texts, improvements considered critical for the peasants. In other words, the CLC organizers made efforts to prepare

materials containing topics new to Cubans, students and teachers, including their living and health lifestyles, the changes in labor organization, the land ownership, and the responsibility to use it.

Freire's Epistemology

Praxis: Banking and Dialogue

Freire's philosophical views of educational practices were in direct relationship to students' liberation, as they experienced the process of *acting and reflecting*, which Freire calls *praxis*. The process of acting and reflecting on their experiences led students to empower themselves. Freire is critical of a *banking approach* in education, as he perceives it as a vertical student-teacher relationship, as explained in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Freire is a proponent of a pedagogy that creates incentives for revolutionary praxis:

Manipulation, sloganizing, depositing, regimentation, and prescription cannot be components of revolutionary praxis, precisely because they are components of the praxis of domination. In order to dominate, the dominator has no choice but to deny true praxis to the people, deny them the right to say their own word and think their own thoughts (p. 126).

In contrast, Freire is a supporter of *dialogue* or a *dialogical approach*, a method of engaging students, including how the classroom is structured. True dialogue occurs when both teachers and students (also relevant in student-to-student dialogue) are mutually nurtured in conversation, and the distinctions between dominant/dominated are reduced to almost non-existent, resulting in love, humility, faith, hope, and trust.

Equally important, is the use of dialogue as a method of communication between leaders and the people, and between teachers and students, as an act of *genuine humanism*. Students must be informed when challenges emerge and when miscalculations happen. As Freire says:

Its [a true revolution's] very legitimacy lies in that dialogue. It cannot fear the people, their expression, their effective participation in power. It must be accountable to them, must speak frankly to them of its achievements, its mistakes, its miscalculations, and its difficulties (Freire, 1970).

Secondly, Freire (1974) theorizes another feature of the banking approach—the teacher's role— as the sole knowledge holder in the student-teacher relationship. Pre-teaching programs armed future educators with essential knowledge that could encompass principles of education, psychology, teaching content, methods and assessment. Freire, however, warns that teachers must teach while aiming to preserve students' humanity, as human beings are different from the non-human natural world (Freire, 1974). Freire adopts the anthropological concept of culture, as he distinguishes the non-human natural world from the man/woman cultural world. He defines culture as, “the role of man/woman as agent in the world and with the world” (Freire, 1974, 2012). Principled in democratic values, social justice, and equity, Freire focuses his pedagogical approach on empowering deprived, disenfranchised, and oppressed people and students. Therefore, teachers conducting themselves as the only knowledge holders are acting as *cultural invaders* to students, as they limit themselves to solely delivering their knowledge as experts while excluding students' interests and thoughts. In other words, when teachers negate students' knowledge (past and current histories and cultures), teachers distance themselves from the student's reality.

Praxis and Critical Literacy

As I use Freire's epistemology to analyze the impact of the CLC on participants, my goal is to provide tools and methodology to analyze changes in people. I am drawing upon the concepts of reading the word and world, as well as writing the world, from his proposed critical literacy. Transformation of deeply engrained values generally occurs as a structural process and impacts many people. Non-literate students living in isolation and away from the outside world tend to maintain their old beliefs, which at times, are based on their own perception, created and sustained by mysticism, which Freire defines as a "naïve" state of understanding, as few situations emerge in the pre-determined patterns in their lives.⁸ His pedagogy proposes an education aimed towards a critical view of the world, as students learn the word (any school subject areas), allowing them to develop critical understanding⁹ of the world they inhabit. As he writes, "We felt that even before teaching the illiterate to read, we could help him to overcome his magic or naïve understanding and to develop an increasingly critical understanding. (Freire, 1974).

In an effort to understand the development of socio-political consciousness during the CLC, I center my perspective using Freire's (Freire & Macedo, 1987) concepts of reading the world, reading the word, and writing the world. These three components are continuously in motion between students, instruction, and teachers and form the process of praxis. Reading the word entails developing existing knowledge from content areas in K-12 schooling (math, language arts, social studies, music, art, etc.), or the school knowledge. On the other hand, reading the world means having a broad and critical understanding of the power entities and their

⁸ A naïve thinker attempts to accommodate to the normalized "today." (Freire, 1970, p.92)

⁹ A critical thinker the important point is the continuous transformation of reality, on behalf of the continuing humanization of men. (Freire, 1970, p.92)

role in society. Examples of reading the world include the existing cultures (heritage and moral/ethical values) and communities' past histories not included in textbooks. The readings of the world are not discussed enough in the classroom, as they are often considered irrelevant or too political.

Encouraging transparency of power holders' internal affairs may cause despair or raise criticisms once revealed. While engaged in the two readings (of the word and of the world), Freire and Macedo identify the action element of praxis in the writing the world concept (p.33). Writing the world is inseparable from both the readings of the word and the world, and when only these dynamics takes place, the transformation, innovation, reinvention, or recreation becomes clear and visible to the individual.

I have discussed Freire's concepts on banking, dialogue or anti-dialogical approaches, cultural invasion, and praxis for socio-political consciousness all in the context of critical literacy. In the next section, I introduce the curriculum element with some concrete steps toward building the lessons.

The Genesis of Freire's Literacy Curriculum

Freire's major critique relies on previously created textbooks that did not take into account students' reality. His pedagogy and teaching materials highlight the importance of creating teaching materials from students' reality:

Primers end up giving students words and sentences which should truly result from own creative effort. We opted instead for the use of 'generative words' those whose syllabic elements offer, through re-combination, the creation of new words (Freire, 1970; 2003).

Freire attempts to systematize the steps to create a curriculum. He describes a five-step methodology approach to create a potential unit of study leading students toward liberation. The first three stages relate to the word and meaning exploration, while the remaining two contain organizational features to prepare materials for instruction. I describe the first three steps in more detail.

The genesis of the lessons starts from the smallest instructional planning unit Freire termed *generative words*. The first step is to ensure a curriculum that addresses students' concerns, starting with a compilation of a vocabulary word bank inclusive of unique local expressions/sayings and words with existential weight obtained through casual conversations. These words should be connected with what Freire (1970) terms "longings, frustrations, disbeliefs, hopes, impetus to participate" (p. 4). The second stage of this process is the selection of generative words from the vocabulary word bank collected in the previous stage. According to Freire, the criteria encompasses the following elements: phonemic richness, phonetic difficulty (easy to difficult sequence), and pragmatic tone.

The third stage is *decodification*, in which the coordinator collaborates with students to identify the existential or challenging situations experienced by the group, further identified as the situation-problem. In this phase, students unveil the signals and symbols and increase their critical consciousness related to the situation-problem. In Freire's description, discussing and facing the situation-problem increases students' critical consciousness while they learn literacy skills. In their role, the coordinator supports students as they decode the situation presented as a problem.

During decodification, students may orally analyze and discuss the images they view in an attempt to explore multiple interpretations, but he/she understands that these interpretations are not exhaustible, as human beings are constantly changing. Once this step is completed, coordinators working with students focus on the word and invite students to create a vision of the word, as coordinators provide tools for semantic links and separate words into syllables by presenting them in isolation. Finally, the phonemic families are presented altogether as students reach the synthesizing point of learning. Freire names these phonemic cards *discovery cards*:

...men [i.e., and women] discern the mechanism of word formation through phonemic combinations in a syllabic language like Portuguese. By appropriating this mechanism critically (and not learning it by rote), students themselves can begin to produce a system of graphic signs. (Freire, 1974)

Freire warns educators that the most challenging aspect of setting up the program is preparing teachers to adopt dialogical approaches often absent in education and in the ways in people are raised (p.45). The final two stages associate with the organizational elements and preparation of materials for instruction. The fourth stage, defined as the *elaboration of agenda*, which I am inclined to believe encompasses periodization of the sequence and scope of the program, is a flexible plan, allowing for modification as necessary. The fifth stage is the preparation of cards containing the phonemic breakdown of the generative word of the lesson.

Instruction: Impact of Political Literacy in Language Literacy

The importance of Freire's affirmation is directly connected to the concept of literacy and *being literate*. This can be novel and an unusual method to assess students' specific knowledge. If this is true, and it may have been so in many situations, learning can and should be assessed through writing, oral communication, art, and other alternative ways.

Students may have an understanding of socialist consciousness. Human beings can achieve a level of literacy through conversation, discussion, and storytelling. Indeed, this upholds the idea of literacy without texts.

Freire breaks down and proposes steps to try to attain a liberatory education by providing examples from the classroom level; he provides tools towards what he imagines is liberation. Martí on the other hand, theorizes broader principles and ideas of education at the philosophical level. It was during the Cuban Revolution under Fidel Castro's leadership that Cuba was able to put several of José Martí's ideas into practice. As I discussed in chapter 1, while defending himself in his first trial from the attack on Moncada in 1953, Fidel Castro presented José Martí as the intellectual author and the underlying reasons of the attack, and not Fidel himself. Castro's speech, *History Will Absolve Me*, is a written version of his subsequent trial, which was conducted privately. He was able to clandestinely hand it to one of the female soldiers.

In sum, Freire proposes a research epistemology containing a framework in which his foundational theory and ideas can be validated through defined methods, approaches, and tools that have been used by teachers, educators, and scholars. In fact, a group of Cuban educators adopted the Freirean method in popular education. One of the cultural facilitators who accompanied me with student-participants was a popular, trained Freirean educator. Her facilitation method was dialogue: a dialogue to engage with participants; a dialogue to show care

and subsequently build trust; and a dialogue to raise questions. Moreover, the dialogical method is essential for becoming acquainted with the students, especially for those from a different cultural background. In the CLC's context, the brigadistas raised in urban areas and sent to instruct adults in the rural areas, needed to become cultured in this rural environment, which was new to them. However, this is also part of José Martí (1884; 1979) ideas that he articulates in *Maestros Ambulantes*. He says, "instead of sending pedagogues through the rural areas, we would send conversationalists" (Martí, 1884 & 1979), or in another instance of the same essay, he writes:

How happy the peasants would be if some good man teaches them things they did not know, and with the warmth of communicative manner leave the spirits the quietude and dignity that always remain after seeing an honest and loving man! (p. 39).

In general, Martí's idea of a humane campaign for farmers and workers entails gentleness and knowledge. The CLC also reached the workers, and itinerant teachers also conducted the literacy work in the factories, as shared by the teacher-participant Cora. Therefore, this chapter describes the CLC's guiding principles based on Fidel Castro's brief beliefs, José Martí philosophical principles, Che Guevara proposal for the Cuban socialism, and elements from Raúl Ferrer's educational views. After describing the main concepts from Freire's critical literacy and critical pedagogy and attempting to briefly bridge the commonalities of the Cubans and Freire's theories, I will be discussing some aspects in Chapters 4 and 5.

Review of Literature

There has been a fair amount of scholarly research on the CLC between the campaign's commencement in 1961 through the 1980s, and then a second wave of studies after the year 2000 through the present. As I analyzed these studies, I separated them into two periods. While some

studies in the first period approach the campaign from an organizational and participation scope, the second period examines it from specific theoretical frameworks that help the field understand the triumph of the campaign from different lenses. Therefore, my research adopts the critical literacy and critical pedagogy frameworks to examine the literacy campaign using the principle of praxis and participants' socio-political development, as proposed by Freire (1970; 2010), as well as the impact on the Curriculum and Instruction field.

National Literacy Campaigns and CLC

The Period between 1960s-1980s

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report was the first official written document regarding the overall components of the CLC, and it serves as a starting point to understand its technical aspects (Lorenzetto & Neys, 1964). Prior to that date, scholarly work about the CLC had been primarily televised, broadcast, or delivered through newspapers and magazine articles. In other words, the UNESCO report is one of the first documents that provide information on the antecedents of the campaign, organizational aspects, materials and methods, recruitment of teachers and the role of different types of instructors, the search for illiterate students, interventions at the end of the CLC, education for women, and some post-literacy issues. In my view, the UNESCO report remains the first document one should consult to understand the CLC.

Reports from other UNESCO literacy committees focusing on the eradication of global illiteracy are released from time to time. In 1965, educators and country officials met for the World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy in Tehran, with the goal of designing the Experimental World Literacy Programme, a mass literacy campaign planned for countries in the Third World. It was launched a year later (1966), aiming to eradicate

illiteracy in 13 countries: Algeria, Afghanistan, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Iran, Madagascar, Mali, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, and Venezuela. The Congress, which Paulo Freire (when he wrote an article on the CLC) and Abel Prieto¹⁰ attended, reconvened ten years later in September of 1975 in Persepolis, Iran, this time with the goal of assessing the outcomes of these mass campaigns (Battalie, 1976). The 1975 committee participants released the *Declaration of Persepolis*, which presents a new direction for world illiteracy and reconceptualizes the view toward illiterate adult students away from a deficit model; In other words, they are considered as human beings. This change from the deficit to human being represented a paradigm shift:

The Symposium ... is unanimously adopting literacy to be not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of man [sic] and to his full development ... literacy creates conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man lives and of its aims; it also stimulates initiative and his participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, of transforming it, and of defining the aims of an authentic human development (Declaration of Persepolis, 1975).

A major contribution of Bhola's (1984) article is the definition of a *campaign approach* and a *program approach* to literacy. His study explains that campaign approach has the combative sense of urgency, and it is planned within a timeframe, in addition to centering the individual or student in a national concern. Some campaigns focus on economic development without taking into account the students' participation in the process. According to Bhola, the mass approach to the campaigns increases the likelihood for political, social, and economic changes. On the other hand, the program approach, which is conducted on a smaller scale,

¹⁰ Abel Prieto was an educator and the Minister of Education when he wrote the article in 1981, providing more details on the CLC's materials and methods.

emerges in a particular community or with specific occupational groups, and it lacks the passion and fast pace often present in mass campaigns. Bhola credits the triumph of some literacy campaigns to their use of the campaign approach, as he examined the characteristics and components in each of the campaigns. The 1961 CLC falls under the category of a campaign, therefore, his conceptualization of a campaigns approach reiterates many aspects adopted by the literacy campaign in Cuba, which in essence, demanded the participation of the masses for illiteracy to be eradicated.

A non-scholarly book written by Kozol (1978) entitled, *Children of the Revolution: A Yankee Teacher in Cuban Schools* and a scholarly study authored by Prieto (1984) in celebration of the CLC's 20th anniversary, both provide relevant information on the CLC from the perspective of instructional and learning outcomes. Kozol's book narrates interesting aspects concerning this study's goals, specifically with regards to words. Kozol's point is that the CLC used words from learners' experiences and lives.

In Prieto's (1984) article honoring the 20th anniversary of the campaign, he provides an overview of some aspects of the CLC. His findings are associated with the gains of Cubans, specifically in relation to their aspiration for culture, which included the understanding of their role in the development of the country. It is unclear if culture in his article relates to learning or creating new values or if it means understanding Cubans' roles in relation to the country's development, as described by Freire.

Arnold and Graff (1987) provide a historical overview of global national literacy campaigns in their book *National Literacy Campaigns* in which they examine national literacy campaigns across the world, dating from the mid-sixteenth century until the late 1970s. Later campaigns occurred in the USSR (1917), China (1949), Cuba (1961), Tanzania (1967),

Nicaragua (1979), and Vietnam (1945). The *1961 Cuban Literacy Campaign*, an article written by Leiner (1987), describes and addresses the Cuban case from many different aspects. One of the important aspects for this research relates to direct mass participation between what Leiner calls *different social strata*. He describes the most impacting factor for Cuban educators:

Cuban educators emphasized that a key goal, and accomplishment—perhaps as important as the actual literacy results—was the cultural exchange, communication, and strengthening of ties between the urban and rural population, that is, the industrial worker and the agricultural worker. ... It also increased the mutual respect and recognition of the city person and the *campesino* through their alliance in a joint cause of national development and self-improvement. Together, they experience the power to change their lives, and learned how national unity could make possible the gargantuan strides needed to move Cuban society into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (p. 188).

In addition, Leiner argues that the CLC helped create guidelines to educate the masses when there was support or unity between different social organizations.

The Period after the Year 2000 until the Present

A few scholarly and non-scholarly studies emerged after the turn of the century. Two Cuban scholars published their dissertations through the Instituto Pedagógico José Varona, Ciudad Libertad, where the Cuban National Literacy Museum is housed. Both authors studied the CLC. Canfux Gutiérrez's (1993) dissertation analyzed the organizational aspects of the campaign, upon which he expands in his book, *Hacia Una Escuela Cubana de Alfabetización*, written in 2007. He discusses the stages and challenges of the CLC, as well as the novel aspects of organizing a mass campaign in Cuba. Pérez-Cruz's (2000) discusses the campaign from the social movement aspects, which is not the focus of this study.

Two dissertations written by U.S. scholars approach the CLC from different perspectives. Abendroth's (2005) dissertation addresses the curriculum from a critical pedagogy stance. As a former social studies teacher, Abendroth analyzed CLC materials containing civic education elements in the context of globalization, a political economy stance he calls *emancipatory global civic education*. His scholarly contribution features the importance of teaching materials addressing the country's relations from a global perspective. On the other hand, Helbert-Brooks (2013) approaches the 1961 CLC from a gender and women's emancipation lens in her thesis. According to her, the 1961 CLC featured female participants as heroes who played patriotic roles as they conducted challenging literacy work in different parts of Cuba at the beginning of the Revolution. Her findings revealed that women-participants claimed they experienced more freedom after participating in the campaign, despite the fact that ordinary Cubans expressed ambivalence.

Lastly, a scholarly book and a graduation final paper were written in Latin America (Brazil and Mexico respectively). Peroni (2006), a Brazilian scholar from Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul examines the campaigns' literacy process emerging from her primary sources collected in Cuba. Through interviews, the relationship between literacy and revolutionary processes is gradually revealed. Peroni's goal is to recount the contributions and benefits from the educational policy perspective, as well as social mobilization process with the high participation of volunteers. Becerril's final paper through the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Mexico in 2007, provides an overview of the 1961 CLC four decades after it took place. She released artifacts to the public domain, mostly letters from brigadistas. They did not have training in education and mostly were adolescents, middle and high school students. The youngest brigadistas attended elementary school.

All in all, the number of CLC's scholarly work has increased after 40 years of the campaign. As I explained earlier, my interest in the 1961 CLC grew from my visit to Cuba with a group of critical U.S. educators. As my interest grew, I chose to examine the campaign utilizing a research epistemology conceptualized by Paulo Freire. Freire, who was an internationally known educator and scholar, offers a theoretical framework asserting that socio-political awareness is a process that develops through a non-separable, ongoing process of action and reflection. Each time in the process of engagement in transforming reality (writing the world, in Freire's terminology), students' political understanding expands and the reading and writing of the world together provide participants with a sense of autonomy and liberation.

To summarize, in this chapter, I introduced four Cuban theorists: Fidel Castro, José Martí, Raúl Férrer, and the thoughts of Che Guevarra and described their impact on and their contributions to the Cuban Revolution. I also discussed the distinction between Martí's concept of being cultured and the term I adopted, culturing, based on Freire's definition of the indefinite creation of culture. I described Paulo Freire's pedagogical epistemology and critical literacy concepts, such as praxis, reading the world and the word, and writing the world, ideas that emerged as a result of his long work in his native country Brazil, predating the 1964 Brazilian *coup d'état*, during 1960s Latin American political upheavals. In the second part of the chapter. I provided a review of literature from national literacy campaigns and from the CLC. I included the turning point in the reconceptualization of the illiterate from the deficit to an asset mode.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology utilized in this study. I explain the research approach based on Creswell, an American scholarly framework. Following that, I explain the four critical aspects to conducting research abroad, speaking the site's language, local institutional support, negotiating research ethical issues, dealing with unfamiliar human subjects' protocol, and second visits to research-participants. I describe the data collection sources and methods, provide tables with the artifacts collected in the MNA, BNJM, and UNC, as well as the three category polls of participants interviewed in this study organized and displayed in a table format. Lastly, I explain the methods utilized for data analysis. I display a preliminary code list and describe the evolving process of coding in research.

Qualitative Research: A Design Seeking Quality and Depth

This research study examines participants' experiences during the CLC, a literacy campaign that occurred in Cuba 58 years ago, and its impact on them. I intend to deepen my understanding of their socio-political development. The research design most suitable for my study is qualitative design (Berg & Lund, 2012; Creswell, 2012, 2014; Dabbs 1982). I highlight the notion of quality in qualitative research and describe certain highly valued elements, such as the what, how, when, where, ambience, and essence. I have adopted a comprehensive research framework (research design, research methods, and philosophical worldview), as described by Creswell (2014), a research methodologist in education. According to him, a research design determines the procedures and mechanisms utilized in the study, while research methods provide the framework in which one collects, analyzes, and interprets one's data. I have taken the philosophical stance in my research to examine and prioritize social equity, especially for

marginalized groups. In my research, giving access to knowledge for illiterate and financially deprived students equates to social justice.

Research Context, Language of Communication, Entry, and Participants

Researcher Speaking Participants' Language

Most of my information sources were located in Cuba. I intentionally planned to exhaust as many sources as possible, once I had the permission to conduct my research with the Cuban citizens. I have sources from Cuban archives, Cuban-authored scholarly books and articles, and interviews with Cuban participants who lived and still live under the revolutionary regime. Cubans who left Cuba for the U.S. as refugees, and a number of Cuban Americans have experienced a plethora of opportunities to speak about what they term the *atrocities in Cuba*, hence, a means to condemn the Cuban revolution existed, along with the loss of possessions and privileges of the middle class and the rich within the revolution establishment. In later chapters, I present evidence shared by my research participants who reported having experienced improvements in their living conditions in comparison to their pre-revolution experiences.

All communications (emails, phone calls, text messages) between Cuba and myself were conducted in Spanish from 2014 on. I also communicated with the institutions and conducted interviews in Spanish. I transcribed all interviews in Spanish and then translated the quotes and block quotes in my dissertation from Spanish to English. Cubans appreciated that, as an outsider, I did not demand they communicate in English. They appreciated that I was willing to speak their language. One may assume that, as a native Portuguese speaker, I could easily transition to Spanish since both languages belong to the Romance language groups; However, learning Spanish became inevitable when I studied in Japan in my mid-20s; it derived from my desire to communicate with other Latin American graduate students who shared similar cultural values.

My Spanish language skills advanced upon my arrival to the U.S., as Spanish was widely spoken throughout California. I had exposure to Spanish from my spouse who spoke it as well. A few years after moving to Chicago, the need for Spanish-speaking educators was in high demand, and I enrolled in formal Spanish language classes at a local community college. As I became a multilingual dual language teacher, biliteracy became a professional competence. Today, I continue to engage myself in Spanish speaking environments; Spanish is the most frequently spoken language of Latin America, but it is also the second primary language in the U.S. All in all, knowing Spanish while conducting my study in Cuba displayed my effort to understand Cubans and their culture.

Cuban Institutional Support for Data Procurement

Two institutions, the Museo Nacional de Alfabetización (MNA) and Asociación de Pedagogos de Cuba (APC), played a key role in allowing me to enter Cuba and access the necessary sources. Their roles were similar to a gatekeeper or a *foreign collaborator* (an IRB term). For researchers conducting studies outside of their communities, the gatekeeper plays a key role for the researcher. Creswell (2012; 2014) defines them as “the individuals at research sites who provide access to the site and allowing a qualitative research study to be undertaken” (p. 188).

For approximately one month, I resided in Cuba in September of 2014, a hot and humid month, to conduct archival research at the MNA. I spent the first week building relationships and getting to know the Museum Director, Luisa Campos, who did not have the permission to participate in the campaign by her adopted mother. I walked from my *casa* to the museum, and we spent many hours talking about the CLC. I asked numerous questions about the campaign and wrote field notes after returning to my lodging. In the weeks that followed, I gradually started

gaining access to the documents pertaining to the campaign, some of which were never released before, such as the student textbook, *Venceremos*, the teacher manual, *Alfabetecemos*, and 15 campaign students' letters written to Fidel Castro in 1961.

Initially, Luisa was reluctant to release the letters, claiming to keep them as a part of Cuba's cultural heritage, but she hesitantly shared eight letters with me. I attributed her reluctance to the last 61 years of frail relationships between Cuba and the U.S. and the fact that I represented a U.S. research institution. After presenting my rationale for wanting her to share additional letters with me, Luisa released a total of 15. I scanned and stored them in my archives. On some afternoons during my stay, I experienced a short reprieve when the museum's assistant served sweetened Cuban coffee or a popular chamomile tea within the room's three walls filled with files. Accompanied by the museum director's assistant, I watched the CLC's videos stored in the museum, and on the last day of my first trip, I assisted the museum's director with an elementary and middle school event with the brigadistas.¹¹

Brigada Obrero de Alfabetización, BOA, also known as Pátria o Muerte Brigade, became part of the CLC in its last stage (September-December), as part of the intervention to accelerate students' learning toward graduation. The 13,000 instructors were salaried workers who taught as part of their laboring day (Prieto, 1981). These young men, who were in their late teens to early twenties and assigned to teach students living in intricate areas, were trained to use and carry weapons if a situation were to arise where they needed to protect themselves and their students. I took part of a middle school program on my last day at the MNA in 2014, in which the museum honored the role of this CLC brigade, as well as the Chinese-Cuban BOA brigadista, Delfin Sen Cedré, murdered in 1961 while teaching. In my final week, Luisa Campos arranged

¹¹ *Brigadista* is a name given to Cubans, male or female, who were part of a brigade. The CLC formed different at least two brigades, the Conrado Benítez brigade and Brigada Obreros de Alfabetización (BOA).

for my attendance at the APC's National Conference for Teachers. I met a number of Cuban teachers who took part in the CLC and Mariano Guerra, the Cuban scholar from APC studying Freire's popular education framework. Mariano Guerra became my second gatekeeper, specifically to assist me in conducting the interviews.

My scholarly relationship with the APC occurred with minimal friction. I credit this partnership to the fact that we shared similar scholarly visions; my prior archival visit to the MNA also contributed to an expedited the process of our collaboration. In addition, I believe my Brazilian citizenship influence how easily I accepted to conduct my research, as Brazil had been in a firm and respectable relationship with Cuba during the presidency of Lula da Silva for eight years and Dilma Rousseff for five-six years, both representing the Workers Party (PT) for a total of 14 years prior to its current administration. Yet most importantly, the APC as an organization supporting Cuban educational research understood the importance of investigating student-participants' experiences during the CLC, a study that does not exist in the CLC literature. There is also a limited number of scholarly works on teacher-participants. MNA has four videos (*16 Years Later, 1961, Halo de Luz, and Eternos Alfabetizadores*) produced in Cuba and by Cubans on the CLC teacher-participants; the documentary *Maestra* produced by U.S. filmmaker, Catherine Murphy, also centered the CLC's female teacher-participants' experiences and empowerment. Hence, the APC is excited about our partnership and supportive of my efforts to make this research available to the public. Twice with this support, I travelled to Cuba to conduct interviews with my participants, spending a week there in 2016 and another month in 2018. The latter trip was an award funded by the Ann Lynn Lopez Schubert Memorial Fellowship, which made it possible to collect additional for my research.

Negotiating Research Ethical Issues at the Local Community

Either a member from the APC, or their partner organizations, accompanied me as a cultural facilitator in the three categories of interviews: students, teachers, and organizing committee members. This facilitator primarily assisted in making the interview process run smoother when necessary. During the interviews with teachers and organizing committee members, he/she either remained outside of the room or a few feet away from the interview setting; However, during some of the interviews with more timid students, the facilitator not only remained in the room with me, but he/she also utilized a different approach to engage participants in the conversation.

Riza was my cultural facilitator in a number of locations. Throughout some of the interviews, I spotted her head nod, which usually symbolized her desire to validate participants. While transcribing the student-participant's interviews, her parroting patterns became even more evident than during the interviews. Additionally, I detected her paraphrasing and rephrasing participants' (former farmers, workers, and homemakers) words and responses on different occasions. This paraphrasing and rephrasing helped me decipher students' thoughts, so they would carry meaning to me as a researcher. Furthermore, she inverted this process to the student-participants by rephrasing my questions. As a coordinator from the Cuban Centro de Investigación de Educación Popular today, her experience as a popular educator was critical in obtaining authentic responses from many students living in more isolated rural areas. Popular education from Paulo Freire's stance attempts to engage and raise individual and collective awareness among economically deprived adult students of their overall living conditions (O'Cádiz, Wong & Torres, 1998). According to Riza:

The ways a researcher approaches (outreach) their interviewees are extremely important from the methodological standpoint: the dialogue and details on how to reach the interviewee. Dialogues reduce the rigidity used in interviews of the researcher asking questions and interviewee answering them. In many cases, the interview responses do not reflect what the interviewee is thinking; he/she is only doing his role and attempting to satisfy with an answer to complete his duty (Riza, 2016, as translated by the researcher).

In a few instances of our dialogical approach to interview students, and according to my fieldnotes, both the student-participants and Riza conducted small talk before and after the interview, or during a short coffee break. Lastly, Riza mentioned the importance of the details in humanizing the relationship between the researcher and the participants. For instance, she took a package of coffee to the interviewee's family as a gesture of sympathy for the family's recent loss. I also gave a framed colored photograph to research-participants from my previous trip. When participants saw the photograph, their faces lit with astonishment. Attending to and taking into consideration the minor details placed participants at ease, and according to Riza, this meant I was paying attention to them.

Coping with Different Research Protocols (IRB)

Despite the warnings of conducting research abroad from research methodologists and other U.S. scholars, and after managing my research in Cuba—a country in the Global South—I realized the importance of carrying an overall open attitude. To reiterate, the experience of collecting data abroad from a U.S. educational institution made me realize that I was in no position to make demands of my foreign collaborators. Countries across the globe have different research protocols when working with human subjects, and this was true in Cuba. It became essential to build relationships when entering the research site, but also while conducting the

interviews. I was born and raised in Brazil—a country also located in the Global South—but I received part of my education in the Global North. My privileged position of being born in the South yet educated in the North in Japan and the U.S., unveils the wide discrepancy in how research is conducted in countries with neoliberal agendas. Research in the U.S. is a commodity. Research in Cuba is the vehicle to communicate a message and tell their stories.

Continuing Interviews

My return visit to Cuba was twofold; First, it gave me an opportunity to obtain more authentic responses from the participants. On my second visit, some participants seemed more at ease and more communicative than they had been during my first visit, though I cannot say whether participants needed additional time to feel more comfortable with me, or if they experienced other demands that compromised their responses during the interview. Secondly, I was able to give participants the picture I took in my first visit. Student-participants' homes were simple and comprised of the minimum, essential items. The walls in some of the houses were bare; Ordinary Cubans did not hang pictures on their walls or display them on tables.

All of the interviews began naturally with small talk, and sometimes with a cup of Cuban coffee to help us get acquainted and comfortable. The conversation opener was vital to obtaining authentic responses, as opposed to get predictable answers. As an investigator conducting research abroad in an unfamiliar cultural setting, I was somewhat apprehensive about the unknown in my first encounter with participants. As interviews took place in intimate settings, I became cognizant that I had not spent enough time with the participants, despite the feelings of familiarity I had developed with the Cuban people from my previous two trips. Nonetheless, I am a Latina who shares similar traditions and culture with my research participants.

As my comfort with participants in the interview setting grew, I pondered my fellow graduate students' research experiences with undisclosed participants' discomfort in signing a consent form. In some instances, the discomfort can be related to an underdeveloped relationship between the researcher and participant and a lack of awareness of possible contributions the research can produce. Therefore, in order to obtain consent from my participants, I opted to submit my request to the UIC IRB to waive the written consent for all of my research participants in compliance with U.S. research ethics. UIC IRB granted my request, and my research participants gave their consent to me verbally.

Overall, I feel satisfied with the shared decisions made in the process of my data procurement. The MNA Director's decision regarding what to release from her museum's archives, and the cultural facilitator's decision on the interview method to be used, are concrete examples of Cubans asserting their agency and of their stance toward rigor in the research. The Cuban educators and I share similar goals in the public disclosure of the information gained through this research—to tell the truthful story behind their resilience in the face of challenges during the campaign. They persisted in conducting pilot projects in hostile conditions and locations until all of the teaching materials were linguistically a good fit and content was adequate for the experience level of Cubans living in rural areas, who had little or no contact with urban-centric Cubans. I long to make public the moral and ethical gains attained by participants through the CLC, elucidated in Guevara's 1967 essay and Castro's 2009 speech during the 20th anniversary of Guevara's death. I sensed the process and outcomes of what Guevara theorized as *Internationalism*, which I would like to call *solidarity without borders* in the American continent, but also with the world.

Data Sources, Analysis, and Interpretation

I collected data through archival research, interviews (formal and informal), and fieldnotes. I conducted archival research in Havana at the MNA and the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí (BNJM), and in Trinidad and Sancti Spíritus (in Cuba). I conducted interviews in five Cuban provinces and utilized individual and focus group interviews from the oral history archives of the University of North Carolina Library (UNC). I obtained interview responses through open-ended questions and sometimes with close-ended questions to verify the accuracy of information. Additionally, I used fieldnotes (Emerson, Fretz & Saw, 1995). My data sources are organized and displayed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Data sources and interviews from Cuba archives and the University of North Carolina Library.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SOURCES	
Museo Nacional de Alfabetización (MNA), Cuba	
(Artifacts, Documents, Photographs, Journals, Diaries, Recordings, Life History, and Drawings)	
1. Artifacts	
a.	<u>15 Letters to Fidel:</u> These letters, read by Fidel Castro one by one, were individually written by 1916 CLC post-literate students at the conclusion of their literacy program (See Figure 4.9 for letter sample).
b.	<u>Student Textbook <i>Venceremos</i>:</u> This student primer or textbook was especially crafted for this campaign with a goal to create change in people, including helping them learn to read text. Prior to the final edition, the designed materials (text, pictures, etc.) were piloted to ensure the content and format would fit the adult learner. There was only one textbook, and the progression of the lessons started

from simple sentences to complex ones. After Lesson 5, students' learning was assessed for the first time (See Figure 4.6 for lesson sample).

- c. Teacher Manual *Alfabeticemos*: This manual contains lessons with a one/two-page-long introductory discussion before each lesson. It complemented the image and text of each lesson in the student textbook. The 24 readings in this manual are aligned with the lessons in the student textbook, with the exception of 11 readings, which, according to interviewees, instructors could use anytime they thought applicable (Table 4.4).

2. Reports

- a. National Congress of Literacy – September 1961: This Congress summarized and synthesized the CLC's first two stages and determined the measures to ensure students' graduation for the final stage. Attendees were composed of the municipal and provincial heads of education, technical committee members, and invited foreign and Cuban guests. The speeches from the Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro,¹² Congress Executive Vice-Coordinator Raúl Ferrer¹³, and Minister of Education Armando D. Hart¹⁴ were featured.
- b. UNESCO Report – 1964 (Spanish): The United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Report was published two years after the CLC. It contains the CLC's structure and organization and highlights the uniqueness of the campaign.

3. Dissertation Summaries

The two doctoral dissertation abstracts on the CLC authored by Cuban scholars and published in Cuba are stored in the MNA. I accessed their 10-15 pages summaries.

¹² Fidel Castro was the commander-in-chief was the highest authority of Cuba.

¹³ Raúl Ferrer was a rural schoolteacher and critical member of the CLC's technical committee. He was one of the pivotal members in determining the materials and methods for the campaign.

¹⁴ Armando Hart was an educator and Minister of Education during the CLC.

- a. Canfux Gutierrez, J. (1993): Teacher-participant in the campaign and educator. He addressed the structural and organizational aspects of the CLC.
- b. Pérez-Cruz, F. (2000): Historian. He focused on the social movement aspects of the CLC.

4. Magazines & Newspapers

- a. Cuban magazine: Bohemia: Magazine containing Cuban and world current events, publishes articles of general knowledge.
- b. Newspaper clippings: January 1961, November 1961, and December 1961
Cuban: *Gramma, Revolución, Sierra Maestra, Verde Olivo*
Dominican Republic: *Hoy*
Spain: *El Mundo*
Puerto Rico: *La Calle*
Guatemala: *Prensa Libre*

5. Documentary/Videos/Fieldnotes

Most videos contain interviews with CLC's teacher-participants. Some include the students and organizational committee members.

- a. Unknown director/producer. (1977). *16 Años Después*. Cuba: Conrado Benítez brigadistas' reunion 16 years later
- b. Unknown director/producer. (2001). *1961*. Cuba: Interviews with Conrado Benítez brigadistas
- c. Unknown director/producer. (2011). *Eternos Alfabetizadores*. Cuba: Interviews with brigadistas, students, and organizing committee members
- d. Unknown director/producer. (2010). *Halo de Luz*. Cuba: Documentary on volunteer teachers from CLC's 50th anniversary
- e. Written and directed by Catherine Murphy. (2012). *Maestra*. Cuba: Nine female brigadistas addressing their autonomous experience

6. Songs and Verses of Audio Sources

a. Literacy Hymns and Songs

Son de la Alfabetización (by Carlos Puebla): The song focuses on how no one should remain illiterate, as it addresses the connection between being cultured with freedom.

<https://www.shazam.com/amp/track/110758045/el-son-de-la-alfabetización>

Himno de la Alfabetización/himno de las brigadas (by Eduardo Saborit)

<http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2016/12/22/el-unico-museo-de-la-alfabetizacion-en-el-mundo/#.XZeyZa2ZOHo>

7. Images and Photographs

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SOURCES

Additional Archives

*Havana (BNJM), Trinidad and Sancti Spirit, Cuba

Magazines and newspapers

- a. Cuban magazine: *Bohemia* and *Arma Nueva*
- b. Newspaper clippings

INTERVIEWS (IRB APPROVED)

Asociación de Pedagogos de Cuba (APC), Cuba

*Interviews were conducted in different parts of Cuba

- 11 interviews of student-participants (8 females, 3 males)
- 8 interviews of teacher-participants (3 females, 5 males)
- 2 technical advisors (2 females)
- 2 organizing committee-participants: Diego Serra, Canfux Gutiérrez (2 males)

INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC

University of North Carolina Library (UNC), USA

- Digital Collection Repository

- 1 Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización (donated to UNC on 12/17/2017)
- Leonela Relys. 1 female (donated to UNC on 12/17/2017)

Accessing Cuban Archives Nationally and Locally

Some of my data sources were located in Cuban archives at the MNA and at the BNJM, both housed in Havana. The information stored at the MNA contains innumerable sources pertaining to the 1961 CLC, which I utilized in my research.

MNA: I scanned a large amount of newspaper clippings and magazines: 15 letters written by post-literate students in 1961 to Fidel Castro; the student primer *Venceremos* and the teacher manual *Alfabeticemos*; two dissertation summaries from graduate students in the José Enrique Varona Pedagogical Institute; the National Literacy Conference of the 1960's report; fieldnotes from videos produced in Cuba and co-produced with Cubans; and photographs stored in the MNA listed above. The permanent exhibit at the MNA displays artifacts from the CLC's implemented adult education program called *Yo Sí Puedo*, which has been exported globally. Additional sources were located in the archives of Trinidad and Sancti Spíritus, two important cities in Cuba.

APC: The APC assisted me in locating and interviewing brigadistas, students, and organizing committee members who today (as of 2019), are approximately 58 years older than at the time of the campaign. They have an ongoing database with a list of brigadistas and teachers, which they continually update as they locate them. After the initial contact and ensuring participants' eligibility, APC members scheduled the interviews and provided space to conduct the interviews, as well. APC does not store a CLC's student list, so I relied on their network system to locate the student-participants. The regional APC branch, the partner organizations, and local brigadista

groups at each interviewing site undertook the difficult task of locating the student-participants via word-of-mouth. CLC's participants who remained in their communities were especially helpful in finding these students.

Three Participant-Categories

My research contained three participant-categories: student-participants, teacher-participants (volunteer and professional), and organizing committee-participants. I chose these three categories, as I wanted to hear impressions from different angles in regard to the campaign. I interviewed 24 subjects and obtained the remaining interviews and focus group from the UNC. Table 3.2 provides an overview of participant categories and the number of participants per category.

Table 3.2. Overview of participants categories and number of participants per category.

Student participants	Teacher participants	Organizing committee members
11	10	4 + focus group

- a. Student-participants: Word-of-mouth uncovered this group. Since participants in this category would fall under the age group of late 60s to mid-80s, I planned on conducting the interviews in their homes. The recruitment strategy used for this category, popularly known "*word of mouth*", was "snowball sampling" (Berg, 2012). This strategy involves first, identifying participants with relevant attributes and interviewing them as part of obtaining data and second, asking them to refer other people possessing similar attributes sought for the research. This strategy was also recommended by my foreign collaborators, as they anticipated the challenges in finding advanced-age participants. As

predicted, most of the interviews from this category took place in participants' home.

Table 3.3 displays the list of student-participants.

Table 3.3. Student-participants' names (pseudonym), age, mass organizations affiliation, and past/present work.

Student Name (pseudonym)	Student Status, Occupation, Volunteering Activity
Lizete (76)	Unable to finish CLC per chronic medical condition; lives with daughter, a professional studying mother's condition
*Mirna (85)	Unable to finish CLC per socio-emotional condition (loss of child); donated blood, made coal, picked up coffee, among many other methods to make a living; active in CDR/FMC; one of the first presidents of local CDR
Joel (72)	Eligible for CLC, overqualified for self-teaching; studied livestock in two-year training (Soviet Union & Ukraine); office attendant before Revolution; became a teacher in trade school after his training
Clarita (67)	Finished CLC (could sign name); assisted blind father in place of working mother (coal-making); worked as a housekeeper and as school assistant; temporary militant; caring for granddaughter; received disability services
*Mayte (78)	Graduated from CLC; from large family and received no incentive to study; worked for state after CLC
*Olivia (83)	Graduated from CLC; suffered racist remarks for albino condition; raised in revolutionary town with people knowledgeable of community theories; had leadership role in FMC (daughter was 3) and joined CDR; made crafts for living
Diego (81)	Graduated from CLC; no father's permission to work until 30s after father's passing; held janitorial jobs; volunteered, granted job as ticket seller

*Calisto (89)	Graduated from CLC; halted education to support widowed mother; raised in revolutionary town with people knowledgeable of community theories; active in CDR; one of presidents of local CDR; continued studying with son; aware of socio-political issues related to workers' wages
*Angel (77)	Graduated from CLC as army soldier; worked at shoe shining; attempted studying cattle insemination and became teacher; educator for 51 years; was political district representative
Alondra (70)	Graduated from CLC; helped at home before CLC; attended <i>Seguimiento</i> in Ana Betancourt sewing class; makes crafts for stipend; husband was a college student when he joined the army to oust thugs from Escambray area
Paula (89)	Graduated from CLC; halted education for lack of schools; farming (coffee and cocoa) family in east province; lives with daughter in Havana

* Asterisks indicate student-participants who were affiliated in mass organizations.

- b. Teacher-participants: APC has a database containing the names of the instructors, volunteers, and professionals who took part in the campaign. They supported me in locating the participants from their database in the towns I wanted to visit or from referrals by former participants. Table 3.4 displays teacher-participants' information who were interviewed in this study. Table 3.5 are data obtained from UNC's archives.
- c. Organizing committee-participants: Participants from this category (members of the organizing committee and the political/technical advisors) were located through the APC's database. I interviewed people involved with the textbook and teacher manual who developed and formatted the content. The focus group interview with organizing committee members is available to the public and housed at UNC. Catherine Murphy, the

producer of the documentary *Maestra*, donated these interviews. Table 3.4 lists the teacher-participants and organizing committee participants from this study. Table 3.5. lists former brigadistas' information (Murphy, 2005).

Table 3.4. Teacher-participants' and Organizing Committee Members' Information, CLC Brigade Participation, Career/Profession, and Volunteerism.

	Teacher Name (pseudonym)	CLC Teaching Brigade Career, Profession, Volunteerism
1	Athlete Julian	CB brigade in Oriente. Became an athlete in track and field. Represented Cuba in the various meetings
2	Librarian Solana	CB brigadista. Daughter from middle class immigrant parents. She was the red sheep in the family. Worked as an accountant, and after retiring, she became a librarian. Active in the AJR and in the FMC
3	Principal Gutiérrez	CB brigadista. Always dedicated to education
4	Commander Theo	Militant of the Rebel Army brigade. Retired today, proud to have served the country
5	Teacher Juaneta	CB brigadista. Teaches adult students in trade school
6	Teacher Rogelia	CLC popular teacher at age 12. Taught <i>Seguimiento</i> after the CLC and K-8. Retired now and volunteers to work with students with disabilities
7	Biologist Carlito	CB brigadista in Viñales at age 13. Affiliated with AJR before the CLC. Interested in history and is a biologist today
8	Philatelist Charo (fieldnotes)	CB brigadista and CLC political advisor. Has a philately small shop. Organizes peña-meetings with brigadistas today. Political content advisor
9	Engineer Ramiro	CB brigadista in Baracoa, Oriente province. Learned the CLC political content while teaching. Retired engineer today

10	Teacher/Deputy Zoe	CB brigadista. Was a political district representative
1	Scholar Cheche	CLC volunteer teacher. Attending college in the education field. Became a technical-pedagogical advisor
2	Popular Educator Riza	CLC popular teacher. Worked as an administrator (principal) in a trade school for adults. Technical-pedagogical advisor
3	Teacher Cora	CLC professional teacher. Popular teacher and technical-pedagogical advisor
4	Program developer Leonela	CB brigadista. One of the designers of the Cuban adult education program <i>Yo Sí Puedo</i>
5	Maestros Voluntarios (Berarda, Carmen, Nena)	ER female educators, CLC volunteer teachers. Created and organized the teacher manual pedagogical aspects

Table 3.5. Former Brigadistas Information (Murphy, 2005).

Teacher's Name	Impact of the Experience of Being in the CLC
Daysi V	In high school when AJR made the call to join the CLC Was in Varadero when the U.S. attacked Cuba Family disagreed; claimed it was too dangerous or she would be scared; there were many insecurities about the Revolution Gains: Participation raised her self-esteem
Gina Rey	It took a lot of persuasion for her mother to let her participate in the CLC Urban students went to teach in the countryside. Gains: Personal realization; range of capabilities; learning own limitations “I believe helping others without expecting anything back was one of the best things in life. It converts the purpose in life.”

Norma Guillard	It is the best thing that happened; first sensation of freedom; learned there is no other way to live Father (tailor) and mother (seamstress); parents said she could not be dreaming about being a biochemist After the CLC, she continued studying
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Data Analysis Process: Ongoing Reorganizing and Reshaping

This study reviews documents obtained in the archives, artifacts such as the student learning materials and teaching resources and methods, and the interview analysis. The overall data analysis process in this study is a combination of reorganizing and reshaping the content, and through this process, I determined the structure and the division of the chapters. The final chapters of my dissertation contain the findings per category, as well as emergent themes. The initial structure for the chapters consisted of separating interviewees per category (students, teachers, and organizing committee members), but over the course of my analysis, I reshaped and reorganized my chapters based on emerging themes. Merging some of the themes present in student and teacher participants into one chapter allowed me to further develop a rich cross-analysis and bring in different perspectives. The decision in my research structure as well as in the analysis method has shown my autonomy as a researcher.

In their book, *Qualitative Methods for the Social Sciences*, Berg & Lune (2012) define content analysis as “a systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of materials in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings” (p. 349). I employed content analysis to examine the artifacts (e.g., letters to Fidel Castro, student textbook, teacher manual), reports, hymns and song lyrics, and any textual sources, including the interviews from documentaries. I also analyzed the content of my fieldnotes and interviews using this method.

My interviews were conducted in Spanish with Cuban participants and took place in Cuba. I transcribed the interviews in Spanish to preserve the language nuances, and only translated into English the interviews' excerpts used in this study. I did not use any coding software, as I realize when I transcribed the interviews myself I was able to recall the interview scenes on-site, which helped me recall some interview details I could add to my analysis.

Once the interviews were transcribed, I proceeded with the coding process, a dynamic method of first, identifying patterns and representing them in short, one-to-two-word phrases, and then converting these short codes into a phrasal category/theme. The process of naming codes constantly changed partially due to the fact that theoretical frameworks, in many cases, are conceptualized ideas and need to be broken down in smaller concepts or sub-codes. Table 3.6 displays the codes I created in the process.

Table 3.6. Codes Created During the Coding Process.

Code	Description	Definition
IA	Individual Agency	Individual action to bring a change
CA	Collective Agency	Massive action to bring a change
DC	Dormant Consciousness	Oblivious or unaware of surrounding issues
AC	Awaken Consciousness	Becoming aware of surrounding issues (at local or global levels)
PC	Political clarity (B)	Having knowledge and understanding of the issues
CS	Class suicide (B)	Renouncing/surrendering middle-class status
R	Reflection (B, part of Praxis)	Remarking/assessing past experiences
A	Action (B, part of praxis)	Ready to act for being aware

PR/T	Political Relationships/Trust	Creating alliances with like-minded supporters
D	Dialog/Horizontality	Horizontal relationship between teachers and students

Overall, I adopted an inductive approach in the analysis of my research, which grounded the results and conclusions in the data from interviews and archival research, the theory, and my scholarly knowledge and personal experiences. Scholars in the social science field elucidate this analysis as a method for examining artifacts of social communication, such as photographs, videotapes, etc. (Berg and Lune, 2012).

In summary, this chapter explained the research approach as adopted from Creswell. I discussed the contradictions of conducting research in the Global South as a researcher from the Global North, as well as the entry process, the receptivity of speaking the language of the research site, negotiating the research ethical issues, the local institutional support, and a second visit for member checks. I described the research-participants and explicated the data sources, the data collected in the museums and interviews, and finally, the document review and coding of interviews and documents as the method for data analysis.

Chapter 4. Findings: The CLC Planning and Organization

In Chapter 4, I examine the curriculum materials and analyze how it relates to Freire's pedagogical stance. First, I define the campaign using the description from participants during the interview. Then, I provide an overview of the CLC's timeline to analyze events within this period to examine the impact on research-participants. I provide a layout of the student primer and teacher manual in an attempt to understand how it may have impacted student-participants' learning and briefly address the challenges of making the materials. Finally, I identify the components that remain unclear and the need for future research to address them.

Curriculum: Conceptualization, Universality, and Accessibility

A Campaign without Borders

The ages of student-participants in this study ranged from approximately 10 and 31 at the time of the CLC, a value calculated based on their ages during the interview in 2018. The oldest participant I interviewed was 89 years old. As Juaneta, one of the teacher-participants, said "[approximately] 60 years have passed; students who were in their 30s, 40s were taught" (personal communication, Juaneta, 2018). Therefore, the student-participants who were recounting their experiences in this research were approximately teenagers or young adults.

The age range for the CLC teachers, professional, volunteer teachers, Conrado Benítez Brigade, and Obrero de Alfabetización (Pátria o Muerte) Brigade started from approximately 7 years of age through adulthood. Griselda Aguilera Cabrera has been portrayed as the youngest person signed up for the campaign in *Bohemia* magazine, published in December 14, 2001, forty years after the campaign. Thus, the CLC was an intergenerational campaign, including students of all ages learning at different levels and paces; it was a campaign without borders. Luisa

Campos from the MNA shared a newspaper clip reporting that the youngest teacher was an elementary school student, and the oldest, an ordinary literate adult.

Another borderless aspect of the campaign was its geopolitical standpoint. The CLC taught people from other nations, such as Haitians, Jamaicans, and Spanish students, and it embraced volunteers from around the world who demonstrated solidarity with the Cuban Revolution's cause. Figure 4.1 displays a Spanish couple who became literate during the CLC. Both CLC's reports and teacher-participants from this study mentioned students from Haiti who worked in the agriculture industry. Additionally, the CLC received support from literate internationals who volunteered to work as teachers.

Figure 4.1. A Spanish Couple who Became Literate.



From the JMNL archives. Used with permission

A Campaign Filled with Love

The literacy campaign also involved love and giving. Leonela Relys, a CB brigadista during the campaign and one of the *Yo Sí Puedo* literacy program developers, characterized the CLC as a humane act. According to her, the CLC teachers taught with love and shared their

knowledge without expecting anything in return. Other participants also reiterate her view of this campaign being an act of love. I am inclined to interpret love as caring deeply for other human beings, similarly to when one demonstrates solidarity, described as political love (Darder, 2002), and political relationship (Gutstein, 2003), translated as feelings and emotions deeply rooted in the human's well-being and dignity. Freire positions love resulting from the horizontal relationship, which will be discussed later in depth.

In the National Literacy Congress, the executive secretary Raúl Ferrér (1961) described the literate as:

...the comrades who fulfill the task with the revolution, who have passed the [content] of the textbook, who can read fluently simple themes, and who can write enough to craft a letter to Fidel Castro ending somewhat like this: *¡Viva nuestra gran Revolución Socialista!* (p.19).

Thus, the universal expectation of the CLC was to enable students to read and write, as described above by Ferrér in September of 1961. The Literacy Congress intended to reflect upon the CLC's accomplishments to date, as well as identify the necessary tasks to eradicate illiteracy in Cuba in the last stage of the campaign, from September through December of 1961. In September, the number of literate students had reached only 120,000 out of the 545,800 Cubans identified in the census of April of 1961 (Kozol, 1978). Ferrér urged the members of the Municipal Councils of Education, the Provincial Commissions, and the National Literacy Committee to create a clear plan containing technical control and support for the CB brigadistas in order to reach the goal to graduate students by the end of the year.

An Inclusive Campaign

Students with Socio-Emotional Conditions

Some of my student-participants revealed their struggles while learning. Mirna, one of the student-participants I interviewed, halted her classes in the CLC due to the death of her child; “Well, I had bad luck. My son, who was a toddler, got sick and lasted only three days. I was traumatized. The others [students] continued and finished” (personal communication, Mirna, 2018). The loss of a child is traumatic for parents, and Mirna’s loss did not allow her to focus on her schooling. Although she was a strong supporter of the Cuban Revolution, she was unable to attend 1961 CLC classes.

Despite the fact that Mirna did not graduate, her services in the community never halted. She was actively involved in her local Committee for Defense of the Revolution (CDR), an organization established in 1960 throughout Cuba, becoming one of the first presidents there. Mirna’s story depicts the anecdote of an adult student who was unable to reach the goal of reading and writing through the literacy campaign but reached the CLC’s political goal of executing the tasks of the Cuban Revolution through her volunteer work.

Students with Chronic Medical Conditions

Lizete’s story was also quite moving. She suffers from chronic disease to this day, and the condition impairs her overall well-being. During the interview, Lizete answered some of the questions on her own, despite her slower and, at times, indistinguishable verbal articulation. Her daughter, who also attended the interview, described Lizete’s medical condition. Lizete’s daughter explained how no medical care or support existed before the Revolution and how she consequently became a professional specializing in her mother’s medical condition. Lizete’s daughter lives with and takes care of both her parents. Although life before the Revolution was

different, and Lizete's medical issue was considered a deficit, the revolutionary ideology included everyone. Therefore, Lizete worked one-on-one with a female brigadista who came to the house daily to conduct basic literacy work. As Lizete's daughter exclaimed with what I sensed was enormous gratitude, "It was a campaign without borders" (personal communication, Lizete, 2016). Gina, one of the CB brigadistas portrayed in the *Maestra* documentary (Murphy, 2005), shared the difficulties that farmers and peasants encountered as they learned to read and write: some had lost their ability to hold or move a pencil to write their letters; others worked with heavy tools or climbed up the palm trees to pick fruits from the top. Despite these obstacles, Gina performed her work as a literacy worker with rural, countryside students.

Linguistic and Racial Diversity

The CLC reflected the efforts of the Cuban Revolution to dismantle and transform the existing educational structures and policies of racism and language. From a linguistic point of view, teacher-participant/athlete Julian and teacher-participant/professional teacher Cora shared their struggles in teaching Haitian students to speak Spanish, among other lessons. Learning a new language as an adult is comparable to a child learning a new language at a pre-literate state of language acquisition (Handsfield, 2016). Furthermore, Haitian students received educational instruction in French and spoke Haitian Creole¹⁵, an official language developed from a blend of African languages and French.

Cora, who worked as a technical advisor and a teacher during the campaign, collaborated with Joel, another young CB brigadista, who was able to teach the Haitian students. Joel, a student-participant, grew up with Haitian Creole-speaking parents. Joel's father died when he

¹⁵ <https://restavekfreedom.org/2018/02/09/haitian-creole-become-official-written-language/>

was a teenager, so Joel started working and did not go to school. He was approximately 25 years old in the Year of Education.

Despite the fact my study does not address racism in Cuba, some participants mentioned their experience with racial discrimination. To start with, *Racial Discrimination* is the title of a passage in the teacher manual; the passage was also used as oral reading for students. This reading content is applicable to any of the lessons (Table 4.5). Second, during the description of the CLC stages later in this chapter, I describe the newspaper headline accusing insurgents' racism as a rationale for their hostilities. As a matter of fact, the three young male brigadistas murdered in 1961 and featured in the National Literacy Museum belonged to three distinct racial groups: Afro-Cuban, White Cuban, and Chinese Cuban.

Racism existed during the pre-revolutionary years; As former CB brigadista and member of the CLC organizing committee, Leonela Relys, explained how the CLC adopted José Martí and Ignacio Agramonte¹⁶ ideologies. During the Cuban colonial period (early 1500 -1898), Agramonte taught literacy to enslaved Africans. According to Leonela, both Martí and Agramonte believed that both men and women had the right to an education, and in turn, the responsibility to teach others. Lastly, two teacher-participants, Juaneta and Rogelia, referred to the CLC's inclusiveness of Afro-Cuban students and teachers. According to Juaneta, the central plaza in Trinidad pre-revolution had benches segregated by racial groups, but benches during the revolutionary times were for all Cubans. Ending racism was an official policy of the early revolutionary government. I asked Juaneta if students asked questions about racial discrimination; she explained:

¹⁶ Agramonte (1841-1873) Cuban patriot native from Camagüey, was an exceptional leader and military commander. He became known as the "El Mayor." He wrote the draft of the first constitution.

No, no, no, no. They would ask me, “so can’t we get into the beach yet?” I would respond, “But we will soon be in the Varadero Beach, some day. Some day we will get into the beach in Varadero, black and white and we will bathe in the beach together” (Juaneta, 2018).

Historical sources explain that Cuban unity became important in the fight against external enemies, the U.S., and counterrevolutionaries. These unexpected attacks forced Cuba to push its people in the direction of overstating racial unity and understating the power of colonial and racist ideologies inherited from centuries of a slavocracy (Morales Domínguez, Prevost, & Nimtz, 2013). This is a complex issue, which I will not be addressing in this study. In sum, this section described the CLC according to the participants’ narratives and the evidence found during my trips.

CLC Timeline

From an educational standpoint, one of the central elements of this research was the creation and manufacturing of the curriculum and related materials. The completion of the student textbook and teacher manual suggests that groundwork occurred well before December 1960 (the year the first edition was announced). Truthfully, a group of educators began working on materials from 1959 until the mid-1960s. Targeting the visualization of the CLC stages and main events and challenges in each stage, I organized the information in table 4.1., which provides an overview of the literacy events, instructors’ recruitment, and training in the first three years since the beginning of the Cuban Revolution from 1959-1961.

Table 4.1. CLC timeline in the first three years of the Cuban Revolution

1959	1960	1961
Foundational Planning Period (1959-Aug 1960) 3,000 vocabulary & textbook research	CLC Planning Stage (Aug-Dec)	CLC Stage One (Jan-Apr) Pilot A: Cayo Coco (1 brigade/11 students) Pilot B: 35 brigades/15 students Community and Parent education & Brigadistas recruitment
		CLC Stage Two (May-Aug)
Rebel Army Literacy	Fidel Castro's UNESCO announcement (September)	Brigadistas Recruitment
Recruitment of Pilot Students	Teacher recruitment (Professional & Volunteers)	CLC Final Stage (Sept-Dec) CNA Congress Acceleration of students towards graduation

For instance, designers of the teacher manual *Alfabetizamos* composed the research Raúl Gutiérrez conducted on 3,000 vocabulary words during this period (UNC, 2017). Interviewees Berarda and Carmen worked closely with the Rebel Army (ER) literacy materials under Che Guevara's leadership prior to the CLC and represented the ER in the 1960 National Literacy Committee. They implemented the pedagogical aspects of the CLC described in the teacher manual. Furthermore, the volume of foundational work conducted for the literacy materials backed Fidel Castro's announcement in September of 1960 at the UNESCO General Assembly Meeting of Cuba's commitment to eradicate illiteracy by the end of 1961.

During my literature review, I noticed some inconsistencies in the CLC timeline. The UNESCO's report (Lorenzetto & Neys, 1964) notes the CLC starting in August of 1960 and ending in December of 1961, running for approximately a year and a half. Conversely, Canfux Gutiérrez (2007) describes the preparatory period taking place a year and a half prior to August of 1960, in addition to the five months of planning time reported by Lorenzetto & Neys (1964). For this research purpose, I will focus on the period of August to December of 1960 and the CLC's three stages in 1961.

1960: Planning Period (August to December)

According to Canfux Gutiérrez (2007), the five-month planning period can be characterized by the establishment of the National Literacy Commission (CNA), the strengthening of local municipal institutions, and the cohesion of participating organizations, such as MINED, Teachers College (Colegio de Maestros), and ER, as well as additional organizations that supported the literacy campaign. Furthermore, the search for pre-literate students and popular educators (members of the community) began in this period, and the new working style—dynamic and participatory—was necessary to make the CLC operational.

One important element for this study is the creation of the 3,000 vocabulary words previously, a study conducted by Raúl Gutiérrez in 1960. "Questionnaires used were studied, and later recorded on tape. This way, not only the language of the illiterate would be recorded, but also his social and political views" (Lorenzetto & Neys, 1964). The study was a result of the improvement of materials that did not meet students' needs. According to the UNESCO report, Gutiérrez's study was conducted under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Lorenzetto & Neys state:

Dr. Raúl Gutiérrez began an investigation of the active and passive vocabulary of the Cuban farmer, with the idea of publishing a “revolutionary primer.” According to Gutiérrez, those of Echegoyen and Laubach which had been employed until then, although technically good, did not adapt themselves to the specific motivation of the moment, of the country and of the struggle against illiteracy (1964).

Moreover, not only would the material’s content motivate students’ learning, but the language of the materials, as well as the delivery format, was designed to be comprehensible to a Cuban farmer. “A poll was taken which covered 3,000 adults over 16 years of age. The island was divided into various zones, with municipalities remaining within an urban or rural zone” (Lorenzetto & Neys, 1964).

The planning period concluded with Fidel Castro’s announcement in December of 1960 of the printing of the campaign’s materials: the textbook *Venceremos* and the teacher manual *Alfabeticemos*. Canfux Gutiérrez (2007) reported four conditions requiring attention at the time:

1. The technical and administrative conditions required for implementation
2. The Cuban education field had little to no experience in mass organizing, and as a result, acting in unity was difficult despite the support gained from teachers and the teaching field.
3. No conclusive research of political work had been conducted to incorporate pre-literate students or how a search of instructors would be undertaken.
4. Emergent revolutionary organizations and the CLC’s fitness as a great school for them. (The AJR was founded January of 1960 and the FMC and CDR were founded in March and September of 1960 respectively.)

I provide a brief overview of the three mass organizations below. In addition, table 4.2 displays the three political mass organizations with their date of establishment in relation to the timeline of the revolutionary initiatives at the Revolution's onset.

FMC: *La Federación de las Mujeres Cubanas*¹⁷ (Cuban Women Federation) was created in August of 1960 with Vilma Espín as its first President. She remained in office until her death in 2007. The federation emerged from smaller women organizations comprised of countryside women and supporters of the Revolution. The main goal was to incorporate women into society and the workforce, as well as in programs of social and economic changes underway. The federation still exists today, and most female participants in this study disclosed their participation in the past and present.

CDR: *El Comité en Defensa de la Revolución*¹⁸ was created in September of 1960. This committee emerged from Cuba's need to mobilize the nation on tasks related to the Revolution's defense and to work directly with the community to discuss socialist welfare. Many opposers hid in the mountains of Sierra Maestra and Escambray, but they infiltrated towns as well. The committee emerged from smaller organizations with different goals that unified as one mass organization aiming to defend socialist interests.

AJR: The *Asociación de Jóvenes Rebeldes* (Rebel Youth Association) was established in January of 1960 after Guevara proposed it in August of 1959. "The constituents of the AJR were the undereducated or unemployed youth" (Luke, 2014). The organization targeted neglected sectors of society during the pre-revolutionary government. Moreover, in his speech from May

¹⁷ https://www.ecured.cu/Federaci%C3%B3n_de_Mujeres_Cubanas

¹⁸ https://www.ecured.cu/Comit%C3%A9s_de_Defensa_de_la_Revoluci%C3%B3n

1960, Fidel Castro declared that AJR members would attend one of the centers to receive a secondary education since they were too old to attend school (as cited in Luke, 2014).

AJR membership required the completion of challenging tasks within a three-month period, which included climbing Peak Turquino five times; The event was called Cinco Picos (or five peaks). The other organized activities included gaining literacy, building schools, hospitals, and roads, and reforesting the land among other tasks. All these tasks were structured to build physical endurance and develop a revolutionary spirit.

Table 4.2. Creation of mass political organizations in relation of the revolutionary initiatives.

Year Established	1960	1961
Mass Political Organization	FMC: La Federación de las Mujeres Cubanas CDR: El Comité de Defensa de la Revolución AJR: Asociación de Jóvenes Rebeldes	X
Revolution Goals	Agrarian Reform	Educational Reform (CLC)

The last condition is relevant to my study, as the youth participants' membership in these organizations may have impacted their socio-political development. Below, I provide a brief description of the CLC's materials.

Following this period, the CLC officially launched in three phases, with the first two phases devoted to technical planning, organizing, and strengthening political guidance (Lorenzetto & Neys, 1964). The post-pilot instruction began at full speed in the second phase, and the last phase mostly concentrated on supporting instruction towards graduation.

1961: CLC Launching Stage (January to April)

According to Canfux Gutiérrez (2007), the CLC's launching period concentrated on organizational and technical (instructional training and material creation) structuring. It lasted approximately four months, from January to April of 1961. This period can be characterized by the deployment of the first pilot project located on the island of Cayo Coco, off the Camagüey Province coast. Twelve middle school student-members of AJR completed the program successfully between December 1960 and February 1961. Moreover, on January 30, 1961, Fidel Castro announced the instructors' decision to teach *in* farmers and peasants' homes due to the difficulties that students faced in trying to attend classes away from home (Canfux Gutiérrez, 2007).

The success of the Cayo Coco pilot segued into a larger pilot program, this time in challenging mountainous and damp areas throughout Cuba. Thirty-five brigades with 15 students each were sent to Pinar del Rio, Matanzas, Las Villas, and Camagüey. Once more, the AJR middle and high school students were selected as program students. The aim of this pilot program focused on conducting literacy work in desolated areas. The creation of experienced brigadistas would subsequently become part of 100,000 brigadistas undergoing training in Varadero, a resort reserved for the rich prior to the Revolution. The special training included learning literacy techniques, how to use equipment, and how to develop health classes.

Launching Stage Two: Challenges

The Integrated Revolutionary Organizations, a group of Cuban organizations, including AJR, FMC, and School of "Normal"¹⁹ Teachers (CMN) organized assemblies to educate Cubans about the CLC and its positive outcomes for the people and the Cuban Revolution. Notably, a

¹⁹ Normal teaching licensure is obtained within three years of training; it is equivalent to high school years.

great need existed to incorporate youth into the campaign to become teachers. Canfux Gutiérrez (2007) reported one of the major challenges at this stage was convincing parents who resisted being separated from their children, especially their daughters. The Catholic Church also showed resistance. In the end, the political work became strong, and the already prestigious Revolution overcame these obstacles. Two of the female interviewees from the 2005 documentary *Maestra*²⁰ shared their experiences as young teenagers joining the CLC. They persisted and persuaded their parents to allow them to volunteer. Gina shared how she convinced her mother, but when her mother was almost convinced, the U.S. attacked Cuba in the Bay of Pigs (April of 1961), creating a wave of fear among Cubans. At the very same time, the brigadistas' were training in Varadero. The attack on the Bay of Pigs increased parents' concerns about their children's safety.

The murder of Afro-Cuban college student Conrado Benítez, only two and a half weeks after the campaign launched, greatly worried parents and impacted their decisions to allow their children to participate as well. Benítez was 18 and attending college at the time of his murder. He was also in one of the CLC pilot programs as a *volunteer teacher*. His murder, according to the news, was an attack on his socio-economic status and race, on the literacy campaign, and on the Cuban Revolution. As Fidel Castro conveyed his message to Cubans, he stated the intention of opposers of the Revolution was to spread fear and disincentivize Cubans from participating in the CLC. The headlines in two newspapers, *La Calle* and *Revolución*, from January 24, 1961, portrayed this bold headline: "They killed him for being poor, young, black, and a teacher" (as translated by the researcher). Teacher-participant Gutiérrez said, "Conrado Benítez, from the

²⁰ *Maestra* is a documentary produced and directed in 2005 by Catherine Murphy. It portrays the experience of nine women who volunteered in CLC as a Conrado Benítez (CB) brigadista. They were teenagers at the time of the CLC.

Black race, was hideously murdered for wanting to share his knowledge with the others”

(personal communication, 2018). In the face of Cubans' indignation over this tragedy, Fidel Castro announced the country's immediate recruitment of every Cuban who could read and write to teach the illiterate, and he named this new brigade the Conrado Benítez Brigade. Figure 4.2 displays images of Conrado Benítez brigadistas, young and old, who attended Varadero for a week-long training. Also, in order to release teachers and students interested in supporting the CLC, schools were closed for six months starting in mid-April of 1961.

Figure 4.2 A Massive Group of CB Brigadistas Ready to Start Teaching



From the MNA archives. Used with Permission

1961 CLC Second Stage (May to August)

While Lorenzetto & Neys (1964) point to political guidance as the main focus of this stage, Canfux Gutiérrez (2007) highlights the focus on the materials' provision and methodological resources to instructors, as well as the immediate emotional support provided to families visiting their adolescent children. When speaking about the CB brigadistas, Ferrér's words conveyed a caring and loving tone. In addition, he spoke about the importance of the head of brigadistas (*Responsible*) implementing good orientation sessions as a way of preventing what he termed *military style*. This was one of the first massive campaigns in Cuban education, and yet Ferrér highlighted the need to be "politically vigilant" and not merely focused on the

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technical goals of literacy (p. 22). Also, in this stage, different Cuban regions progressively started to declare themselves “Illiteracy-Free Territories (TLA).” Melena del Sur was the first region declaring their pre-literate students’ graduation.

1961 CLC Final Stage: Challenges

Later in this phase, two young male brigadistas were hung and killed. The first, Delfin Sen Cedré, belonged to the BOA Brigade; He was murdered on October 3rd. The second, Manuel Ascunce Domenech was from the CB Brigade; He and his student were killed on November 23rd. Hung, tortured, and killed, the brigadistas were shockingly and heartbreakingly murdered in the Escambray area.

Materials and Instruction / Pedagogy


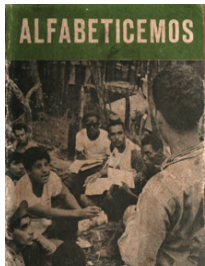


Curriculum Content: Student Primer and Teacher Manual

I collected artifacts directly associated with instruction and instructors’ roles. The first booklet is the *Guía del Brigadista*, a young brigadistas guide containing the by-laws established by the Literacy Army (Figure 4.3). Table 4.3 provides additional artifacts, such as the student primer or textbook *Venceremos*, containing 15 lessons. The teachers’ manual, *Alfabetizamos* contained 24 readings, which were aligned with each lesson. The additional materials were booklets to practice penmanship and the basic math operations entitled *Producir, Ahorrar, y Organizar*.



Figure 4.3. Artifact provided by the Sancti Spiritus Archives. Used with permission.

Table 4.3. The *Guía*, *Venceremos*, *Alfabeticemos*, the Penmanship Practice and Math Practice Booklets.

Student Textbook	Teacher Manual	Penmanship Practice Booklet	Arithmetic Practice Booklet
			
From the MNA archives. Used with permission.	From the MNA archives. Used with permission.	From the personal archives of Diego Serra. Used with permission	From JMNL archives. Used with permission

Curriculum Sequencing: The Guiding Criteria

The principle for the sequencing of the CLC curriculum, especially in regard to the selection of the first few lessons, was a combination of students' real-life experiences within the Revolution and their technical skills. In 1960, the Cuban Revolution committed to implementing the Agrarian Reform.²¹ The Agrarian Reform in Cuba gave land to people who worked on it (i.e., peasants and farmers) and ended the privately-owned states. The revolutionary reform ended the exploitation by landowners who demanded peasants pay rent or share a portion of their harvest for using the land. Therefore, the first few lessons of the student textbook dealt with concepts related to land reform, such as the right to land, cooperatives, and land distribution. Canfux Gutiérrez (a former *maestro voluntario*), Leonela Relys, and Carlito (both former CB brigadistas) discussed the rationale for the selection of the first few topics during the interview.

²¹ The goal of the Agrarian Reform in Cuba (1960) was to give land to people who work in it and to end the "latifundio," the great state privately owned.

Table 4.4 (below) shows the alignment of student textbook lessons with the readings from the teacher manual. The left column lists the 15 lessons in the student textbook, and the right column displays the 24 themes compiled in the teacher manual. I discovered the suggested alignment of the readings in the teacher manual to the lessons in the student textbook in the sources I obtained from the MNA archives.

The readings in the teacher manual provided the background knowledge for teachers to prepare for the lessons. The alignment of curriculum indicates what readings the teachers should do. Each reading is one page long, which is unrelated to the depth and complexity of each lesson. When brigadistas needed additional support for their reading, they could bring questions to technical or political advisors or coaches with whom they met periodically, and in some cases, on a weekly basis.

Table 4.4. 15 Lessons from the Student Primer Aligned with the 13 Themes in the Teacher Manual.

Lesson #	15 Lessons in Student Primer <i>Venceremos</i> *	13 Themes out of 24 in Teacher Manual <i>Alfabetecemos</i> **	Theme #
1	OEA - Organization of American States	The International Unity	15
2	INRA - National Institute of Agrarian Reform	The Land is Ours	3
3	The Farm Cooperatives under the Land Reform	The Cooperatives	4
4	The Land	The Revolution The Land is Ours	1 3
5*	Cuban Fishermen	The Cooperatives	4
6	The People's Store	The Cooperatives	4

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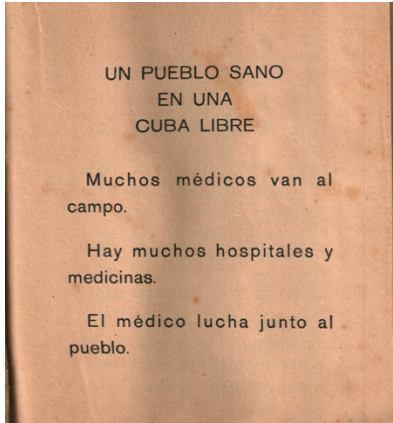
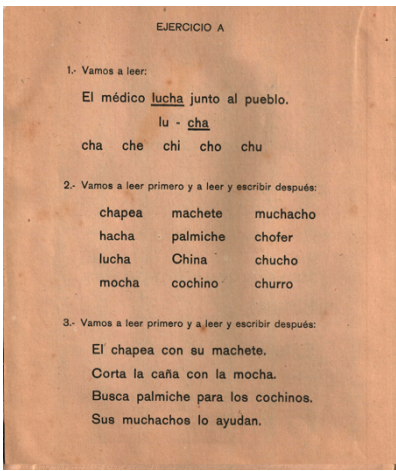
7	Every Cuban, a Homeowner	The Right to Housing	5
8	Healthy People in a Free Cuba	Health	20
9	INIT - National Institute of the Tourist Industry	Popular Recreation	21
10	The Militias	The People: United and Alert	18
11	The Revolution wins all Battles	The Revolution Fidel is our Leader The Revolution wins all Battles	1 2 23
12	The People work	Industrialization Workers and Peasants	8 18
13	Cuba isn't Alone	The International Unity The Revolution wins all Battles	15 23
14	The Year of Education has arrived	The Revolution converts Barracks into Schools Literacy	9 22
15	Poem		15 23
	<i>*Venceremos</i> or "We Shall Conquer"	<i>**Alfabetecemos</i> or "Let's Teach How to Read and Write"	

Table 4.5 displays a list of the themes contained in the manual. The 13 unshaded readings/themes are paralleled with each lesson. I asked my interviewees if they recalled reading or teaching these shaded readings, but they could not remember. As I look at the titles of these shaded readings, I am inclined to interpret that they would be connected to all of the lessons. For instance, Imperialism is a broad topic that could be a point of discussion at any time, so teachers could refer to these readings at any point of the lessons.

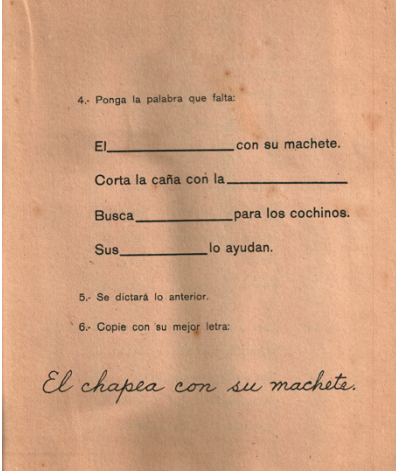
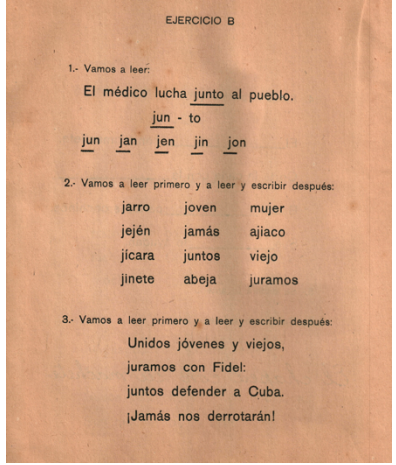
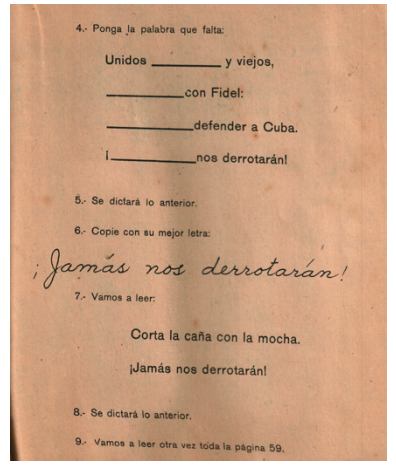
Table 4.5. List of 24 Curricular Themes/Readings from the Teacher Manual *Alfabetizamos* (How to Teach to Read and Write)

Theme #	List of Themes and Titles
1	The Revolution
2	Fidel is our Leader
3	The Land is Ours
4	The Cooperatives
5	The Right to Housing
6	Cuba had Natural Resources and yet was Poor
7	Nationalization
8	Industrialization
9	The Revolution converts Barracks in Schools
10	Racial Discrimination
11	Friends and Enemies
12	Imperialism
13	International Trade
14	War and Peace
15	International Unity
16	Democracy
17	Workers and Peasants
18	The People: United and Alert
19	Religious Freedom
20	Health
21	Popular Recreation
22	Literacy
23	The Revolution wins all Battles
24	The Declaration of Havana

Table 4.6. Lesson Sample from the Student Textbook.
From the MNA Archives. Used with permission.

<p>Image Page</p> 	<p>Reading Page</p> 	<p>Reading Page (Translation)</p> <p>Healthy People in a Free Cuba</p> <p>Many doctors go to the countryside.</p> <p>There are many hospitals and medicine.</p> <p>The doctor fights together with the people.</p>
<p>Reading A</p> 	<p>Reading A (Translation)</p> <p>1. Let us read: The doctor <u>fights</u> together with the people. lu-<u>cha</u>/fight cha che chi cho chu</p> <p>2. Let us read first and read/write afterwards: chapea/cut machete/machete muchacho/boy hacha/ax palmiche (palm tree fruit) chofer/driver lucha/fight China chucho mocha (farmer tool) cochino/pig churro (sweet snack)</p> <p>3. Let us read first and read/write afterwards: He cut with his machete. Cut the sugar cane with <i>mocha</i>. Look for <i>palmiche</i> (to feed) for the pigs. His children help him/her.</p>	

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<p style="text-align: center;">Practice A</p>  <p>4. Ponga la palabra que falta:</p> <p>El _____ con su machete. Corta la caña con la _____. Busca _____ para los cochinos. Sus _____ lo ayudan.</p> <p>5. Se dictará lo anterior. 6. Copie con su mejor letra:</p> <p><i>El chapea con su machete.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Practice A (Translation)</p> <p>4. Place the missing word: He _____ with his machete. Cut the sugar cane with the _____. Look for _____ for the pigs. His _____ help him/her.</p> <p>5. The last sentences will be dictated.</p> <p>6. Copy with your best handwriting: El chapea con su machete.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Reading B</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">EJERCICIO B</p> <p>1. Vamos a leer: El médico lucha <u>junto</u> al pueblo. jun - to jun jan jen jin jon</p> <p>2. Vamos a leer primero y a leer y escribir después: jarro joven mujer jején jamás ajiaco jicara juntos viejo jinete abeja juramos</p> <p>3. Vamos a leer primero y a leer y escribir después: Unidos jóvenes y viejos, juramos con Fidel: juntos defender a Cuba. ¡Jamás nos derrotarán!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Reading B (Translation)</p> <p>1. Let us read: The doctor fights together <u>with</u> the people. <u>jun-to/together</u> jun jan jen jin jon</p> <p>2. Let us read first and read/write afterwards: jarro/pitcher joven/young mujer/woman jején (harmful insect) jamás/never ajiaco (meat stew) jicara (small mug) juntos/together viejo/elder jinete/horse rider abeja/bee juramos/we swear</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Practice B</p>  <p>4. Ponga la palabra que falta:</p> <p>Unidos _____ y viejos, _____ con Fidel: _____ defender a Cuba. I _____ nos derrotarán!</p> <p>5. Se dictará lo anterior. 6. Copie con su mejor letra:</p> <p><i>¡Jamás nos derrotarán!</i></p> <p>7. Vamos a leer: Corta la caña con la mocha. ¡Jamás nos derrotarán!</p> <p>8. Se dictará lo anterior. 9. Vamos a leer otra vez toda la página 59.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Practice B (Translation)</p> <p>4. Place the missing word: United _____ and old, _____ with Fidel. _____ to defend Cuba. _____ will defeat!</p> <p>5. The last sentences will be dictated.</p> <p>6. Copy with your best handwriting: ¡Jamás nos derrotarán!</p> <p>7. Let us read: Cut the sugar cane with the “mocha.” We will never be defeated!</p> <p>8. Let us read page 59 one more time.</p>

An Introduction to the CLC Literacy Model

The CLC student textbook was based on the Spanish language skills from early literacy programs; However, it did not follow the traditional sequencing of letters and syllables. Carlito, a former CB brigadista, recounts:

When you were teaching OEA, they learned O, E, and A. They would learn to read the capital and small letters. In other words, we did not follow the sequence ABCD. O-E-A. Because we wanted to take the opportunity to explain what was the OEA. “Look, the OEA stands for Organization of American States. They oust us from the organization for being revolutionaries, which was part of having a better life.” In other words, [this is the way] the political and social messages were delivered. With the content (personal communication, Carlito, 2018).

Instead, the sequencing of the consonants was based on the essential words in the text, and in some cases, the title of the lesson itself (i.e. OEA).

According to Handsfield (2016), the current emergent literacy theory suggests that literacy development and language learning naturally occurs when individuals are engaged in their social environment. Literacy development in children is ongoing, from birth through their development of literacy, and onward as they further develop reading and writing skills. The method utilized in 1961 at the CLC used a similar principle of learning while engaged in the social world.

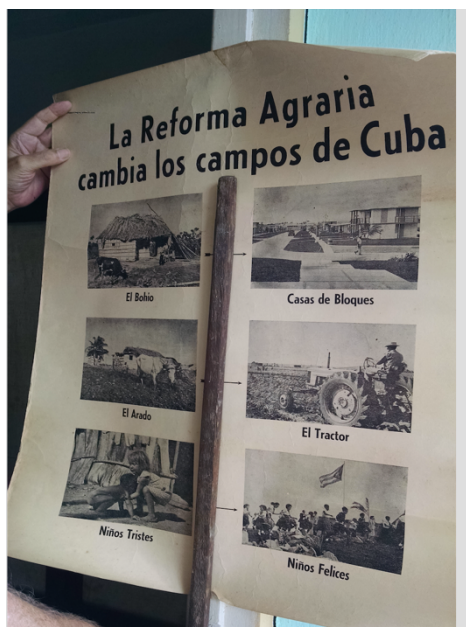
Curriculum Materials: The Challenges of Creating the Textbook

As I mention earlier, the CLC involved the creation of a bank of 3,000 of the most popular words in Cuba. I obtained additional pedagogical resources during my interview with Diego Serra, the son of Matilde Serra Robledo, one of the designers of the 1961 CLC textbook.

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She worked closely with Raúl Ferrer, who was very familiar with adult students in rural areas. I took pictures of the *lamina* or poster. The figures below (Figure 4.4) are samples of teaching materials, the artifacts created by Matilde Serra Robledo and stored by Diego Serra in his home. Additionally, the instructors Rogelia and Carlito referred to these as *laminas o didácticos*, visual materials used to support learning.

Figure 4.4. Teaching Materials used During the Instruction of Pilot Program or CLC Lesson



From the personal archives of Diego Serra. Used with permission.

Studies report that the ER literacy efforts were in motion in the Sierra Maestra, Oriente Province after Fidel Castro's return to Cuba from his exile in Mexico (Abendroth, 2005). Many rebel militants were non-literate and part-literate local peasants and farmers. A small group of educators who engaged with committee members and used the materials and methods disclosed that they taught the ER under Che Guevarra's guidance, who oversaw the Department of Instruction and Culture literacy activities in the Sierra Maestra. In focus group interviews, I

discovered that the ER efforts may have worked for some students, but the content was not as motivating for the army soldiers. As Ana Maria explained:

It was noticeable that the textbook was not responding to the adult student characteristics, to their motivations, and so, we started working on that [an appropriate textbook]. This is why, with that prior experience, we were able to create the textbook in a relatively short time. It is not easy to create a textbook (personal communication, Maria, 2017)

Moreover, Berarda, also an ER educator, reported that the ER's textbook content was not designed for older students and it excluded the revolutionary aspects that militant students would need. As she recalled, "The textbook was not meeting the necessary literacy requisites for these men, who in addition, were revolutionaries, combatants and all that" (personal communication, Berarda, 2017).

The eradication of illiteracy became an enduring concern for the revolutionary government, and in 1959, the CNA was created to oversee the literacy issues in Cuba. From that date on, Reverend Fernández Ceballos ran literacy programs using various textbooks in the Casa de las Américas (Lorenzetto & Neys, 1964). After the first two years of attempting to decrease illiteracy in Cuba, a more radical approach materialized in the CLC, which Fidel announced in September 1960 at the UNESCO meeting.

Advisors and Coaches Training

Some interviews brought to light the variance of political education among the brigadistas and how this previous preparation could have impacted how they taught their students. Carlito and Solana belonged to AJR prior to the 1961 CLC, and their political preparation could have started as early as 1960 when they joined the AJR. As mentioned earlier, the 1960 emergence of political organizations included the AJR, an organization exclusively

serving youth, as the organization's name suggests (Gutiérrez, 2007). Based on the timeline of events, one can conclude that the youth partaking in AJR were exposed to political knowledge, and in turn, the development of their socio-political consciousness started before their peer-brigadistas who joined and received training in April of 1961. The significance of having awareness may have impacted their method of instructions, and such brigadistas could have provided the larger picture when working with their students.

In fact, throughout the literacy campaign, young CB brigadistas who had little to no experience in teaching received weekly support from advisors with technical-pedagogical training, as the advisors were attending college or were already professional teachers. The political advisors would support the CB brigadistas with political materials. In some cases, especially in more remote areas, advisors would spend a few days in the homes of farmers, peasants, and workers before going to visit another brigadista.

Interventions to Protect Brigadistas Against Attacks

Teacher-participants mentioned that they worked under the fear of counterrevolutionary attacks. Some brigadistas from urban areas shared their fears of unfamiliar insects and the noises of wild animals in the night, however, their major concern was being attacked by the Revolution's opposing parties. Alondra, a student-participant, reported her family's plan to protect the brigadistas when the enemies came knocking at their door. Alondra explains:

We always have them [brigadistas] hidden. We did not let them leave the house alone.

Our grandpa would say, "In case they ask for the brigadistas around here." They were always protected; They were always with us. We would lock our house, and sometimes,

we had classes in the afternoon so we would not need to light the Chinese lamp in the evening, because we were afraid (personal communication, Alondra, 2018).

Alondra lived in Escambray, not too far from where Manuel Ascunce and Conrado Benítez were murdered, so their fear was tangible.

According to Carlito (2018), a teacher-participant and native of central Cuba, these attacks took place in the areas of Cienfuegos (a province of Bay of the Pigs), Villa Clara, Fomento (part of Sancti Spiritus province), and an area known as Escambray. Given its inhospitable conditions, many thugs chose Escambray as their hiding place.

Carlito, a CB brigadista affiliated with the AJR and a strong interest in history, explained two important structural interventions created by the CLC to counterattack: 1) the creation of two CLC independent municipalities. The Sectional Committee of the Escambray Campaign (SCEC) supported the CLC's countryside and mountain teachers and students, and the Municipal Literacy Committee (CMA) supported urban and plain geographical areas. The SCEC operated independently from the CMA; and 2) the creation of the ER, an army constituted of militants trained to carry and use their weapons to protect Cubans against Revolution opposers. The ER aided in reducing public fear and dangerous situations. "This structure facilitated the CLC in this area," Carlito explained, and the ER established a campsite in the mountains to protect students and brigadistas from death (personal communication, 2018). According to the interviewees, the killings of Conrado Benítez, Delfin Sen Cedré, and Manuel Ascunce, three young CLC brigadistas, spread fear among parents and teachers. Theo, a teacher-participant, was an ER soldier and Revolution militant who oversaw a group of approximately 24 literate soldiers tasked with overthrowing counterrevolutionaries hiding in the mountains. In addition to teaching four local peasants, Theo also taught his soldiers. In the interview, Theo proclaimed, "I taught four

peasants and 24 students. [A total of] 28! ... One group was teaching and the other was guarding the site. The soldiers guarding the site in the morning, were teaching in the afternoon” (personal communication, 2018).

Instruction and Pedagogy

Instruction: Dialogue Prevailing Over Banking

Banking, dialogue, and praxis, concepts described and discussed by Paulo Freire (1970; 2003), are essential parts of his pedagogy towards the liberation of oppressed peoples. Banking occurs during a vertical teacher-student relationship, where a teacher is positioned as the knowledge holder and the student merely a recipient of this knowledge. Quite the reverse, an education towards students' liberation contains dialogue. Dialogue permits the unveiling, recognizing, and naming of the world. Naming of the world, a term used by Freire, will eventually identify a problem; In order for students to attain liberation, they must face the problem and undergo a process of reflecting and acting and then start the process of transforming. A genuine dialogue, as portrayed in a horizontal teacher-student relationship, is mutually filled with love, humility, faith, hope, and critical thinking (p. 91).

One critique of the CLC pedagogical approach is that teachers used banking approaches; However, during the interviews with students and teacher-participants, both students and teachers insisted that the hosting families considered and treated brigadistas as family members. Other interviewees shared the manner in which adult students trusted them to teach despite the brigadistas' young age. Moreover, some brigadistas labored side-by-side with their students, sat alongside while their students were working in the field, or remained in the house helping the family with chores or teaching them healthy practices to avoid illnesses. For some scholars (Leiner, 1987; Prieto, 1981), this illustrates a knowledge exchange as urban youth learned the

countryside culture. I identify this exchange as an act of love, as teachers shared their skills with farmers, peasants, and their families, and included them in the process of creating a new nation. It is also an act of caring, as farmers, peasants, and their families opened their homes to host brigadistas and took unknown risks.

Therefore, this suggests that participants of the CLC (instructors and teachers) intended to (and indeed did) adopt humane attributes to treat and teach their students in a dialogical manner, as described by Freire. I would like to share excerpts from two students' rather touching letters archived in the MNA. Students expressed their feelings of empowerment, confidence, and pride as they became literate. Eugenio, an October 17, 1961 graduate, shared his pride in being able to write his own letter. Eleodoro, who graduated on November 17, 1961, expressed his ownership of and participation in the CLC, writing, "I fulfilled your [Fidel Castro] promise to the world and so will do other CLC's students" (Eleodoro, 1961):

I am writing this letter because I am proud of being Cuban and have learned in the Year of Education. I fulfilled the promise you made to the world (that in 1961 Cuba would not have one illiterate), and all Cubans, who are illiterate, will fulfill it as well (Eleodoro, 1961).

I write the letter you requested with my own hands. I thank you and the socialist revolution for have sent the CLC to the countryside and have given the opportunity I have never had before of reading and writing (Eugenio, 1961).

Figures 4.5. CLC Teaching and Learning Environments



Figures 4.6. Brigadistas Instructing a Group of Cotton Pickers During their Break



From the JMNL archives. Used with Permission.

The photographs above were scanned from *Bohemia* and *National Institute of Agrarian*

Reform (INRA) magazines, both from 1961. Figure 4.5. depicts a Rebel Army (ER) soldier, writing phonemes in the blackboard under his teacher's supervision. The teacher is standing next to him.

According to focus group teacher-participant Berarda, a large number of the ER soldiers were illiterate, even though literacy work had been conducted since 1956 when the rebels, led by Fidel, entered Cuba from Mexico. Figures 4.6 captures two brigadistas talking to a group of cotton pickers (men, women, and children) during their labor break in the cotton fields. The picture's caption reads, "Benito and Lucia get up in the truck. Benito speaks with simple and clear words about the importance of education. 1961, the Year of Education." Figures 4.7 and 4.8 display, respectively, an 88-year-old retired teacher instructing a small group of CLC students in her house, and a revolutionary militant instructing a prisoner-student.

Figure 4.7. Retired Teacher Instructing Students in Her House

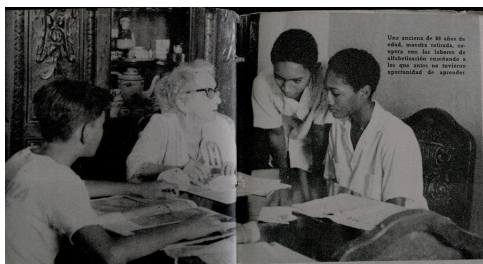
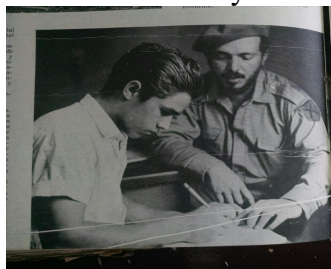


Figure 4.8. Rebel Army Soldier Teaching a Counterrevolutionary Prisoner



From the JMNL archives. Used with permission.

These snapshots provide us with information about the students and teachers, how the class layout was established, and perhaps how instruction was approached, but I have no evidence, other than in a few cases, that lessons were delivered with anything but a lot of care, which indicates the presence of a horizontal student-teacher relationship as a whole, instead of a banking model.

Raúl Ferrér urged coordinators and heads of brigadista units to closely supervise the last stage of the CLC. He pleaded with them to use non-military approaches with volunteer youth during the CNA Congress in September of 1961. Instead, he recommended employing guidance, which I interpret as presenting facts and explaining expectations, rather than demanding that tasks be accomplished without any clarification (Congreso Nacional de Alfabetización, 1961).

In addition, the teacher-participants I interviewed and the former brigadistas portrayed in *Maestra* declared their participation was an act of love. These statements suggest the presence of love, one essential component in a horizontal relationship between student and teacher (Freire, 1970: 1974). To love requires humility; Love calls for hope; Love is connected with faith in people. Banking and dialogue are antagonist concepts, and Freire deemed domination/conquest, regimented/ordered, depositing/prescription, and cultural invasion as human attributes against love, faith, humility, and hope. This is evident in accounts of how humanely the CLC endeavor treated people.

Generative Words Versus Active/Passive Words

Reading Methods and Active-Passive Words

The last instructional component regarding the methods and words used in the textbook *Venceremos* are the selection of words and themes. According to Lorenzetto & Neys (1964), the literacy materials available at the time of the campaign included the Laubach Method, Ideophonic,²² and Maria L. Soler's words method. The words in *Venceremos* were categorized as either *active* or *passive* (Lorenzetto & Neys, 1964; Kozol, 1978; Prieto, 1981). Lorenzetto & Neys describes active words as words containing strong emotional reactions, such as "love or longing, ecstasy or rage" (1964) to farmers and peasants. Passive words, on the other hand, were words familiar to students, but not often used in formal communication (Kozol, 1978). As indicated in his book, the acronyms "OEA" and "INRA", from the first two lessons of the textbook, functioned as active words, as they contained explosive social meaning for students (1978). However, Kozol (1976) does not provide information on how these words were selected or how they were used throughout the textbook.

Aiming to better understand the curriculum in its entirety, I created Table 4.7 and organized the lesson titles, the word that would be decoded and its corresponding decoded syllables and included one sentence containing words for use during lessons and the central topics. I organized the central topics based on the readings in the teacher manual, and they reflected the overall topics addressed in each reading.

²² Ideophonic method is a literacy device evoking sensory events, such as sound, taste, visual effects, smell, gait, and it suggests action, quality, etc. It is part of the language repertoire in many Asian and African language and also present in English. It is often confused with onomatopoeia.

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/ideophone>

In my attempt to uncover the rationale for the selection of words and the sentences' main idea, I was unable to determine the criteria used to select the words. Although I did not find the 3000-vocabulary word study conducted in 1960, it is likely that the decoded words used in the student textbook derived from that list and function as the active words. Additionally, the words were placed in sentences, but it is unclear how the sentences were created and what process was used to do so. Such information would be important in the examination of the CLC curriculum from Freire's stance. Freire's epistemology explains the process of choosing the words and how to create the sentences and text within a context that is full of meaning, which in turn, generates a rich conversation.

Table 4.7. Sequencing of 13 Lessons Taught, the Syllabus Used in each Lesson, and the Central Topic.

	Lesson Title	Sentences and Selected Words	Central Topics
1	OEA - Organización de los Estados Americanos	Organización de los Estados Americanos a, e, i, o, u	International relations, solidarity, imperialism
2	INRA – Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria	La Reforma Agraria la, re, for, ma (la reforma)	Housing: Elimination of unused land, land distributed to farmers and peasants, no landlord
3	Las cooperativas de la Reforma Agraria	Los campesinos trabajan en la cooperativa co, pe, ra, ti, va (cooperativa)	Economy: People working in cooperatives
4	La Tierra	Los campesinos cultivan su tierra si, nos, rra (campesinos, tierra)	Housing, production/economy: Peasants working on their land
5	Los Pescadores Cubanos	La cooperativa pesquera ayuda al pescador que, yu, da (pesquera, ayuda)	Economy: Fishing business in fishermen hands
6	La Tienda del Pueblo	El campesino compra bueno y barato en la tienda del pueblo ba, blo (bueno, pueblo)	Economy: People's store, local store, equitable prices

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7	Cada Cubano Dueño de su Casa	No habrá bohíos ni solares en años venideros ha, bra, ños (habrá, años)	Housing: Improved Housing and Sanitation conditions
8	Un Pueblo Sano en una Cuba Libre	El médico lucha junto al pueblo cha, jun (lucha, junto)	Work: Professionals and people support each other side-by-side
9	INIT – Instituto Nacional de la Industria Turística	Cuba expone su belleza al mundo ex, lle, za (expone, belleza)	Patriotism: National pride, tourism
10	La Milicias	Un miliciano vigilante y disciplinado gi, ci, pli (vigilante, disciplinado)	Patriotism, values: work ethics, volunteerism
11	La Revolución Gana Todas las Batallas	Ganamos la libertad guiados por Fidel ga, gui (ganamos, guiados)	Nationalism: national pride
12	El Pueblo Trabaja	Los obreros producen. La industria crece pro, tri, cre (producen, industria, crece)	Economy: Workers produce, for industrial growth
13	Cuba No Está Sola	Unidos venceremos la agresión. No podrán frenar la Revolución gre, dran, fre (agresión, podrán, frenar)	Unity, International solidarity

CLC and Language Issues for Non-Spanish Speakers

Item number 5 of the report generated by the CNA states that the 3.9% of CLC non-graduates included the 25,000 Haitians students "unable to learn" (CNA, 1961). I have no additional information on what skills domain they were unable to learn. They probably spoke Spanish; In fact, I met one Haitian CLC student in Santiago de Cuba who graduated from CLC and spoke Spanish with me. Julian, a teacher-participant and CB brigadista during the CLC, shared his struggles with teaching Haitians students. He stated:

[There were difficult times] especially with the Haitian [students]. It was difficult; they had their accent. They spoke some Spanish, but it was not too clear. But in the camp, I worked with another brigadista who was older than me, and we both taught the class

together to the Haitians. Anyway, the three students graduated (personal communication, 2016).

Julian was clearly addressing the challenges students had in learning a second language.

Learning in another language would require more time and/or additional support. According to research, young students learn a new language faster. With additional support from another older brigadista, the Haitian students were able to graduate. Julian did not know how to describe if the older brigadista was a professional teacher or someone with more experience in teaching than him.

All in all, this section addressed the items related to the curriculum, the creation of materials, its sequencing, and issues related to the instruction in the context of the evolving Cuban Revolution. This chapter unveiled issues, such as the creation of the curriculum, essential to framing the CLC from Freire's epistemology.

Assessment

Assessing Performance and Students Placement

The CLC assessment was conducted three times (initial, intermediate and final) to assess the progression and complexity of students' skills over time. The language domains contained in the assessment were writing (name and address), reading, dictation (reading fluency), and reading comprehension. The final additional literacy task was to write a letter to Fidel Castro, which for some students, was a request to continue in the program that followed the CLC, titled *Seguimiento*; They would receive a textbook to continue their studies. Teachers and instructors volunteering for the CLC were encouraged to observe and gauge students' progress rather than give them a grade. Grades were given by the brigadista unit technical advisor. The *Record and Documents of the Literacy Campaign – Instructions for the Literacy Teacher*, a letter to CLC teachers provided by Kozol (1978) quoted:

These tests are not graded, because grading does not accurately measure the progress of the pupil. The teacher (“alfabetizador”) is the only one who knows how the pupil is progressing and what are his difficulties. Because of its revolutionary quality, our Campaign is clean and honest. Your work should equal it, “alfabetizador” (Kozol, 1978).

Students were identified within three categories: 1) the non-literate or pre-literate: students unable to complete any of the exercises from the initial assessment; 2) the part-literate: students capable of completing the first three exercises or able to read but unable to write; and 3) the literate: students who met the requirements in the pre-test. The student-participant Joel’s anecdote provides us with evidence that the placement of students included an individual interview with each Cuban qualified as a student.

Joel, a Self-taught Student

After being screened for placement, Joel did not qualify as a CLC student. Joel shared his excitement with the triumph of the Revolution and the changes in education underway, as he longed to attend formal schooling. The Revolution was going to build a big school with three classrooms in the farm nearby. He took the placement test on three separate days. On the third day, the teacher asked him to write a composition. Joel recounts:

This was done for the teacher to verify who knows something and who doesn’t know anything ... [It] was a coincidence the only letter I wrote, the letter I wrote my brother ... as usual I was playing when I was writing ... so I wrote the letter with “20,000 spelling mistakes,” a lot of spelling mistakes, no commas, where I should use “s” I placed “c” ... but she perfectly understood my letter (personal communication, 2016).

Then the teacher said to Joel, “Let’s see, Joel, what you know.” As Joel walked towards the blackboard and picked up the chalk, he thought to himself, “what do I know?” The teacher told him, “Write one half.” Joel gave me an inquisitive look and said, “what can I do?” and commented that he probably wrote the correct answer. The teacher then remarked, “... you will need to fill out the spreadsheet for her (another teacher) to teach reading and writing to countryside peasants.” Joel’s teacher meant he did qualify to teach or be a student. Joel told me he could not understand the rationale behind it. He had not attended school in the past, so he believed he did not have any knowledge. According to Joel, the teacher insisted, “No, no, no. Stop fooling me. All you need to do is to complete the spreadsheet to teach in the countryside because this place is for those who don’t know how to read and write” (personal communication, 2016).

Joel’s initial placement did not accurately reflect his skills, and he was dismissed as a CLC student after taking the placement assessment. He shared that he grew up teaching himself. From the initial assessment until the point where brigadistas were recruited to teach, Joel set up a system to learn from others at work who were literate. As a student, Joel did not fit perfectly in any of the student expectations categories in table 4.8.

Lorenzetto & Neys (1964) reported the tasks students were expected to complete. These learning expectations were described again during Raul Ferrer’s speech at the National Literacy Congress (CNA):

Who is the illiterate? A comrade, who follows their revolutionary tasks; they finish the entire [CLC] textbook; they can read simple themes and can write enough words for a letter to Fidel Castro... (Congreso Nacional de Alfabetización, 1961).

In addition to the CNA learning expectations, conference attendees defined the planning stages. I learned that these expectations varied from student to student as teachers and brigadistas worked with them. Teacher-participants Carlito and brigadista Gina (from the *Maestra* documentary) shared the challenges some students faced. For instance, for students lacking confidence in their learning, Carlito would attempt to give them incentives by telling them that signing their names was the most liberating literacy task. On the other hand, Gina recounted her student's struggle to hold a pencil to write, as his hands were disfigured from holding heavy working tools in the countryside. Both brigadistas realized students' limitations and made modifications to facilitate learning. The table below (Table 4.8) attempts to illustrate the levels of expectations shared during the interviews and in my archival research.

I used the information provided by students during the interview and synthesized Level A. For Level B, I used the descriptors described by Raúl Ferrer during the CNA Conference in September of 1961. Level A represents the minimum skills required by students, as explained by Gina and Carlito. Level B is the mid-level, in which students display all skills but have not mastered them. Level C represents a level of mastery of all skills.

Table 4.8. The CLC Levels of Expectations

Level A	Writing: Sign name or not Basic Reading Notions of cultural and revolutionary knowledge
Level B	Finish student textbook Read simple themes Letter writing reflecting cultural and revolutionary knowledge
Level C	Finish student textbook Read simple and complex themes Write letters with details and understand cultural/revolutionary knowledge

After the completion of textbook lessons, students were expected to write a letter to Fidel Castro. I collected 15 letters from the MNA archives and a few additional ones either published in Cuban magazines or on display in museums. Most of the letters I collected contained different messages based on students' post-literacy reflections. The content and length varied slightly from one letter to another. Figure 4.9 is a sample of a letter to Fidel Castro. Translated, it reads:

Venegas, November 28, 1961.

Dr. Fidel Castro,

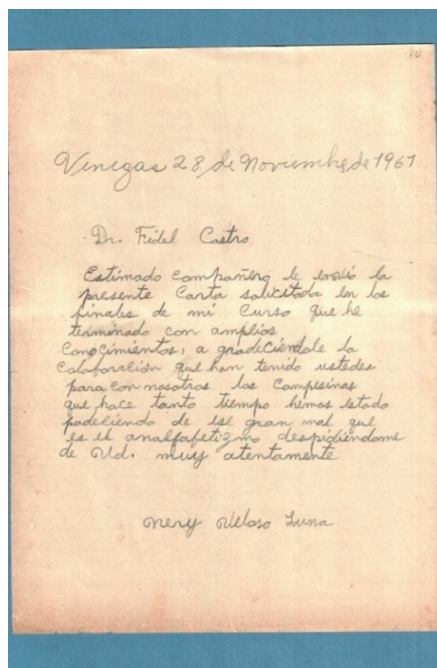
Esteemed comrade I write this present letter requested at the end of CLC, which I have ended with ample knowledge. I am thankful for your [the government] collaboration with us, the peasants, who for a long time have been suffering from this harm, the illiteracy. Farewell to you. Kind regards,

Nery Veloso Luna

This letter is written by Nery. Nery noticed changes and described them; "I am thankful for your [the government] collaboration with us, the peasants, who for a long time have been

suffering from this harm, the illiteracy.” I interpret his last phrase, “who for a long time have been suffering from this harm, the illiteracy,” as a message of hope.

Figure 4.9. Sample of a letter to Fidel Castro



From the MNA archives. Used with permission.

In Chapter 4, I defined the CLC as a campaign that included participants with learning issues, medical/disability issues, and linguistic/racial diversities. Although the teaching materials and student textbook were considered the official and only existing curriculum, I argue that research-participants' membership in the mass political organizations in 1960 contributed to the socio-political development of participants' critical education. Student and teacher-participants who were affiliated with these organizations held considerable opinions about their community and government. For instance, Gutiérrez, Carlito, Solana, Olivia, Mirna, and Calisto, all volunteers in organizations, made connections about certain community activities in relation to

the larger context of the Cuban Revolution. These affiliations unquestionably contributed to participants' socio-political awareness.

Furthermore, the CLC materials suggest that the revolutionary knowledge was organized using the real occurrences from contemporary Cuba, and it was aligned with the literacy skills to be taught. The images in the student textbook and on the posters used in class contained imaginings of the improvements and conveyed a hopeful tone. Therefore, research-participants provided evidence of non-textual/oral discussions taking place with students during and after class about socio-political issues, which suggests that content learning of cultural and revolutionary knowledge and notions took place.

In my analysis of the student textbook and teacher manual from Freire's pedagogical stance, the content of the lessons was associated with the student's reality, which in turn, facilitated the engagement of students in learning. A component that remains unclear is the criteria in which the main thoughts of each lesson were selected in the student textbook, as well as the oral readings from the teacher manual. I presume that the thoughts and ideas in the student textbooks correspond to Freire's generative themes. According to Freire, these themes emerge after an exhaustive process of exploring the meanings contained in the words, suggesting a significant amount of time was dedicated to researching the generative themes and words. I consider the unveiling of these criteria, especially for process of selecting the generative themes and parts of the CLC's active and passive selection criteria, topics for future research.

Chapter 5: Findings: Analysis from Participants' Experiences

In this chapter, I share my findings on the emergent themes in my analysis. I found two main points from participants response: 1) horizontal relationships eliciting human attributes and 2) volunteerism (participation) and empowerment: giving labor, time, and space. I highlight the gender (woman) and racial empowerment as well as the motivation to continue studying.

Horizontal Relationships Eliciting Human Attributes

As I described in Chapter 2, Freire (1970; 2000) defined the student-teacher relationships as horizontal, but not equal. Traces of domination were non-existent, and as teacher-participant Julian shared, “we went to teach literacy, and we returned literate” (personal communication, 2016). The relationships elicited students and teachers’ human attributes, such as love, humility, faith, hope, and critical thinking. Students and teacher-participants in this study articulated the improvements to their lives as one major impact of the Revolution. As I listened to participants stories during interviews, many credited their feelings of personal fulfillment to having their basic needs (material and tangible) met and their participation in the advancement of humanity. In the next pages, I share findings derived from the interviews of students, teachers, and organizing committee members. Table 3.4 in Chapter 3 displays the teacher profiles.

“It was an Act of Love”

In most of my encounters with Cubans who performed the role of teacher-participant during the CLC, whether casual or clinical, both participants and ordinary Cubans proudly recounted the CLC’s success. For many, it was an act of love! As a scholar examining the CLC from the critical literacy perspective, this phrase suggests that, perhaps, some aspects of this student-teacher horizontality were present. For other students, it may be that they felt cared for.

For instance, Nery's letter provides no description of how his class was conducted, but when he says, "I am thankful for your [the government] collaboration with us, the peasants, who for a long time have been suffering from this harm, the illiteracy," it suggests he, as a peasant, felt cared for.

"They Esteemed Me as Their Own Child"

One interview included both student and teacher-participants. According to teacher-participant Ramiro (2016), love manifested through actions and his placement in the family. Ramiro shared how his students, a couple living in Baracoa, treated him like a family member. Ramiro explained:

50 years ago, Cuban families from the countryside were not used to hosting a young stranger from the city in their house. When peasants had no political [knowledge] development, when they were unfamiliar with the Revolution, it was not easy. To host a young man (stranger) in their house was not easy. And I earned to be accepted 54 years ago when we met, when they embraced me as their son (personal communication, 2016).

Ramiro earned his students' respect enough to be considered part of their family. In fact, when his male student was dying a few years after the CLC, he was called to join the farewell. As he recounted his student's words about him, Ramiro said, "this [man] (referring to Ramiro) who is here is like a brother for all of you because he was like a son to me!" (2016). Ramiro said his student's family was still very special to him to this very day; he visits them from time to time, as an 80-year-old female student of his lives in Havana with her children today. Ramiro presents the family with gifts on his visits and maintains contact with his "adopted sister" (2016) every now and then.

Students and Teachers Working under Dangerous Conditions

The following instance relates to the conditions surrounding teacher-participants who taught in the countryside and the role the students' families played in protecting them. Teachers who worked in these regions expressed being treated like family in the instances where their students' families had to protect them against the Revolution's opposing party. At the time, the opposition was murdering brigadistas and students, especially those with active political roles. Teacher-participants worked in dangerous conditions and were very afraid of counterrevolutionary attacks, though the level of fear varied by person.

Student-participant Alondra reported that peasants and farmers hid brigadistas under beds as the enemies came knocking at their doors. As stated earlier, the attacks occurred in Cienfuegos (province of Bay of Pigs), Villa Clara, and Fomento (part of Sancti Spirits' province), in an area also known as Escambray. Students also showed great support and solidarity to teachers under these conditions, evidenced by their presence after the murders of Manuel Ascunce and Pedro Lantigua.

Love can be interpreted as a human characteristic, and Freire (1970; 2003) often refers to love as one of the qualities that results from student-teacher horizontal relationships. When teachers as oppressors lose the dominant role, they embody a solidary role and "enter into the situation of those whom one is solidary" (p. 49). In alignment with this thought, Gutstein (2006a), a scholar in mathematics education for social justice, described his teaching relationship with students as "political relationships" (2006a). In his view, student-teacher relationships allow teachers to take active political stances on students' issues; teachers could read, discuss, and analyze the students' current situation with them, or join social movements with them (2006a).

Feeling Gratitude

The literacy campaign for me was the starting point of my development as a human being. The experience living with the peasants, watching their needs, their lifestyle, afforded another mindset for me. My mindset changed completely, the way one works, as I lived with the peasants.

—Julian, 2016

In the anecdote above, Julian describes his gratitude for having participated in the campaign. He was assigned to teach farmers, including some from Haiti, in his native region of Oriente Province. Julian explained that the campaign taught him moral values. Additionally, peasants' ethical values as workers, and their determination, perseverance, and sacrifices, helped Julian normalize his own challenges:

With the farmer's perseverance of rising at dawn, with this love to milk cows and bring milk so I could have milk, leaving to the countryside almost at dawn, work in the land with limited farm tools, this "wild monster" (the challenges) for them was natural ... I lived these moments. Look, these were teachings that no one, not even my father would tell me (personal communication, 2016).

Rogelia, another teacher-participant and former popular teacher²³ who taught in her community at age 12, explained an unforgettable childhood memory from the arrival of the Cuban Revolution:

I was doing laundry and felt, as they said through the radio the Revolution had triumphed. The only thought I had was to have a doll because I have never had a doll.

²³ Popular teacher or people's teacher (Prieto, 1981)—there were 120,000 literate housewives, workers, and students.

Nevertheless (she got teary eyed), the Revolution gave me everything. It gave me a home, education, and made me think I am a person (personal communication, 2018)

Rogelia said the Revolution gave each child three toys, one of which was a doll. As a child, she longed to have a doll, but Rogelia she was not chosen to receive one in a lottery. She expressed several reasons she felt such gratitude for the Revolution:

The Revolution started giving children the right to own three toys. We had the right to have three toys ... I picked up my three toys; and among these three toys, I had a doll. I studied, thank you for the Revolution. I became a teacher with good outcomes. I stayed for five years, I left the school and worked in a multigrading class when I was 16 years old. We were in a boarding school in the peasant's home. It reminded me of the literacy campaign (personal communication, 2018).

With her years of experience in teaching, Rogelia declared that a shift in her perception toward adult students occurred after the CLC. She no longer perceived the peasant families living deep in the mountains as neglected and deprived; The Revolution gradually changed this perception among many students. Rogelia's female students learned faster than her male students; Not only were they interested in the discussion topics, they had more opportunities to talk casually before and after classes, an opportunity Rogelia also had as a 12-year-old discussing women's potential in society. As she concluded, Rogelia expressed that her main goal was to teach students to think.

Finally, all letters written to Fidel Castro as part of the CLC's final assessment—whether in short or long sentences; a paragraph or two in length—expressed students' gratitude to Fidel. Letters revealed students' literacy advancement and reflected their understanding of political knowledge and cultural views. Table 5.1 displays the contents of 13 students' letters I collected

from the MNA and the data I obtained from archives in the public domain represented in bullet points.

Table 5.1. Letters to Fidel Castro containing students' names and a summary of the letters' content

Student Name Letter Date	Letter to Fidel Castro - Content
Yoribio Sept. 27, 1961	Thankful twice: a. for giving back land to work (displaced 10 years ago) b. for organizing the CLC and helping us to read and write and never be fooled again
Eredio (16 yrs.) Sept. 12, 1961	a. proud of being able to write the letter b. thankful for being allowed to read and write like others
Alejo (37 yrs.) Sept. 26, 1961 16 yrs. brigadista	a. happy and delighted for being able to read and write in the new Cuba b. will join the militia to help protect the country against attacks
Ricardo (76 yrs.) Oct. 16, 1961	a. 76 yrs. of age, joined the CLC as the revolution demanded b. mentioned brigadista and 6 peers c. Cuba becoming a literate nation thanks to the committed youth who taught in the city and countryside
Eugenio Oct. 17, 1961	a. letter written with his own hands b. thankful to Fidel and the revolution for sending CLC to countryside c. given the opportunity to read and write; he never had it before
Eleodoro Nov. 17, 1961	a. proud of being Cuban and learning to read and write b. Fidel's promise fulfilled by him and all of CLC's students
Juaquina Sept. 29, 1961	a. expressing thankfulness for gaining literacy with a popular instructor b. requesting <i>Seguimiento</i> book to continue studying
Rafaela Oct. 5, 1961	a. Grateful to the CLC for eradicating illiteracy; first government to invest in literacy; the inconvenience of people's literacy—it would awaken people to exploited conditions

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	b. grateful for Fidel Castro and the CB brigades
Elena Oct. 9, 1961	a. reporting to Fidel her capability to read and write b. daughter taught her under another teacher's guidance
Anicia (15 yrs.) Oct. 13, 1961	a. could not attend regular school, as it was too far from home b. proud of becoming literate with a 16-year-old teacher; wanted to continue studying c. thankful; never dreamed it would happen
Gloria Nov. 10, 1961	a. happy with the revolution b. overcame illiteracy; thankful to instructor
Nery Nov. 28, 1961	a. sending requested letter with ample knowledge b. thankful for farmer and government collaboration; suffering from being a longtime illiterate ended
Carmen Nov. 12, 1961	a. happy for becoming literate; learned in a short time b. husband's gratitude for the socialist revolution; lives better and they are equal now
Felipe (pilot prog) June 19, 1961	a. revolution brought freedom, gave land and work, ascended people, secured students and their children's future b. learned to write and say ¡Viva Cuba!

In the letters collected at the MNA, students expressed their highest regard for the Revolution's success in teaching them to read and write. Then they expressed their gratitude for the instructors, for the peasants getting their land back, for families living in better conditions after the Revolution, for the government giving incentives to collaborate with farmers, for the Revolution being the first government not afraid of investing in people's literacy and awareness process, and for illiteracy.

The next three excerpts are from letters sent by CLC students Eleodoro, Eugenio, and Rafaela to Fidel Castro that I obtained in the MNA:

The promise you made to the world [of Cuba having no illiterates in 1961] was fulfilled by me, and it will be fulfilled by all Cubans who are illiterate (Eleodoro, 1961).

I write the letter you requested with my own hands. I thank you and the socialist revolution for having sent the CLC to the countryside and giving the opportunity I have never had before to read and write (Eugenio, 1961).

I am so grateful with your grandiose campaign to eradicate illiteracy as no other government had invested in it since it would not be convenient that the entire country knew how to read and write. They would know they could no longer exploit and cheat (Rafaela, 1961).

Positioning himself as a subject bringing change to Cuba, Eleodoro alluded to his fulfillment of the CLC's goal in becoming literate. He was proud to have learned through the CLC. Eugenio also expressed his pride for having written the letter to Fidel himself. He addressed the issue of inequity as the Revolution ensured the CLC reached Cubans in the long-neglected countryside. Rafaela's letter carried a tone of reflection and understanding of the government's goal of educating the Cuban people. She accurately assessed the Revolution as "the first government investing in literacy" (1961), as the CLC carried two important elements of the literacy campaign's triumph: political will linked with a mass approach (Bhola, 1981). In addition, Cuba's goal of eradicating illiteracy dates back to the 1935 Constitution. The 1961 CLC was the first campaign involving the entire nation, but the Cuban Revolution conducted literacy work since its inception, first with ER soldiers, and then with a literacy initiative in the *Casas de las Américas* in Havana under the leadership of Reverend Fernández Ceballos. Cuba continued to implement education initiatives through higher education.

These three students were able to express in writing their positions as subjects or agents of change in the Revolution and moved away from an oppressed positionality. In fact, Rafaela articulated the revolutionary government's adoption of a dialogical approach (Freire, 1970) when she openly stated that the government fearlessly sought to raise people's consciousness as it taught uneducated Cubans to read and write (Rafaela, 1961). Moreover, when individuals perceived themselves as subjects in control and displayed critical readings of the world, I posit they were practicing a liberatory praxis in a collective process of struggle.

Julian and Rogelia's anecdotes and letters to Fidel illustrate participants' expressions of gratitude. Students seemed to understand gratitude as a human attribute from the horizontal relationship between brigadistas and students. Teacher-participant and former CB brigadista Gutiérrez explained the outcomes of this horizontal relationship from a broader stance of culture:

When you are grateful, you are valuing or assessing Fidel's project, and this is culture.

Students may be unable to interpret the value of a literary work, but they are able to assess the received benefit [from the literacy project]. When students say, "thank you," this is culture because they understand the value of something (personal communication, 2018).

As he explained the steps involved in the process of feeling grateful, Gutiérrez framed this behavior as a new culture for farmers and peasants that, while unfamiliar to them, allowed them to function in society. Although Gutiérrez's statement may suggest that farmers and peasants had no culture prior to the Revolution, if interpreted from Martí's context of *being cultured is to be free*, their *new* culture may simply refer to their ability to function in civil society and avoid marginalization. As some student-participants stated, illiterate people were marginalized as a result of their mystical and naïve explanations for basic scientific knowledge.

According to Gutiérrez, Cubans' gratitude towards the Revolution and Fidel Castro for conducting the CLC transformed into culture. The feeling of gratefulness was not uncommon among post-literate Cubans. For Gutiérrez, the act of showing appreciation meant students were able to assess the value of the CLC project and the CLC's direct benefit to them. When unveiling the layers beneath the feelings of gratitude, I realized that the beneficiaries of the CLC had internalized the process of valuing, feeling thankful, and giving thanks. Moreover, as farmers and peasants understood their role in and contributions to the agricultural economy, they gained a sense of liberation they had not experienced, similar to Freire's conceptualization of culture.

Freire (1970) describes the understanding of the position of men/women in relation to society as a mark of culture. The new perception of their role in relation to a national context became possible because the farmers and peasants were reading the world, a step toward obtaining socio-political consciousness, as described in Freire's praxis. For Gutiérrez, when students accomplished some *notions of culture*, they have reached the CLC political goal of becoming a new Cuban man/woman or cultured, as idealized by José Martí. Moreover, students and teachers immersed in the cultural praxis achieved the political goal of the campaign, as they incorporated the process of acting through experiencing and reflecting through interiorizing, rather than demonstrating externally shaped behaviors.

The Eliciting of Human Attributes and Dialogical Mode

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, *banking*, *dialogue*, and *praxis* are essential concepts of Freire's (1970; 2003) pedagogy towards the liberation of the oppressed. Banking occurs during a vertical teacher-student relationship, where teachers are positioned as the knowledge holders and students merely recipients of their knowledge. Quite the reverse, an education towards the students' liberation contains dialogue. A dialogue permits the unveiling,

recognizing, and naming of the world. According to Freire, naming of the world occurs when students begin to identify the problems that antagonize them through the process of confronting them, and in order for students to move toward liberation, they must face the problem and make a change. A genuine dialogue portraying a horizontal teacher-student relationship is mutually filled with love, humility, faith, hope, and critical thinking (Freire, 1970; 2003). Praxis, which is the continuous process of acting and reflecting or, as I word it, experiencing and internalizing, will allow students to reinvent.

Another important element of the anti-dialogical approach of banking is what Freire (1970) terms “cultural invasion:”

... it is thus always an act of violence against the persons of the invaded culture, who lose their originality or face the threat of losing it. In cultural invasion the invaders are the authors of, actions in, the process; those they invade are objects (p.152)

The cultural invasion approached the CLC mostly from the pedagogical viewpoint. However, I expand the discussion of banking and cultural invasion from the materials and knowledge standpoint. I provide evidence that the CLC included partial local histories, as opposed to a foreign (e.g., Eurocentric) approach. Lesson five in the student manual contained indigenous names and words from the civilization living in Cuba before Spanish colonization. This lesson, titled “The Cuban Fishermen” also mentioned the bodies of water named after indigenous peoples, Yara and Yumuri, which also coincided with the lesson’s syllables “yu-ya-ye-yi-yo.”

Lesson six, “People’s Stores,” addressed the indigenous culture (past history). It discussed Cuban festivities, traditions, and additional indigenous Cuban words. Finally, lesson seven,

“Every Cuban, a Homeowner” dealt mostly with housing issues, including the elimination of substandard housing, and described the indigenous people of Cuba, highlighting Hatuey, a Cuban indigenous hero. In sum, the CLC curriculum included part of their people’s history.

Raúl Ferrér spoke to and urged a mixed approach within the Brigadistas’ Responsible Teams during the CNA conference in September of 1961. As the CLC approached its last stage, the campaign needed to closely supervise the monitoring style of the brigadistas. During Ferrér’s conference speech, he pleaded with the Responsible Teams to use non-military command approaches, a style Cuba no longer employed with youth brigadistas in 1961. As he said:

Sometimes the Responsible (the manager of the brigadista unit) doesn’t have a good orientation, and carry over a militaristic concept, which can be charming if it is similar to the popular army style in Cuba, but sometimes they use techniques and manners that are obsolete among us. They act in a commanding pose and disturb and mortify a lot, ending up debilitating their work and their relations with the council. (Congreso Nacional de la Alfabetización, 1961).

Instead, Ferrér recommended employing guidance, which in this study I interpret as presenting facts and explaining expectations, rather than demanding tasks be accomplished without any clarification:

The Council helping a brigade is known here as the council that takes care and protects, has control over the brigade but monitors in good manners seeking the best tools for the male and female youth to feel well, and conducts their work happily, with discipline and in harmony with their Responsible. (Congreso Nacional de Alfabetización, 1961).

To summarize, I would like to begin with the contributions of this study to answer my research questions. Drawing on participants' responses, the first theme that emerged was the manifestation of horizontal relationships between students and teachers and among students themselves. I named this process horizontality. Student-participants expressed their feelings of being loved and cared for by brigadistas and the Cuban Revolution. The perception of being loved was higher among student-participants than among teacher-participants in this study. Most of the teacher-participants in this study communicated that their role was to serve the country and perform a public good in response to Fidel Castro's call to participate, as they taught literacy skills to students.

Secondly, my findings indicated that the horizontal relationship between students and teachers contributed to their socio-political awareness development. Horizontality created opportunities for students (peasants, farmers, fisherman, and farmer's spouses) to share their expertise with brigadistas, many of whom were from urban areas. This accreditation for the students' labor skills was critical for both students and teachers creating leverage, and in turn, feeling valued. As mentioned earlier, the socio-political process entails the critical views of how one situates oneself in the larger context. Therefore, the peasants and farmers were able to view their contributions to the Cuban economy, and the brigadistas viewed themselves as contributors to the future of the New Cuba.

Volunteerism and Empowerment: Giving Labor, Time, and Space

Volunteerism (or participation) impacted student-participants' perception of *giving without any expectations*. Guevara was one of the strongest proponents of volunteerism. A photograph displaying him at work on Saturdays or Sundays is published in *Socialism and Man in Cuba*. According to this 1965 essay, Guevara believed Cuban socialism should focus on men (categorized broadly as human beings inclusive of women) from their moral aspects. The motto for the literacy of the ER during the guerrilla war in Sierra Maestra included three elements: study; work; and rifle. According to Guevara, work, volunteered or remunerated, was part of people's prosperous habits within the socialist belief (p. 37).

The CLC and Cuban Revolution massively incentivized Cubans' participation, impacting both brigadistas and students. Incentives in this case implies a moral notion of giving. During the celebratory event on December 22, 196—the end of the CLC—all brigadistas and campaign participants gathered in the Plaza de la Revolución in Havana (see figure 5.1 and 5.2). On that day, Fidel Castro declared Cuba a literate country. Brigadistas volunteered by choice for the campaign, some even going against parents' decisions and strong opposition of the church (Canfux Gutiérrez, 2007). Yet, in this celebratory event, brigadistas startled the country by massively attending the event and carrying a banner bearing the message, "Fidel, tell us what we should do next," displayed in figure 1.1 at the beginning of this study.

Figure 5.1. Brigadistas attending the CLC closing celebration carrying giant pencils



Figure 5.2. Families during the CLC



From the JMNL archives. Used with permission.

Fidel Castro's response to them was, "Study, study, and study!" (personal communication, Gutiérrez, 2018). Castro announced that Revolutionary Cuba was a nation in need of human resources, specifically professionals to move the country's economy. Professionals during Batista's government hastily left Cuba because they disagreed with land reform and the nationalization of properties belonging to foreign corporations and the very wealthy. Hence, young brigadistas needed to continue their education, whether to finish compulsory education (high school, career training, or college) or to develop knowledge to help rebuild Cuba. The government instituted additional programs for further studies immediately after the CLC. The revolutionary government prepared provisions for multilevel continuing education to advance students' skills. I address government educational organization and structure later in this section.

Students and teacher-participants referred to their experience serving in three political mass organizations throughout the interviews: the AJR; the CDR; and the FMC. The relevance of the participants' involvement and engagement in these mass organizations denoted their access to political knowledge or experiences, which might have impacted their community and

political activism. Therefore, the mass organizations' establishment date and approximate time of participants' affiliation will be essential for the analysis of the sociopolitical process of CLC participants.

Student-Participants: Conviction to serve

“I Collected 85 Pesos in Donation!”

The student-participants of this study worked for the FMC and CDR. Student-participant Olivia was an FMC and CDR member prior to the CLC, so she already had political notions about the future. In fact, Riza, the cultural facilitator who accompanied me to several student-participants interviews, explained that Olivia's town was politically educated. During Olivia's interview, Riza said, “I learned with the people in Santa Rita, with Pelin, with Mingo, who taught what communism was, which I did not know” (Olivia, 2018). A Santa Rita resident, Olivia had this to say about her hometown:

Santa Rita had lots of hills, a lot of misery [in a sad voice]. The fact that everyone had a brigadista in their homes ... it was not easy [for them]. They were very nice people, the young brigadistas (personal communication, 2018).

Despite the fact that Olivia lived through hardship, residents in her town provided revolutionary political education. Olivia was an active FMC member, a mother of a three-year-old child, and she recruited 45 women to become members of the FMC as well. Olivia told the story of Aurora, a woman who needed welfare. Olivia's experience with FMC allowed her to negotiate the FMC membership for this woman:

A woman, head of the house, told me she could not become a member, as she had two people with disabilities in her house, and only the son was working. I told her, “if you become a member, the revolution ought to help you. I will pay the FMC membership for

you while you wait for the government checkbook to arrive. I will pay for you.” So, the woman became a member, and I started searching, I have to figure out how I could help her. Yes, so I converted into a social worker. I went to see the man in charge who told me not to worry ... I went to Aurora and explained what was happening (personal communication, 2018).

The revolutionary government rewarded Cubans who volunteered in mass organizations in many ways. Olivia received a television as a gift for her ongoing volunteer work with the FMC. Olivia’s anecdote illustrates her awareness of her neighbor’s struggle, and in response, she created a plan to provide support to her fellow neighbor going through hardships very familiar to her own. Olivia explained:

We should organize a tour and ask people to donate. (...) she asked her mother to babysit her daughter, and she went to ask for donations for the woman. I collected 75 pounds of beans, 10 pounds of rice, “viandas.” Look, some people gave bananas, other gave me 5 pesos. That was a (...) I had to talk to the Responsible so he could take the donations to my house (...) and I have to talk to two to three FMC members so they could help deliver. I did this! This is a proof that when one has the intention, it does anything in life (personal communication, 2018).

Olivia said she collected 85 pesos in total. She articulated her thoughts well and remembered many details from past events. This was certainly an occasion that moved her emotionally. I recognize Olivia as a politically engaged student-participant who continued to learn about the issues affecting her neighbors and took initiative as an FMC leader to write the world, as Freire articulates in his theory. Olivia was 83 years of age at the time of the interview (see table 3.3 for additional information).

“I had to Motivate Myself (Guapear) to Live!”

Calisto, another student-participant, revealed receiving a television from the Revolution for his militancy in the CDR; He became one of the presidents of this organization. Calisto shared, however, that the beginning of his CDR volunteer work was not easy. He was unfamiliar with the tasks despite having received some political training as a resident of Santa Rita, the same town where Riza learned the foundations of communism and Revolution. Calisto declared:

I worked a lot of hours for the CDR. I worked collecting raw material. I worked my whole life, every year, month to month, I earned first place in the province, municipality, nation, I was an outstanding worker. ... With a pushcart/wheelbarrow, I collected raw material in the entire Tacajó. With a wheelbarrow, I collected and distributed an entire cart filled with this raw material. Some people from CDR helped me ... with doing the paperwork ... I always got first place. ... I was president of the CDR. They gave me a lot of gifts (personal communication, 2018).

Riza added, “they gave him a television set, like the one I have in my bedroom” (personal communication, Calisto, 2018).

Calisto finished the CLC classes and learned to sign his name and “write few things” (2018), but he discontinued the *Seguimiento*, the next literacy program for CLC graduates. Since the loss of his father at age 12, Calisto joined his widowed mother to work in the tobacco plantation to support the family. His notions of literacy prior to the CLC were the result of his father’s teachings. Calisto continued his studies later in life with his eldest son, the only family member who attended school, overseeing his education. Calisto knew he had intellectual abilities, but he did not continue them, as life demanded he work in the tobacco fields. He explained:

The brigadista gave classes in the morning, but I could not stay ... I did not study a lot. One of my cousins gave me some classes. He would say, “what a shame you could not study because you have all very clear [in your head]” (personal communication, 2018). Calisto continued, “I had to motivate myself (*guapear*) in order to live!” (personal communication, 2018). This expression can be interpreted as Calisto attempting to motivate himself in the absence of his father.

Calisto volunteered on many occasions in his life. Joining the CDR and volunteering to collect and supply raw materials after gathering them seemed to be a time commitment for the community's well-being. His nomination to become the CDR president, and his desire to continue being educated and cultured, were constantly present, reflecting his leadership and political preparation for the position. These actions, according to Freire, can be viewed as writing the world.

“I was Non-Literate, and Yet, The CDR President”

Mirna, another a student-participant committed to the Revolution, was ready for our early evening interview, as hers was the last on a day full of interviews. Mirna spoke fast, often pausing from one thought to the other, which gave me an opportunity to write notes. Mirna, like Olivia, joined and was active in one of the mass organizations, either the CDR or FMC. She explained that most of her learning took place while she served in that organization. Also, Mirna could not understand how she was chosen as a president despite her illiteracy:

I didn't study; there were people with immense culture. Why [was I chosen to be the community leader] me? I learned a lot when I was integrated to the FMC and CDR. Without knowing how to read and write, I was the CDR president for many years. I

attended meetings, participated in events in many different places. It is like “studying while working” (personal communication, 2016).

Mirna joined in 1960 and was one of the first CDR presidents from her town. She often mentioned her illiteracy as a CDR officer. Mirna attended CLC classes but was forced to stop due to the sudden death of her two-year-old. Her son contracted an illness and died within three days. This tragedy impacted her so much, she struggled to focus on and continue her studies:

I had four young children. At age 21 I had four children. God bless me I have four children, because I lost one. He died, my little boy. I was saddened, saddened, saddened to a point I could not fulfill this task the revolution had given me (personal communication, 2016).

Nevertheless, Mirna was grateful for the Revolution. Life was extremely hard for poor people. Mirna had worked since she was a girl picking coffee from the ground in the fields and making coal using primitive methods, all work more suitable for men, she proclaimed (personal communication, 2016). “I have lived to work” (2016) she proudly expressed as she explained how she made a living honorably instead of from illicit associations. Although Mirna did not mention receiving any incentives or gifts from the Revolution, I presume she did, as many volunteer public servants were compensated for their work.

During the first years of the Revolution, Mirna was reading and writing the world as a student-participant. It wasn't until a few years after the CLC when she began to read the words once she gained literacy. Nonetheless, she occupied a leadership position in one of the main mass organizations and worked in other leadership positions for many years. This means that the revolution permitted her progression into leadership roles instead of dismissing her for not fulfilling the revolutionary requirement of graduating from CLC. It is unclear why Mirna

remained in her leadership position, but since the Revolution planned to expand the educational system, they may have assumed that Mirna would eventually become literate, which is exactly what happened. Perhaps the crucial point here is that a reader and writer of the world would eventually seek to read the words as part of his/her own praxis process. In other words, as one feels liberated, he/she will continuously seek further empowerment that will lead to the end result.

Teacher-Participants: Conviction to Teach

In this section, I discuss students' and teacher-participants' impressions about volunteering during and after the CLC, as the topic frequently emerged during their interviews. Two teacher-participants, Solana and Carlito, disclosed they were members of AJR before joining the CLC. As described above, the AJR was a mass organization aiming to educate and preparing the youth to conduct tasks for societal improvement.

Solana, the Librarian: "I am the Red Sheep in the Family"

Solana revealed that she was considered a radical or the *red sheep* of the family; It is not surprising, then, that she started incorporating the values of the Revolution into her life. She secretly joined the AJR without her parents' knowledge and later enlisted herself as a CLC teacher, again without asking their permission. Solana commented, "I am the red sheep in the family" (personal communication, 2016). A daughter of Syrian and Spanish parents, Solana attended private schools and commented on her experience:

When you are educated in nun's schools, you fear everything. They started with the, campaign saying that if you join the campaign, if you go there, they will rape, kidnap you... But because I have always been like this, when I say, "I will go," I go! (personal communication, 2016).

As the radical daughter in the family, Solana already displayed signs of becoming a supporter of the Revolution, especially with her AJR membership. Adding on, Solana shared some of her life decisions during Cuba's transition to the Revolution. For instance, she chose to stay in Cuba while her parents and maternal relatives sought exile and a cousin decided to leave for the U.S. in the Peter Pan program.²⁴ Her only supporter was an aunt, who was also a proponent of the Revolution. From Freire's praxis of a critical literacy perspective, Solana displayed a reading of the world. She attended a catholic public school in Cuba, which would have constrained, not promoted, students' growth, but her decision to remain in Cuba while her parents left the country demonstrated that she was already reading and writing the world on an individual level.

Solana discussed her commitment to the revolution. As she was assigned to teach, she became ill and was sent to a hospital. Her decisive personality steered her to teach in the CLC's provisional hospital, a farmer's chicken coup. After the CLC, Solana continued her political work as a delegate of the Young Communists Organization and the Cuban Pioneers United (created in 1962). Today, as a retired accountant, Solana continues reading and writing the world as a volunteer librarian and researcher for a non-profit organization collecting Fidel Castro's speeches during the CLC. Even further, she facilitates continuing education workshops through the FMC for women with social dysfunctions.

²⁴ Operation Peter Pan was a mass exodus of 14,000 Cuban children from middle-class families to the U.S. This exodus was a result of the parents fear to leave their children growing up in the socialism regime after the Cuban Revolution. The first two exodus took place in 1960 and 1962 (Blakemore, 2019)

Carlito, the Biologist: “You Can’t Act Like Spider Man”

Carlito, teacher-participant and member of AJR before the CLC, participated in the literacy campaign at the age 16. He helped prepare a small AJR group attend Varadero’s training, but a few days before their departure, he asked his supervisor to join the group. His request was granted with the commitment that he returns to his workstation after the campaign. Carlito’s conviction can be seen in his request to attend the training in Varadero:

I told my superior in the organization, “I sent men and I want to work as a teacher alongside the people I prepare.” My superior responded “All right, we will allow this, but when it is over, you need to come back and you will work with them in another role. (personal communication, 2018).

Having been exposed to the revolutionary culture through his AJR membership, Carlito grasped the revolutionary vision very well. He understood that he could not act like “Spider Man”:

The people guiding the youth at that time followed the teachings passed down by Fidel, Camilo, Che, and Raúl, and you couldn’t act like *Spider Man*. We call the people in Cuba Spider Man, those who says “Look, I need to take down sugar cane for the revolution,” and then, he does not go to take it down, he sends people. Not us, we would say, “well, we need to recruit brigadistas” to my other comrades from classes (personal communication, 2018).

Carlito meant that the revolutionary teachings were founded on the idea of joining instead of sending people to resolve issues. “We would recruit” (personal communication, 2018). Solana reinforced these teachings in her anecdotes. She mentioned her two encounters with Fidel when he paid a visit to a state department where she worked.

As I analyzed the interviews, I noticed that both Solana and Carlito articulated well and in detail their anecdotes and encounters with Fidel Castro and other revolutionary events or moments. They mentioned how busy they were with AJR political activities, as well as with their leadership role in political organizations, which extended into their adulthood. Solana currently volunteers in an educational non-profit organization, as well as in the institutions served by the FMC. Carlito founded the militia in Sancti Spiritus. He currently serves as the President of the Pedagogical Institute in Sancti Spiritus and works in the Ministry of Environmental Sciences with his biology background.

Material Rewarding: A Controversy of Cuban Socialism

The concept of giving rewards during the revolution was not merely a material gift, but a gift containing implicit moral and ethical values—effort, loyalty, perseverance, or any other non-tangible values benefiting and geared toward the social good. Material rewards in a socialist society are controversial. Guevara (1968) and Castro (1968) discuss material rewards extensively, as rewards seemed necessary in certain instances of the Revolution. As Guevara explains:

... it is important to choose the right instrument for mobilizing the masses [to build communism.] ... Basically, the instrument must be moral in character, without neglecting, however, a correct use of the material incentive—especially of a social character. (p. 13)

In other words, when rewarding the people, the government must clarify the reason for providing the rewards to awardees. In socialism, rewards are not perceived as a commodity. Material rewards, especially during the transitional stages from capitalism to socialism, were a form of recompense for moral and ethical accomplishments (Guevara, 1968). Riza, and student-

participants Calisto and Olivia, reported that they received a television set from the government for their services in the CDR and FMC.

In addition, a television was an essential communication tool to maintain contact with Cubans living in isolated rural areas. The isolation of people living in the countryside was one of the major issues in Cuba during Batista's presidency, prior to the 1959 revolution. Similarly, an example of a reward from the revolution was the provision of glasses for the visually impaired. For instance, student-participant Clarita had a father who was blind, and yet he volunteered to cross the brigadistas to and from their campsite on a boat. One of the former brigadistas who also took the boat declared during the interview, "There was a hole in the boat, and Alfredo (Clarita's father) used his tact and removed the water from the boat when the boat was in the middle of the bay" (2016). The revolution rewarded many Cubans for their volunteer work, if not all of them. Therefore, gift-giving or rewarding can be interpreted as the creation of a new culture in which men and women were acknowledged for their solidarity to each other in relationship to a larger project that benefits everyone. In these two examples, the gifted items were associated with people's basic needs.

In sum, the anecdotes in this section highlight the volunteer experiences of students and teacher-participants. I discussed how volunteering seemed to be conducive for some participants to take an initiative. Also in this section, I alluded to the fact that both volunteering and the rewarding, as moral values, were inculcated in Cubans as a human attribute of the new Cuban man and woman becoming part of revolutionary culture.

More Empowerment: The Protagonist Role of Women

In my search to understand the socio-political process of participants, I learned how the phenomenon materialized differently among them. In this section, I address participants' experiences. Some women may have reached the starting point of the CLC aware of the range of their limitations and abilities, but they may have also explored the malleability of boundaries in the discovery process. During the interviews and through my literature review, I learned that the Cuban Women Liberation was a social phenomenon that occurred jointly with the Cuban Revolution, as many say, it was the *revolution within the Revolution*.

According to some of my participants, before the Revolution, Cuban society displayed traces of *machismo*,²⁵ a Spanish word associated with male dominance, a phenomenon many female student and teacher-participants experienced at the time of the CLC. For instance, some former female CB brigadistas were affiliated with political organizations without parent consent, as I discuss earlier in this chapter. Two teacher-participants, Solana and Leonela, had early experience in navigating the patriarchal system in order to reach their autonomy, a process that seemingly started with the Revolution. These two women, whose profiles I featured in Table 3.4, as of today, are retired independent women who volunteer to support others.

Continuing Education: Career and Professional

“Study, Study, and Study:” Alondra and Joel

The revolutionary government gradually set up educational initiatives for farmers, peasants, fishermen, workers, their wives, and their children. They arranged literacy initiatives

²⁵ Machismo: strong sense of masculine pride: an exaggerated masculinity
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/machismo>

for the primary school level, designated as the *Battle of Six Grade*, followed by the middle school level initiative, called the *Battle of Ninth Grade* (Leiner, 1987). The training for the trade schools was also implemented in conjunction with the other formal education initiatives. Two student-participants, Alondra and Joel, shared their experiences in the post-CLC stage. The Ana Betancourt sewing class was offered to female CLC students in Havana. Alondra attended the sewing class and recalled:

...we were all happy. We were happy because we thought we would be no one in life; I went to Habana after being literate and learned sewing in Ana Betancourt school, and I was able to find work, for [having completed] 9th grade (personal communication, 2018).

Alondra described the sewing class as an unforgettable experience. Traveling to Cuba's capital permitted her to witness a completely different lifestyle while she was learning a new skill. Alondra, who had never before left her hometown, said this was a life-changing experience.

Some of the study opportunities for trade workers were offered abroad in the Soviet Union and Ukraine. Joel was one of the chosen workers. He became literate in his mid-20s. Orphaned after the deaths his father and mother at the ages of 7 and 13 respectively, Joel had no access to education. "I did not attend school and had no one who could take me to places" (personal communication, Joel, 2016). Nonetheless, his curiosity instilled in him the desire to learn. Joel created opportunities to access education, such as learning how to write his name. Once he received a notebook, a pencil, and an eraser; Unsure how to use them, Joel decided to learn to write his name and give purpose to these school items. So one day, he intercepted a small group of school students passing by and demanded they write his name. "So, if it is true you are learning, write my name in this notebook. Write my name very clearly," he'd say, and this is how he learned to write his name (personal communication, Joel, 2016).

With the establishment of the Revolution, Joel was excited he would finally be able to learn. When the Revolution triumphed in 1959, he shared that, “I was content because the revolution planned to build 3 classrooms in the chicken farm where I lived” (personal communication, 2016). He enlisted as a CLC student, but after a composition writing assessment, his teacher said he was not eligible for the CLC and dismissed him from classes on the third day. Joel described his test as “filled with spelling errors” (personal communication, 2016). Joel recalled his conversation with the teacher:

Teacher: You need to complete a form to teach the peasants in the countryside.

Joel: But *maestra* (*teacher*), I don't know anything. How can I teach someone if I don't know anything? I did not attend school. I was fooling around, and this is how I learned.

Teacher: The only thing you have to do is complete this form and teach in the countryside because this class is for people who do not know anything (personal communication, 2016).

Joel's efforts to learn on his own without any logical sequence or structure still equipped him with a number of literacy skills. After being asked to either volunteer as a CLC brigadista or undergo training in the Soviet Union, he chose to study abroad and became an expert in cattle and livestock.

In summary, this chapter discussed the emergent theme horizontality, or the horizontal relationship among all participants; students, teachers, leaders, and those who served in compound roles (student-teachers, teacher-leaders, and student-leaders). Horizontality encouraged the expression of humane attributes among participants of the campaign often expressed as love, or political love (Darder, 2002).

The second emergent theme that contributed to the conclusions in this study relate to participants' volunteerism, which led them to feel empowered and liberated. In addition to the anticipation of changes in Cubans' lives, female student and teacher-participants expressed their feelings of liberation for families and spouses. Moreover, participants observed the end of racial discrimination in public spaces and grew hopeful it would be eradicated all together.

Volunteerism manifested through participants' actual labor and the time and space given to perform it.

Teacher-participants shared that they felt a desire to continue supporting the Revolution after experiencing empowerment through the CLC. Some of them declared that they volunteered against family rules, an early sign of becoming liberated. Others revealed that participation in the campaign developed their vocation as teachers.

Taking part in the CLC raised their awareness of Cuban living conditions in the rural areas and youths' habits in the urban areas. Additionally, the voluntary participation of student and teacher-participants in mass political organization created in the beginning of the Cuban Revolution provided youth (AJR), women (FMC), and ordinary Cubans (CDR) with systematic political and civic education. Research-participants with lengthier memberships in these organizations demonstrated an understanding of their life improvements, were able to articulate them, and were active within the community. Female participants shared their feelings of liberation from family values and became autonomous. Finally, student and teacher-participants in this study communicated their desires to continue their education and learn skills necessary to pursue their trade training or earn higher education degrees.

In short, volunteering experiences and participation in the mass political organizations helped student and teacher-participants develop their socio-political awareness. According to

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research-participants, the Revolution reduced gender discrimination by increasing the number of women in the work force and removed racial segregation in public spaces.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This chapter opens with my explicit research questions as a reminder to readers of the purpose of this study. The important step of self-assessment linked my research questions with my findings. Although the data source analysis was a stimulating process, explicating the minute steps in writing compelled me to abandon my intended direction at the time.

My research questions are:

1. How have the participants (students, teachers, and organizing committee members) understood their experiences in the Cuban Literacy Campaign?
2. What factors strongly contributed to the development of socio-political awareness/consciousness during the Cuban Literacy Campaign?
 - a. How did the political context impact the development of their socio-political consciousness?

Research Contributions

The CLC was an act of love. CLC and research-participants in this study experienced a collective impact of horizontality for the first time. Horizontality, which I discussed widely in the previous chapters, manifested at the most minute level, in the classroom between students and instructors, as well as in the highest level of the CLC organizational chart—the Revolution leaders. As stated by Canfux Gutiérrez (1993), in the horizontal relationship model, ordinary Cubans played an important role during the Revolution's transitional period by supporting the eradication of illiteracy with multiple resources. The horizontality between the Cuban people, students and brigadistas/teachers, and the Revolution leaders took place through an ongoing communication of announcements, speeches, and personal visits by leaders to various sites. They set a great example of conducting themselves in public by marching, laughing, and connecting

with the people altogether. The concepts of horizontality, political love (Darder, 2002; Freire, 1970; 2000) and political relationships (Gutstein, 2003a) demystify the superiority/inferiority dialectical relations. Horizontality is not the deprivation of experts; On the contrary, experts and expertise are necessary. Horizontality is necessary for critical views to emerge.

Volunteerism or mass participation is a precondition for critical literacy. Discussed by Freire (1987), the praxis of reading the word and the world, when synchronized with writing the world, are conditions to the formation of a critically literate person. In my previous discussion in Chapter 5, I referred to Joel, a teacher-participant, who said he went to teach literacy and he came back literate himself. This powerful statement demonstrates that the CLC provided a critical education to many brigadistas. Teacher-brigadistas developed their own socio-political awareness as they participated in the Revolution. Shalaby (2013) explains that teachers born and raised from privileged families “did not received critical education, rooted in love...” (Shalaby, 2013) from their elite institutions. Therefore, the volunteering experience of my research-participants indicated that Cubans’ volunteerism parallels with Freire’s concept of participatory education. His definition of writing the world includes action as a result of reflection, so participation plays an essential role in shaping participants’ critical views. Brigadistas were reading the world as they taught students to read the world.

Future Research

First of all, this study intends to disrupt the current narrative on how we talk about political education in our teacher education programs and to intentionally dismantle the belief that teachers with political preparation do not exist. Therefore, teacher preparation programs should include topics addressing inequalities for students and the teaching force. There presently exists a shortage of teachers in the U.S. One should ask what force(s) are driving this shortage; Is

it that college students lack the motivation to join the teaching force voluntarily, or are unfair labor conditions halting them from choosing to teach? The number of teachers in Cuba after the CLC increased drastically. For instance, of the 11 student-participants in this study, two became educators; of the 10 teacher-participants, 4 became teachers or educators; of the 4 organizing committee members in this study, all 4 furthered their studies and worked in educational administration or became scholars.

Future research ideas derived from the findings in this study associate with human traits (love, humility, hope, faith, critical thinking) and horizontality. Many research-participants referred to love as one of the most impactful factors in the literacy campaign. Can one say that love is the starting point for one's socio-political development? "Love has a place in revolution ...because it is resistance," explains Shalaby (2013). Her quote suggests that any act that attempts to bring back humanity, through resistance of social movements, through a revolution, represents the larger ideal of political love.

Another unresolved issue involves the relationship of Freire's epistemology to that of the CLC. Freire's teachings support the idea that learning contexts need to be applied to students' reality. His lessons began with *codifications*, which contained non-surface aspects of learners' reality *encoded* in pictures, text, sound, and art (Freire, 1973; 2003). Through the process of decodification, learners uncovered generative themes and learned to read and write generative words. Cubans utilized a word bank and determined active and passive words. These words seem to parallel Freire's generative words. The major ambiguity of the Cuban materials rests in how the CLC organizers created the content in the text/passage pages of the *Venceremos* textbook. They seemed to contain an abundance of meaning associated with Cubans' present life concerns.

Finally, an overall area of scholarly interest to explore is how to develop and assess critical curriculum for our classrooms. Developing a critical view of the world around us through literacy is a complex process that requires an understanding of events within a community as well as the individual. Our current education in schools tends to rank and discriminate against people or objects outside of the norm despite the fact the norms continually shifting as we denounce them.

Acknowledging Limitations

Entering the Cuban research community was one of the most uncertain points of my research, which I described in Chapter 3. As I learned about the legalities of traveling to conduct research between countries with a history of political tension, I felt it important to create political relationships with Cuban organizations. I introduced myself to Cubans as a Brazilian, junior researcher conducting research in a U.S. educational institution. I traveled to Cuba on a scholarly assignment three times, and on each trip, I formed new alliances with educators. Once these were established, I became a part of the educational community.

The remaining task was to maintain these relationships. As I reflect on this process, it was extremely important that I spent time with the community and built trust there so that my research collaborators (i.e., cultural facilitators) and participants would feel so comfortable sharing information with me that they could recall their most memorable moments from nearly 60 years ago. For instance, on a few occasions during the interviews, a student-participant revealed something that, in her perception, was considered an embarrassment, but it was a reality that the Revolution intended to end. Her mother was the breadwinner, the sole person bringing income to the family. The cultural facilitator managed the situation, and she was astute in

demonstrating that this situation was common in pre-revolutionary Cuba. This was my second visit with this student-participant, and I noticed she was more at ease.

Another limitation of my research was the advanced age of my group of participants; This made difficult to fully explore participants' experiences, especially the students. The youngest student-participant interviewed was in their late 70s. Justifiably, there were occasions in which participants were unable to provide accurate information of an event that took place approximately 58 years earlier. I carried the CLC materials on one of my trips to Cuba, and I showed students the student textbook. They were able to recall some instances, but not every detail. Nonetheless, they shared their most memorable impressions of becoming and being literate.

Concluding Thoughts

As a researcher, the most moving moments of the research process involved interviewing the 24 people who took part in my study. Literacy was a social justice project that aimed to create equity and foster critical reading of the world for both students and teachers. When education became the focal point of the Cuban Revolution in 1961, Fidel Castro demonstrated the significance education had for him. Castro did not halt the literacy campaign, despite the U.S. sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion or after the murder of CLC brigadistas and students. As a result of the Revolution leaders' efforts to center the humane attributes of humility, love/care, and hope in the socio-political process, participants honored their call to study and volunteer for Cuba's overall development.

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