Preservice Teachers Engaged in Professional Learning Community to Explore Critical Literacy

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Preservice Teachers Engaged in Professional Learning Community to Explore Critical Literacy

by

Vanessa Casciola

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Elementary Education Department of Teaching and Learning College of Education University of South Florida

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Keywords: teacher education, critical literacy, practitioner inquiry

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Abstract

As demographics change, our school populations are ever changing. Preservice teachers (PSTs) need to be aware of how to meet the needs of all of their future students. Teacher education programs have been charged with the duty of preparing these PSTs for the diverse school population they will encounter. This qualitative multiple case study focused on the influence of specific work with PSTs in the inquiry process within a learning community to make sense of critical literacy. The following research questions guided this study: (1) How do elementary PSTs engaged in practitioner inquiry make meaning of critical literacy instruction within a facilitated learning community? (2) How do PSTs enact critical literacy instruction in the field experience elementary classroom while engaged in practitioner inquiry in a facilitated learning community? (a) What facilitates PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom? (b) What inhibits PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom?

Participants included six PSTs from a cohort in a two-day a week field experience. A sample of three cases was selected to analyze in more detail and for a cross-case analysis. Data sources included transcriptions of learning community meetings, PST written reflections at the end of each learning community meeting, two interviews with each participant, a researcher’s journal, video-recorded literacy lesson and lesson plan, critical literacy concept maps, literacy belief platforms, and plans for learning community sessions.
The findings for each case are detailed in chapters four, five, and six. These findings were analyzed to develop assertions in a cross-case analysis. These assertions included: (1) The three preservice teachers’ sensemaking and/or enactment of critical literacy was impacted as they “saw” examples of critical literacy, (2) Making meaning of critical literacy and critical literacy enactment are an interwoven process that inform each other, (3) As these PSTs engaged in the PLC, their sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy evolved, (4) All PSTs faced similar inhibitors to critical literacy enactment, however, Jodi and Tira were able to negotiate many of these inhibitors to enact critical literacy.
Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Currently in our nation’s schools, students represent a wide range of ethnic groups, languages, socioeconomic groups, sexual orientations, and abilities (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002). Unfortunately, teachers are often underprepared and undersupported to serve these diverse populations (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Educational practices and the opportunities afforded to students are not equitable (Milner, 2010). Often schools actually serve to further perpetuate structural inequities (Milner). Students face many inequities in schools, such as lack of resources, quality teachers, diversity in the teaching population, and low teacher expectations (Banks, et al., 2007; Gay & Howard, 2010; Gorski, 2013; Payne, 2008; Sleeter, 2008; Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). In addition, schools with populations from lower socioeconomic backgrounds experience the following inequities: access to preschool, family engagement, schools with adequate resources, school support services, asset-based school environments, certified and quality teachers, and student-centered curricula (Banks, et al., 2007; Gorski, 2013). Another problem occurs when teachers struggle to connect to students’ cultural frames of reference and the prior knowledge they bring to school (Banks et al., 2007). This issue is only further perpetuated by the lack of diversity within the teaching population (Gay & Howard, 2010; Zumwalt & Craig, 2008; Banks, et al., 2007). While a more diverse selection of teachers does not guarantee a connection with diverse students, it could help with the cultural mismatch students oftentimes experience in schools (Banks et al., 2007).
Teacher education programs have the potential to prepare future teachers for the diverse populations of learners they will teach. Darling-Hammond (2010) asserted the United States is in need of a systematic approach to building a strong teaching profession. She suggested that in order to recruit and retain teachers in the contexts where they are needed most, teacher education must change. Giroux (2009) proposed that teacher education programs could work to change the current oppressive ideologies promoted in society and reproduced in schools. Many other scholars in teacher education advocate that both in-service and PSTs can alleviate inequities in schools by working for social justice within the elementary school context (i.e., Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009; Grant & Agosto, 2008; Howard & Aleman, 2008; McDonald, 2005). Bodur (2012) found PSTs’ beliefs and attitudes are shaped and developed in the elementary school classroom during the field experience and in university coursework. Therefore, it is pivotal that these teacher education experiences support a positive attitude toward diversity and help PSTs make connections in the field to what they are learning in their coursework. Castro (2010) explained that research should “…focus on the specific teaching practices and curricular components that foster changes in the beliefs and attitudes of preservice teachers” (p. 207).

A focus on literacy can be a start for social justice work with PSTs within teacher education programs. Particularly, critical literacy can be used to develop theory about critical literacy and connections to literacy instruction in practice within the field experience and to promote social justice through the use of critical literacy instruction. Critical literacy evolved from the work of critical theory. Critical literacy is, historically, a more theoretical concept than instructional strategy (Behrman, 2006). However, over the last fifty years critical literacy has evolved due to various regional, cultural, and political contexts (Luke, 2012). Critical literacy
encourages students to question the messages and knowledge they receive from texts, actively challenge inequities, and become change agents (Shor, 2009).

The ways in which we prepare future teachers to support greater equity and justice in schools must be directly connected to work within field experiences. In 1986, the Holmes Group published a report that supported the development of professional development schools with the specific purpose to better connect elementary schools with teacher education programs. From this Holmes Report, the National Council of Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) developed standards for these partnerships. In 2010, NCATE released the Blue Ribbon Panel Report, which called for a stronger connection between clinically rich field experiences and coursework. The goal of this connection is to further develop PSTs’ abilities to meet the varying needs of diverse learners.

One pedagogical tool that can support PST learning in the field is practitioner inquiry. Scholars agree practitioner inquiry is a systematic and intentional approach to studying one’s practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009) and can serve as a vehicle for greater theory to practice connections in teacher education (Murrell, 2006). Since inquiry requires action and reflection on this action (Rock & Levin, 2002), inquiry can be utilized to become a tool for PSTs to try new instructional approaches in the field based on theories they have learned in the classroom. Inquiry can be a place to make a change in education as inquiry is both social and political (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Cochran-Smith, 2004). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) proposed that knowledge is created through systematic inquiry in a collaborative community. Teachers work together to develop new learning through inquiry and to create change (Cochran-Smith & Lytle). Inquiry can provide a space for teachers to merge formal knowledge and practical knowledge to create a more cohesive picture of the knowledge
needed to be a successful teacher for both novice and expert teachers working together across their careers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990).

The aim of this study is to examine how teacher education can serve as a context to support the preparation of teachers equipped to promote social justice in their classrooms. Specifically, this research will examine how PSTs develop in their understanding and enactment of critical literacy in their field experience classroom while engaging in inquiry within a learning community. This study has the potential to inform teacher education program and curriculum design focused on social justice in the K-5 setting.

**Rationale**

Future teachers face a widely diverse classroom setting. As a result, teacher educators ask PSTs to teach in ways that can be drastically different than how they were taught (Taylor & Sobel, 2010). Therefore, teacher education programs need to prepare future teachers for the diverse student population they will encounter rather than simply relying on prior experiences with schooling. It is imperative teachers provide an equitable learning environment for all students—where every child is valued for the assets they bring to school (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Oftentimes, teachers can view diverse students from a deficit lens. Deficit thinking only creates an environment in which students are prohibited to think critically and express themselves creatively (Milner, 2010). In contrast, asset based thinking can lead to a close in the achievement gap (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

There exist many different names and ideas that represent the ideals of equity for all students: social justice, multicultural education, culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, teaching against the grain, etc. The overarching concept in all of these terms is the importance placed on establishing a learning environment for all students. Those
committed to social justice focus on creating change in society to eliminate oppression by shifting power from the dominant culture (Young, 1990). The goal of social justice is equal participation of all groups in order to meet the needs of all people (Bell, 2007). Social justice involves a reexamination of societal power structures and change in education to provide equitable opportunities and rights for all (Bell, 2007; Giroux, 2009; Ukpokodu, 2007; Young, 1990). As Giroux (2009) asserted, education can work to change existing and oppressive ideologies in society.

Teacher educators need to help PSTs understand the importance of social justice in education. To make changes within the elementary classroom, teacher education programs need to support PSTs in theory to practice connections within the field experience. The field experience is pivotal to making these practical connections to issues of equity in the classroom (Zeichner, 2010). Freire and Macedo (1987) posited literacy is essential to developing a voice and sense of empowerment and can be a starting place for PSTs to develop a critical consciousness. Literacy can provide a place for students to question the hegemonic nature of society and take action to change the world (Freire & Macedo). Literacy instruction can offer “...empowerment and...mental emancipation, with the potential to shift political, social and educational power” (Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2011, p. 125). These issues of power and emancipation echo the ideas of critical literacy and directly correlate with a social justice stance. As such, “the teaching of language and literacy is a democratic act inextricably linked to issues of emancipation and empowerment” (Jones, Webb, & Neumann, 2008, p. 9). Therefore, the exploration of literacy practices with PSTs provides an appropriate medium for exploring issues of equity in education.
More specifically, critical literacy directly connects with issues of equity. Critical literacy provides a very supportive theoretical framework for those interested in creating an equitable learning environment, because it lends itself to an equitable mindset (Vasquez, 2001). In order to work for social justice, critical literacy is dependent upon an awareness of the social, historical, and linguistic features that influence literacy learning (Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006). It is through literature that “…children construct their identities, negotiate relationships, and position themselves in the world” (Sahni, 2001, p. 32). Critical literacy builds upon students’ prior experiences (Soares & Wood, 2010), explores multiple perspectives (Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Lewison, Flint, & Sluys, 2002; May, Bingham, & Pendergast, 2014; O’Neil, 2009), and encourages questioning of texts and the world (O’Brien, 2001; Soares & Wood, 2010). By questioning the messages within texts, students can examine the power structures set up in society and possible places of oppression (Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Jones et al., 2008; Lewison et al., 2002; Wood & Jocius, 2013). Furthermore, critical literacy can provide an opportunity to rethink how “…harmful assumptions can lead to stereotypes and unfair judgments about individuals and groups and thus to the establishment of social barriers” (Soares & Wood, 2010, p. 490). In addition, this work with critical literacy can lead to social action (Assaf & Delaney, 2013; Dozier et al., 2006; Powell, Cantrall, Adams, 2001), a key component in the social justice framework. The very act of engaging in critical literacy can lead to a more equitable learning environment.

In order to create a classroom in which children are able to question the hegemonic messages of text and see themselves reflected in literature, it is vital to offer children’s literature that portrays diverse populations. Bishop (1997) posited the importance of students seeing
themselves portrayed in literature as well as seeing children as diverse others too. Literature could act as both a mirror and window into others’ lives (Bishop).

Jones et al. (2008) emphasized the need for literacy teachers to take the reigns as social justice leaders in schools within the K-12 setting. As future teachers, PSTs can use literacy to become leaders in social justice. Jones et al. asserted language and literacy are intertwined with issues of emancipation and empowerment. Teachers can use critical literacy pedagogy as a place to empower students in the classroom. However, just because PSTs are exposed to critical literacy, does not necessarily mean they will use critical literacy with their future students (Jones & Enriquez, 2009). In order for teachers to be able to help their students to become critically literate, teachers first need to be empowered themselves (Neophytou & Valianides, 2013). Neophytou and Valianides (2013) assert we must “provide teachers with authentic opportunities to become critically literate individuals and transformative leaders” (p. 424). In this study, I worked with PSTs in hopes to empower them to enact change in their elementary classrooms and create a context where they can develop their own skills as critically literate individuals, so that they can empower their future students.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain more insight into how PSTs make sense of critical literacy instruction in an elementary school context and how PSTs use practitioner inquiry to develop theory to practice connections in their work in the field experience classroom. The findings will provide more information on how PSTs are able to make meaning of critical literacy and enact critical literacy instruction in the field experience through inquiry. In addition, the findings will give more insight into how practitioner inquiry is used to create change in PSTs’ pedagogical practices. This study emerged directly from the scholarly literature on social
justice teacher education and critical literacy. Critical literacy can be centered within the teacher education curriculum to support a focus on social justice as critical literacy helps to challenge the status quo (Shor, 2009). Inquiry communities are political and can provide a means for change (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Kincheloe (2011) supported the use of inquiry as a means for teachers to work for social justice for their students. Therefore, practitioner inquiry serves as a vehicle to support learning about critical literacy and to make changes to instructional practice. This study will add to the research on using critical literacy in teacher education for social justice purposes in elementary school. It will also add to the research on using practitioner inquiry to create a change in pedagogical practice.

**Significance**

In this section, I will outline the significance of the study based on the scholarly literature available about critical literacy in general and with specific regards to teacher education. This study will be significant as it focuses on the theory to practice connections that can be made within the field experience to move towards a more clinically rich teacher education program. I chose to collect data at the elementary school context since “…knowledge, skills, and dispositions that individual teachers bring to teaching are, to a large extent, the products of the social contexts in which these were developed” (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008, p. 144). Therefore, the PSTs’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions are shaped by the context in which they are doing their field experience. Cornbleth (2010) asserts that in addition to university coursework, “school sites also ‘teach’” (p. 295). Since context plays an integral part of learning (Putnam & Borko, 2000), PSTs are learning from the elementary school context and the university context.
While critical literacy research literature details the importance of literacy with school-aged children, more research on using literacy with PSTs to promote equity in the classroom is needed. Within teacher education there is not a consistent place for or use of critical literacy. Critical literacy is a term with multiple interpretations being actualized in different ways in a variety of contexts within teacher education. A large portion of the literature focused on how teacher educators work closely with in-service teachers to use critical literacy in the classroom (i.e., Assaf & Delaney, 2013; Cooper & White, 2012; DeMulder, Stribling, & Day, 2014; Dozier & Rutten, 2005). In particular, work with elementary education students in teacher education is rather limited. Most of the scholarly literature is focused on work with adolescents, rather than with elementary age students (i.e., Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012; Lapayese, 2012; Saunders, 2012; Sawch, 2011; Schieble, 2012; Simmons, 2012). Additionally, connections between literacy coursework and fieldwork need to be explored in more depth.

Since this study is designed to further support learning critical literacy theory and engaging in critical literacy instruction, this study will work toward developing the connection between university coursework and fieldwork, as purposefully combining coursework and fieldwork can lead to learning that might be more difficult without this connection (Putnam & Borko, 2000). NCATE’s (2010) Blue Ribbon Panel Report called for a stronger connection between university coursework and clinical experiences. As a result of this gap, I chose to study how PSTs make meaning of critical literacy and can enact critical literacy in the field experience (elementary classroom) through practitioner inquiry. Therefore, in this study I will explore how the conceptual knowledge of critical literacy can be incorporated into the field experience for practical application of critical literacy through the inquiry process.
Methodology

In this multiple case study (Yin, 2014), I explored how PSTs engaged in practitioner inquiry can make meaning of critical literacy. I worked with PSTs in a learning community during one of their elementary field experiences. During this time, PSTs engaged in inquiry focused on critical literacy instruction. I used the following research questions to guide my work:

1. How do elementary PSTs engaged in practitioner inquiry make meaning of critical literacy instruction within a facilitated learning community?
2. How do PSTs enact critical literacy instruction in the field experience elementary classroom while engaged in practitioner inquiry in a facilitated learning community?
   a. What facilitates PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom?
   b. What inhibits PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom?

I explored these research questions by facilitating bi-monthly learning community meetings with a small voluntary group of PSTs in a late field experience elementary school context. During these learning community meetings, I provided a place for PSTs to gather and work on inquiries focused on critical literacy instruction. As a facilitator, I coached and supported PSTs through the inquiry process. I based my role off the PSTs’ needs. I had the PSTs model critical literacy instruction, and I offered relevant examples of teaching strategies when needed. I also prompted, questioned, and framed discussions. The exact content of these meetings were dependent on the specific needs of the PSTs. I had the PSTs explore their own beliefs about literacy instruction, learn more about critical literacy practices, and scaffolded their work with individual inquiry projects (See more detailed plan in Chapter 3).
Data collection for this study included: transcriptions of learning community meetings, PST-written reflections at the end of each learning community meeting, video-recorded literacy lessons, and two interviews with each participant. In addition, there was a variety of artifacts collected from the learning community meetings and the PSTs’ individual inquiries (conceptual map of critical literacy, inquiry action plan, classroom literacy audit, lesson plans, student work, etc.). Finally, I recorded my own ideas and thoughts within a researcher’s journal after each meeting. Based on PSTs’ feedback and needs during these meetings, I planned for the next learning community session. PSTs played active roles in deciding what we discussed and worked on during each learning community meeting. This study sought to understand how these PSTs make meaning of critical literacy instruction through inquiry within a late field experience.

**Conceptual Framework**

This research study was grounded in the concepts of dialogue, critical consciousness, knowledge for, in, and of practice, and conceptual and practical tools. These concepts were essential in understanding the development of PSTs in making meaning of critical literacy as well as the enactment of critical literacy practices.

This study relied heavily on Freire’s work with education. Freire (1970) posited that dialogue is necessary for critical consciousness, or *conscientizao*. This critical consciousness involves the questioning of the whole education system for inequalities and an awareness of ongoing oppression that is present within education. Through the development of a critical consciousness, PSTs can gain awareness of the inequities present in education. According to Freire (1970), true critical reflection leads to action and central to critical reflection is critical consciousness. This action and subsequent reflection upon action directly ties into Freire’s (1970) idea of praxis or a balance between theory and practice. In order to help these PSTs
change their instructional practice, they will first need to develop critical consciousness, and then use this awareness of education inequities to develop praxis. Freire’s critical reflection, dialogue, critical consciousness, and praxis are connected to this study. In the learning community, PSTs engaged in dialogue, which led to greater critical reflection and critical consciousness. It was from this dialogue that PSTs were able to take action and reflect on this action to achieve praxis.

To support PSTs in moving to praxis or reflection to action, both conceptual and practical tools are needed. For example, a conceptual tool would entail developing a sociocultural consciousness or an understanding that people behave in different ways depending on factors such as race, language, ethnicity, social class, etc. (Banks, et al., 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). PSTs also need practical tools to support praxis. These practical tools helped the PSTs to determine how to make changes to their practice. For example, a greater knowledge of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000) can help PSTs move toward a change in practice. In order for PSTs to make meaning of critical literacy as well as enact critical literacy practices they need both conceptual and practical tools.

As the PSTs engaged in dialogue to support critical consciousness and grew in their development of conceptual and practical tools related to critical literacy they drew upon different sources of knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). The first knowledge source, knowledge for practice, focused on the formal knowledge of teaching. Knowledge in practice was gained when experienced teachers learn while in teaching. Finally, Cochran-Smith and Lytle asserted that knowledge of practice occurs when teachers work “together to investigate their own assumptions, their own teaching and curriculum development, and the policies and practices of their own schools and communities” (p. 279). Furthermore, within knowledge of practice, knowledge is co-constructed within a collaborative inquiry community. Members of inquiry
communities work together to examine their own assumptions and beliefs. Through this work, teachers can link their beliefs with theory and research. As a community, teachers work through inquiry to develop these three conceptions of knowledge. Knowledge of practice is particularly important to social justice as it fosters reflection on assumptions and questions accepted teaching policies and curriculum. Through inquiry, teachers can create new knowledge of teaching, and, thus, change their pedagogical practice.

Critical literacy can be used as a focus for change within these inquiry communities and classrooms because critical literacy directly connects the content of literacy with work for social justice as some of the main tenets of critical literacy overlap with the goals of social justice. For example, critical literacy focuses on questioning the message and power structures in texts, examining multiple perspectives, and instituting social action. Motivation for change and examination of power structures is deeply connected to work for social justice. Since inquiry is a cyclical process that requires constant action and reflection (praxis), teachers within an inquiry community are working through dialogue with peers to try to create change within their classrooms. As teachers try new practice based on this dialogue, the cyclical process of inquiry continues.

**Definition of Terms**

**Practitioner Inquiry**

A systematic and intentional study by educators of their own practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009).
Culturally Responsive Teaching

Gay (2000) defined culturally responsive teaching as “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 29).

Social Justice

Social justice is a term with varying definitions and interpretations. Social justice is political in nature as it focuses on power structures in society. Social justice maintains a commitment to eliminate oppression by shifting power from the dominant culture (Young, 1990), equal participation of all groups in order to meet the needs of all people (Bell, 2007), reexamination of societal power structures, and a commitment to change in education to provide equitable opportunities and rights for all (Bell, 2007; Giroux, 2009; Ukpokodu, 2007; Young, 1990).

Social Justice Teacher Education

A term with multiple meanings, but there is an underlying emphasis on providing learning opportunities for all. Overarching themes include a focus on examination of beliefs, attention to content knowledge and culturally responsive teaching for diverse students, and field experiences to make theory to practice connections.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy involves an awareness of the effects of language, specifically, the power of language (Morrell, 2008). It is a place for social justice (Luke, 2012). Through critical literacy, students can start to question the messages apparent in literature (O’Brien, 2001) and provide a place of empowerment (Jones et al., 2008). Critical literacy draws upon students’ prior experiences (Soares & Wood, 2010).
Field Experience

An internship opportunity where PSTs are placed within elementary school contexts to work alongside collaborating teachers and university supervisors to engage in teaching. NCATE’s Blue Ribbon Report (2008) calls for the field experience to be clinically rich. This clinically-rich environment would provide deeper connections between the field experience and coursework.

Learning Community

A place for supervision of teaching and coaching of learning. It is situated in a specific context. This conception of the learning community builds upon Dewey’s (1904) notion that PSTs learn when they see the consequences of their decisions in action in the classroom, see other more experienced teachers, and receive feedback from others. This learning community also reflects Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) conception of knowledge of practice—a place where knowers and knowledge can connect to larger, political issues of education.

Practices

Scholars have tried to define and refine the idea of teaching practices; however, teaching does not have a specific set of best practices accepted by all. Ball and Forzani (2010) suggest first identifying the sets of tasks that are the basis of effective teaching and explore these practices to identify a common ground. Ball introduces the term “high leverage practices” to describe the “essential activities of teaching” as “practices at the heart of the work of teaching that are most likely to affect student learning” (p.43). In a teacher education initiative at the University of Michigan, Ball and Forzani (2010) have developed nineteen potential high leverage activities that increase the probability of student learning. Ball asserts that these high-leverage practices are content-specific. In addition, classroom instruction is situated in culture
specific contexts, which necessitates different requirements and expectations for instruction depending upon the context.

**Sensemaking**

In this study, sensemaking is used to describe how each individual preservice teacher made meaning of critical literacy. As I developed my findings, this term encompassed the process and the end result involved in making meaning. Sensemaking is used to describe the process the PSTs engaged in to gain more knowledge of critical literacy as well as their final idea of what critical literacy is at the end of this study.

**Summary**

This study focused on how PSTs made meaning of critical literacy and enacted critical literacy in the classroom. This study worked within the constant process of inquiry within learning communities to further build theory to practice connections. This study was largely based on the social justice teacher education, critical literacy, and teacher learning literature. In chapter two, I will provide a brief overview of changes in teacher education, specifically review the research on social justice teacher education, review critical literacy with elementary school children and critical literacy instruction in teacher education, and discuss teacher learning and inquiry as a means of change in education. In chapter three I will outline my plans for this proposed multiple case study. I will detail the study participants, context, data collection procedures, and plans for data analysis.
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

This study examined the following areas of research: teacher education, critical literacy, and practitioner inquiry. These areas of focus were selected in order to address the research questions:

1. How do elementary PSTs engaged in practitioner inquiry make meaning of critical literacy instruction within a facilitated learning community?

2. How do PSTs enact critical literacy instruction in the field experience elementary classroom while engaged in practitioner inquiry in a facilitated learning community?
   a. What facilitates PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom?
   b. What inhibits PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom?

This review of the literature is organized into three sections. In the first section, the focus is on teacher education specifically connected to social justice. This section discusses inequities in education, defining teacher education for social justice, and illuminating the components of social justice teacher education. In the second section, the focus is on critical literacy as an area of focus to support the type of equitable education called for in the teacher education for social justice section. In the third section, the focus is on teacher professional development. Specifically, this section focuses on teacher inquiry as a vehicle for teacher professional development.
I reviewed and synthesized the literature on critical literacy with PSTs and the elementary classroom, teacher education for social justice, and teacher inquiry. I reviewed these specific topics to illuminate developments in the field of teacher education and the role of critical literacy in the classroom and how inquiry can be used to create more equitable teaching practices. This literature review highlights the gaps in the literature pertaining to critical literacy and teacher education of social justice.

**Teacher Education**

The field of teacher education has undergone dramatic changes from its conception as Normal Schools focused on methodology to teacher education programs dedicated to meeting the needs of diverse learners. In the nineteenth century, Normal Schools offered a two-year program that prepared teachers through methods and philosophy of education courses (Bennett, 2008). Normal Schools focused on teacher knowledge, skills, and dispositions (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). In 1862, the Morrill Act provided more support for teacher education programs by contributing funds through a land grant that individual states could use to create additional higher education institutions (Bennett, 2008). During this time, the field of education faced many barriers as it continued to grow. Teachers were paid very little and jobs were not equitably marketed to interested parties. In response, in 1870 the National Education Association was formed to recruit and support teachers. As teacher education continued to evolve, states gained more control over teacher certification procedures. One issue that arose from state control was the consistency of state certification procedures and requirements for teachers across the country, which sometimes resulted in a large disparity in teacher quality (Bennett).

When the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik* in 1957, politicians became much more concerned with the science and technology instruction being offered in public schools (Grant,
2008). In an effort to gain some consistency in teacher quality and student achievement, lawmakers passed several acts including the National Defense Education Act, Higher Education Act, and Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was first developed as a response to inequities in education and later evolved into No Child Left Behind in 2001 (Bennett, 2008). Another shift in teacher education came in 1983 after the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, a report assembled by the National Commission of Excellence in Education (Grant, 2008). This report highlighted the failures of U.S. schools compared to foreign schools. The report called for major reforms in teacher education programs to focus more on teacher knowledge, skills, and dispositions with particular interest in the teacher’s ability to teach science and mathematics (Grant). In response to *A Nation at Risk*, a group of educators formed Holmes Group to address the challenges reported. This report, *Tomorrow’s Schools of Education: A Report of the Holmes Group* (1986), suggested the creation of professional development schools in order to better connect schools of education to elementary schools. The report proposed that university faculty, future teachers, practicing teachers, and administrators could work together based on principles of reciprocity, experimentation, systematic inquiry, and student diversity. The Holmes Report provided the impetus for NCATE to recognize the importance of partnerships with professional development schools, and, thus, create standards for work with professional development schools. The National Council of Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) was founded in 1954 as an independent agency responsible for providing standards for teacher education to ensure high teacher quality and serve as the accrediting body for teacher education programs.

Another turning point in higher education occurred in 2010 when NCATE issued the Blue Ribbon Panel Report, *Transforming Teacher Education Through Clinical Practice: A*
National Strategy to Prepare Effective Teachers. This report argued for a stronger connection between clinical experiences and coursework in order to develop preservice teachers’ abilities to meet the diverse needs of students. The report called for “clinically based preparation, which fully integrates content, pedagogy, and professional coursework around a core of clinical experiences” (p. 8). These school-embedded learning experiences can help PSTs “…develop content-specific and general teaching skills” (p. 10), and, therefore, provide PSTs with a place to develop theory to practice connections in their teaching.

Within the Blue Ribbon Report, the panel suggested that to transform education today teacher education programs needed to focus on preparing preservice teachers to work in hard to staff schools (schools located in areas of high needs). As the economic, racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of schools continue to diversify, teacher preparation programs also need to adapt to better support teachers to meet the needs of ALL learners.

Inequities in Education

As Freire (1970) stated, schools are not politically neutral. Echoing this mindset, Milner (2010) asserts that educational practices and the opportunities afforded to individuals in society are not equal or equitable. Unfortunately, “schools can structurally produce and perpetuate inequity, poverty, and cultures of apathy while pretending to be designed to do the opposite” (Milner, 2010, p. 27). Therefore, the school environment can directly impact the opportunities afforded to students. Gay and Howard (2010) addressed the demographic divide evident in our education system. Even many years after desegregation, students mostly attend schools with other students of their same ethnic group. This demographic makeup is largely constructed due to geography. The tax base only further perpetuates structural inequity by keeping students segregated within schools (Gay & Howard, 2010; Gorski, 2013; Hasci, 2002; Payne, 2010).
Several factors that perpetuate inequities for students in schools include lack of resources, lack of quality teachers, lack of diversity in the teaching population, and low teacher expectations (Banks, et al., 2007; Gay & Howard, 2010; Gorski, 2013; Sleeter, 2008; Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). Darling-Hammond (2010) found the current problem with education is “...tens of thousands of teachers are underprepared and undersupported, especially in schools serving low-income students of color” (p. 208). The lack of support given to teachers and the scarcity of resources for schools, often leads to high teacher attrition. Unfortunately, schools with a high population of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds experience disparities in the following: access to preschool, family engagement, available school resources and support services, asset-based school environments, lack of certified and quality teachers, and lack of student-centered curricula (Banks et al., 2007; Gorski, 2013). Historically, schools serving more disadvantaged students are “exposed to flawed educational experiences,” such as low teacher expectations, ability grouping, and tracking (Dreeben & Gamoran, 1986, p. 660). Payne (2008) found that teachers in difficult school settings often work in isolation and hold low expectations for their students. All of these factors contribute to inequities in schooling.

Another reason for inequities is related to teachers struggling to connect to students’ cultural frames of reference and the prior knowledge they bring to school (Banks et al., 2007). Often this can be connected to the fact that the teaching population is largely populated by young, white, monolingual, middle class females (Gay & Howard, 2010; Zumwalt & Craig, 2008; Banks, et al., 2007). While a more diverse selection of teachers does not guarantee a connection with diverse students, it could help with the cultural mismatch students oftentimes experience in schools. Zumwalt and Craig (2008) proposed that a diverse teaching force could act as role models and use culturally relevant pedagogy, which may increase students’ likelihood...
of academic success. Schools that serve students from lower socio-economic households often experience disparities in resources, teacher expectations, teaching quality, curricula, and family engagement (Gorski, 2013). As a result of the systematic inequities discussed in this section, the academic achievement gap of Black and Latino students versus white and Asian-American students continues to exist (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003).

**Teacher Education and Social Justice**

Due to the nature of current inequities in education, Giroux (2009) posited, “teacher education programs need to reorient their focus to the critical transformation of public schools rather than to the simple reproduction of existing institutions and ideologies” (p. 449). Giroux (2009) maintained the idea that education can work to change the current oppressive ideologies promoted in society. A subset of the teacher education literature advocates that teachers (both in-service and preservice) can alleviate inequities by working for social justice (e.g., Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Grant & Agosto, 2008; Howard & Alemán, 2008; McDonald, 2005). While various ideas of social justice exist, those committed to teaching for social justice strongly focus on creating change in society to eliminate oppression by shifting power from the dominant culture (Young, 1990). Bell (2007) affirmed that the goal of social justice is to have “full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs” (pp. 1-2). Social justice calls for change, equal rights, opportunities for all, and a reexamination of societal power structures to attain equity in education (Bell, 2007; Giroux, 2009; Ukpokodu, 2007; Young, 1990).

Social justice has been a focus within teacher preparation programs; however, Grant and Agosto (2008) criticize this body of research as it lacks attention to the definition, context, and assessment of social justice in teacher education programs. Cochran-Smith (1991) sought to
reform teacher education by highlighting the idea of “teaching against the grain.” A central tenet of teaching against the grain is working with schools in a collaborative effort to question and change curriculum. This includes programs with a foundation of collaborative resonance: linking what preservice teachers learn in the university coursework with what they learn in their school-based experiences. While working with a teacher education program, McDonald (2005) found the faculty members clarified the goals of social justice “…as helping all students from all backgrounds succeed; to articulate the standards for prospective teachers; and to guide decisions about planning, curriculum, and assessment” (p. 425). According to McDonald (2007):

Social justice teacher education programs view preparing teachers with the knowledge, dispositions, and practices to work with students from diverse backgrounds as a fundamental responsibility of teacher education and require that the multiple settings of programs—university courses and field placements—contribute to prospective teachers’ learning to teach from a social justice perspective. (p. 2048)

Teacher education for social justice involves preservice teachers understanding inequities at both the classroom and societal level. Chubbuck (2010) proposed that socially-just teachers look beyond the confines of education for reasons why students struggle. Chubbuck (2010) posited that the teacher who looks at a child as an individual and the structural inequities this child may face, “will be better equipped to supply the support and instruction that the child needs individually and to begin to redress the effect of and transform the realities of educational and societal structures that perpetuate learning inequity” (p. 202). Darling-Hammond (2002) also pointed to the importance of teachers examining the social context that can produce inequities and affect students’ opportunities to learn. Cochran-Smith (2014) suggested that understanding structural inequities, such as those perpetuated by social constructs of race and gender, is central
to PSTs understanding the power and privilege experienced in society. While teacher education programs are not the only means to creating an equitable society, education can be one place for a substantial change (Nieto, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Cochran-Smith proposed that teacher education for social justice is both a political problem and learning problem. Education is decidedly political as tensions over the purpose of education have been evident throughout history. For example, the term “social justice” within teacher education has been contested due to the political nature of the term. In 2000, the National Council of Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) included the term “social justice” in the definition of teacher dispositions, stating that teacher dispositions are “...guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice” (p. 56). However, much criticism and debate ensued and NCATE was accused of using disposition theory to promote “groupthink” to support diversity and the “culturally left agenda” (Leo, 2005). Damon (2005) critiqued NCATE’s inclusion of social justice in dispositions stating “those who have been granted the authority to assess teacher candidates have been given unbounded power over what candidates may think and do” (p. 4). As a result, NCATE revised the dispositions to subtract social justice from its verbiage and focus more on behaviors than beliefs (Burat, Chubbuck, & Whipp, 2007).

One of the issues discussed within the literature related to teacher education for social justice is the lack of diversity of teacher educators. Like the teacher population, teacher educators are overwhelmingly white, female, and English-speaking (Banks, et al., 2007; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter, 2008). Nieto (2000) suggested that teacher education programs try to recruit a more diverse teacher educator population. Diversity in teaching force is not a guaranteed solution
However, white PSTs of tentimes have less awareness of discrimination and racism (Sleeter, 2008).

**Curriculum and Pedagogy in Social Justice Teacher Education**

Across the social justice and teacher education literature there are key themes related to the necessary components for teacher education program development. Unfortunately, a focus on social justice is often relegated to one or two courses within teacher education programs, instead of integrated throughout course and fieldwork. There is a need to develop coherent, connected programs where concepts of social justice are integrated throughout teacher education programs (Bodur, 2012; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Howard & Aleman, 2008). Grossman, McDonald, Hammerness, and Ronfeldt (2008) asserted that foundational courses in multicultural education need to focus on the theories of social justice as well as help PSTs develop teaching practices to help typically oppressed groups succeed in the classroom. They also called for methods courses to weave issues of inequity directly into the coursework (Grossman et al., 2008). The components of social justice teacher education programs include: focus on examination of beliefs, attention to content knowledge and culturally responsive teaching for diverse students, and field experiences to make theory to practice connections. Across these components, there are specific pedagogical practices to promote social justice.

**Examination of beliefs.** Freire (1970) described critical consciousness as an awareness of oppression in society due to dominant forms of thinking and an ability to question these central messages. More specifically, critical consciousness develops as people start to question the whole education system for inequities. This questioning and critical thinking is central to promoting action and transformation. Through the development of critical consciousness, PSTs can gain awareness of the inequities present in education.
In order for PSTs to take up the task of working for social justice, they must first critically reflect on their own beliefs. A major challenge teacher educators face is how uncomfortable PSTs are with examining their own beliefs and assumptions (Catapano, 2006). Hammerness et al. (2005) suggested that long-term work with PSTs to address preconceived ideas and beliefs is essential to change. Teachers needed to develop their “sociocultural consciousness”—an understanding that people think, communicate, and behave in different ways depend upon factors such as ethnicity, race, language, social class, etc. (Banks, et al., 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Teachers must become sociocultural conscious of how their own identity and experiences with diversity influence their teaching (Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). To extend this idea even further, Villegas and Lucas (2002) proposed that teachers must understand that all social systems, including schools, are not neutral; and, further, that social inequities are further perpetuated within these social systems. Gay (2010) asserted, “Teacher education programs need to do a much better job than they currently are in helping their students examine the causes and character of the different attitudes and beliefs they hold toward specific ethnic groups and cultures” (p. 144). Nieto (2000) cautioned that if future teachers do not examine their own identities and beliefs, they could develop a mindset that cultural diversity is a problem and should not be attended to.

As PSTs develop this sociocultural consciousness, they develop a more affirmative attitude towards students (Banks et al., 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). By developing an affirming attitude towards students, PSTs can develop an asset-based outlook. Asset-focused classrooms “…involve learning exchanges that build on the assets students bring into the classroom and…provide conditions that allow these assets to flourish” (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, p. 69). Additionally, Feiman-Nemser (2001) expressed that PSTs bring prior knowledge of
education from their own experiences. Oftentimes, this leads PSTs thinking that they know more about teaching than they actually do. Feiman-Nemser found "...prospective teachers need opportunities to examine critically their taken-for-granted, often deeply entrenched beliefs so that these beliefs can be developed or amended" (p. 1017). For example, Bowers and Flinders (1991) suggested that teachers can take language and culture for granted and do not even think about how these aspects influence actions in the classroom. When students’ prior experiences and identities are taken into account, teachers utilize asset-based teaching that could help close the achievement gap (Boykin & Noguera).

To become a social justice leader, PSTs need a space to self-reflect on their own cultures, beliefs, and attitudes before they can understand their students (Addleman, Brazo, Dixon, Cevallos, Wortman, 2014; Banks, et al., 2007; Bodur, 2012; Castro, 2010; Gay, 2010; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard, 2003; Reyes, 2004). Once PSTs have explored their own culture and belief system and develop sociocultural consciousness, they can identify schools as sites of inequities and work to transform schools. Villegas and Lucas (2002) asserted that teachers have a moral obligation to act as agents of change.

Attention to content knowledge and culturally responsive teaching for diverse students. Many teacher educators have responded to culturally diverse classrooms and inequities present in the school system with calls to increase teachers’ capacity to teach students from culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse households (Howard & Aleman, 2008; McDonald, 2007). To blend the importance of teaching content matter and teaching diverse students, Grossman et al. (2008) proposed a model for teacher capacity that highlights the interdependence of preparing teachers to teach subject matter and to teach for social justice. It is imperative that teacher education programs “...address issues of inequity directly, through
introducing students to the practices associated with teaching intellectually ambitious subject matter to historically underserved children (Grossman et al., 2008, p. 246). PSTs must possess both subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in order to provide students equitable access to curriculum (Howard & Aleman, 2008).

Grossman et al. (2008) explained that teachers must develop both conceptual and practical tools to support diverse student populations. Conceptual tools include frameworks and theories of learning and philosophical views to guide teachers’ decisions about teaching and learning. These conceptual frameworks can be adopted while teachers are examining their own beliefs and assumptions. In addition, teachers need actual practices and strategies that they can use and try in the classroom. These teaching practices include culturally responsive teaching strategies in which the intersection between students’ culture and students’ learning is illuminated.

One practical tool necessary within teacher education program curriculum that supports greater social justice within schools is the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). Ladson-Billings (1995) proposed that all students must experience academic success. Geneva Gay (2000) posited that academic success is possible when teachers use “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 29). Ladson-Billings also called for students to develop cultural competence and critical consciousness so that they can challenge inequities within the current social order.

To develop a culturally responsive pedagogy, teacher education programs must provide PSTs with the opportunity to delve into the definition of culture to explore the intricate daily
lives of students and their families. Teachers need to go further than simply incorporating celebrations with food and traditional clothing into the curriculum (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Teachers need to provide a place in the curriculum and instruction for students and their families to be valued for the cultures they bring into the classroom (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Banks proposed multicultural education as a way to move away from mainstream, Eurocentric curriculum in schools that only work to perpetuate dominant ideologies (Banks, 2010). He pushed for teachers to reach a social action approach in which students take action and get involved in societal issues to make a change in the world (Banks). Sleeter (2005) also pushed for multicultural education to provide all students access to quality and relevant curriculum focused on models of transformation.

Additionally, the work of Villegas and Lucas (2002) directly relates to this idea of knowing both content knowledge and the individual students as a way to be culturally responsive. They suggested the importance of knowing about students’ lives outside of school as well as the students’ past learning experiences. Teachers can use their knowledge of students to promote constructivist learning in the classroom. Villegas and Lucas posited that constructivist learning could build on students’ prior knowledge. Teachers can use what they know about students to adjust the mandated standards in a way that makes all students capable of learning. There needs to be a balance between content knowledge and teaching for diverse student populations (Grossman et al., 2008).

**Field experiences in diverse settings.** Often the topic of diversity is relegated to one or two courses within teacher education programs but needs to be incorporated throughout teacher education programs (Bodur, 2012; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Howard & Aleman, 2008). Grossman et al. (2008) specifically proposed that issues of equity should be interwoven into all
methods coursework. Unfortunately, PSTs often do not feel prepared to teach diverse student populations (Catapano, 2006). Simply placing PSTs in diverse field experiences is not enough to prepare teachers for culturally responsive teaching (Banks et al., 2007). Bodur (2012) asserted, “Providing field experiences in culturally diverse schools without the support of theoretical knowledge gained through classwork in the university settings is not sufficient” (p. 52). Fieldwork in diverse settings provides an opportunity for PSTs to connect the field experience to their studies of theoretical knowledge on how to teach for diverse populations (Carter Andrews, 2009; Bleicher, 2011; Bodur, 2012; Catapano, 2006). Sleeter (2008) shared that within field-based experiences, “our prospective teachers rely on what they’ve learned about the urban context through families, communities, churches, and media to frame their observations” (p. 122). Sleeter argued that field-based learning should prompt teachers to engage in critical reflection and begin to question what they see. Based on the information reported in this literature, the field experience can be a place for teacher education programs to promote social justice.

There is a lack of focus in the literature on field supervision as a place for social justice. More time and experience in the school community can help teachers learn more about what is needed to teach within these communities (Banks et al., 2007). Through a review of literature on PSTs’ perceptions of urban students in the field experience, Hill, Friedland, and Phelps (2012) found that several factors can help PSTs’ attitudes about their preconceptions of urban students: clear connections between theory and practice, opportunities to discuss experiences, support in the field experience, guided reflection, and knowledge of cultural diversity. Therefore, field supervision within diverse community settings can provide an opportunity to focus on social justice at the local, school level. A key player in supporting PSTs in field experiences is the
university field supervisor. Historically, supervision has been loosely tied to social justice through concepts such as moral action (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007; Starratt, 2005; Starratt & Howells, 1998), critical inquiry (Smyth, 1985; 1988; 2005), and cultural responsiveness (Bowers & Flinders, 1991; Gay, 1998, 2005). As Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002) asserted, supervision is a place to “...support, nurture, and strengthen the moral ideals embedded in teaching” (p. 69). Smyth (1985) proposed critical inquiry to question whose needs are being served by policies and practices in education and to promote opportunities for students to have a greater voice and ownership in schools. Additionally, culturally responsive supervision can be used as a means toward improving the learning of all students by empowering teachers to gain more knowledge about their students and, in turn, be better able to meet diverse students’ needs (Bowers & Flinders, 1991; Gay, 1998).

Jacobs and Casciola (2015) proposed supervision as a key place for social justice within teacher education. Just like teachers and future teachers, supervisors for social justice must examine his or her own beliefs and assumptions to develop a supervision platform and help the PSTs they supervise. Once a field supervisor is committed to supervision for social justice, this lens will influence all aspects of supervision. For example, supervisors will need to help PSTs reflect on their own beliefs, develop culturally responsive teaching skills, examine and interpret student data, and integrate with the school community.

**Inclusion of pedagogical practices within teacher education to promote social justice.** Castro (2010) called for further research on the specific teaching practices that could change PSTs’ attitudes and perceptions of cultural diversity. A variety of pedagogical practices within the teacher education literature exist to help PSTs on their journey to becoming better prepared to meet the needs of diverse learners. These include: autobiography and narratives
(Banks et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000), journal reflections and critical conversations (Addleman, Brazo, Dixon, Cevallos, and Worton, 2014; Taylor & Sobel, 2003), and observation tools within the field experience (Gay, 1998).

PSTs examine their beliefs through autobiography (Banks et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000) as well as narratives and life history (Banks et al., 2007). Autobiography is a narrative text in which a person can “…bring insight to one’s own motivations and experiences, to learn from reflecting on experience, and to learn from others by sharing experiences” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005, p. 408). Banks et al. (2005) proposed that autobiography can help teachers relate to students who have different life experiences and learn differently.

Addleman et al. (2014) advanced journal reflections and critical conversations as useful in PST development. They used journal reflection prompts with PSTs as a place to reflect upon specific situations PSTs encountered with cultural immersion, and then used these journals to foster dialogue. This idea of giving PSTs a space to reflect individually and then to discuss as a group provides a solid platform for social justice development. Taylor and Sobel (2003) also made the point of highlighting the importance of discussions surrounding topics of equity. They recommended that PSTs would benefit from “guided exposure integrated within the curriculum to provide preservice teachers with supports and outlets for questions, reflections, and candid conversations about their interactions with real students, teachers, and parents within the broad cultural diversity of a PDS context” (Taylor & Sobel, 2003, p. 255).

All of these pedagogical practices provide ideas for change in practice within teacher education programs. Field supervision specifically provides the context for PSTs to try
pedagogical practices and reflect on their instruction. Zeichner (2010) and Taylor and Sobel (2003) found observations in field experience schools and explicit modeling to be pivotal in helping PSTs make theory to practice connections. Taylor and Sobel (2003) found PSTs wanted a “demonstration of exactly how to approach what we are asking them to do in multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive classroom contexts—to show, tell, and explain the rationale for an education that is multicultural, multilingual, and inclusive” (p. 256).

Another place for social justice within supervision can be a supervisor’s observations of PSTs’ teaching. Gay (1998) proposed video recording of observations and specific observational tools for supervision to help PSTs reflect on their actions in the classroom. Gay’s ideas allow for the PSTs to actually see their teaching. Supervisors can help PSTs determine where culturally responsive teaching is taking place and can help identify areas of improvement. Catapano (2006) emphasized the same point Gay makes for the role of the supervisor in mentoring PSTs. The supervisor can help the PST uncover specific places for change in regards to social justice within their pedagogical practices. Therefore, the connection between theoretical knowledge in coursework and practice in the field experience is pivotal to teaching for social justice.

Transforming the classroom environment is one of the first steps in tackling inequities in education and engaging in praxis (Freire, 1970). Teacher education for social justice includes a focus on examination of beliefs, attention to content knowledge and culturally responsive teaching for diverse learners, inclusion of pedagogical practices to promote social justice, and providing field experiences within diverse settings (See Figure 1). The concept of critical literacy aligns with these tenets as it directly relates content knowledge of literacy with specific pedagogical practices, which promote social justice. In the next section, I will dissect critical
literacy as a concept and its practical applications to help PSTs move to more socially-just teaching practices.

**Figure 1.** Social justice teacher education literature themes.

**Critical Literacy**

Most of the scholarly literature on critical literacy is focused on adolescents, rather than on the elementary classroom (i.e., Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012; Lapayese, 2012; Saunders, 2012; Sawch, 2011; Schieble, 2012; Simmons, 2012). Furthermore, a large portion of the literature outlines what in-service teachers are doing with critical literacy and how teacher educators are working more closely with these teachers to expand their practice (i.e., Assaf & Delaney, 2013; Cooper & White, 2012; DeMulder et al., 2014; Dozier & Rutten, 2005). In addition, critical literacy is a term with multiple interpretations being actualized in different ways
in a variety of contexts. For example, some scholars suggest that critical literacy hinges on the belief that language and power are inextricably connected in the classroom (Delpit, 2006; Janks, 2001; Morrell, 2008).

Figure 2. Critical literacy literature themes in elementary schools and teacher education programs.

Figure 2 outlines the literature on critical literacy in both the elementary school setting and teacher education setting. In elementary school settings, the literature on critical literacy focuses on examining multiple perspectives, scrutinizing power structures and global issues in society, and social action. In teacher education programs, critical literacy is promoted in various courses and through the use of multiple strategies. For example, scholars use dialogue, literature, role play, popular literacies, debates, literacy lesson planning, examination of literacy events through a historical lens, and inquiry as pedagogical strategies. According to Adams (2010), social justice pedagogies “…acknowledge and seek to transform the many ways in which identity-based social position and power, privilege, and disadvantage, shape participant interactions in the classroom and everyday context” (p. 61). Therefore, I made note of the
various social justice frameworks used in these articles containing critical literacy in teacher education. Additionally, I examined the literature for implications of future practice with critical literacy in the teacher education realm.

**Exploring Critical Literacy**

Soares and Wood (2010) propose, “Critical literacy allows students to bring their own lived experiences into discussions, offering them opportunities for participation, engagement in higher levels of reading and discussion, and to understand the power of language” (p. 487). Critical literacy also promotes action and change. It “…challenges the status quo in an effort to discover alternative paths for self and social development” (Shor, 2009, p. 282). Through critical literacy, students can find a place to question the messages and knowledge they receive, actively challenge inequalities, and become a means of change (Shor).

**Foundations of Critical Literacy**

Morrell (2008) outlines a foundation of critical literacy that dates back to the Greek philosophers and a time when all language was viewed as rhetorical. The Greek philosophers recognized the intense power of language and acknowledged, “Those who have been able to use language, literacy, and pedagogy as tools of critique and resistance have always been considered as threats to the status quo” (Morrell, 2008, p. 31). The Enlightenment then brought about the emergence of critical philosophy (Morrell, 2008). During this time, verification of knowledge became an important topic. Specifically, Immanuel Kant questioned the source of knowledge. Kant considered what was just and what characteristics make up a moral citizen. Kant believed that self-examination was critical in order to challenge current dogmas. Morrell also highlighted the work of Hegel, who was especially interested in how people know the world even when they are presented with the ideas of other dogmas. To build on this critical philosophy, Karl Marx
asserted that the ideas of the ruling class were the ruling ideas in society (Morrell). From the Frankfurt School came a model of praxis. Here emerged the tools used to challenge the assumptions presented by those in power.

One of the biggest leaders in critical literacy was Paulo Freire and his work with marginalized adults in Brazil. Freire (1970) opposed the “banking model” of education where teachers simply “deposit” knowledge into children. Instead, Freire saw education as a dialogic process where teachers and students can learn from each other in a mutually beneficial relationship. Freire and Macedo (1987) posited, “literacy is fundamental to aggressively constructing one’s voice as part of a wider project of possibility and empowerment” (p.7). In order to read the world, Freire and Macedo (1987) suggest one must name their own experience and begin to understand the political nature of society. Therefore, people will question the hegemonic ways in which society functions and take action to change the world around them.

Within the last fifty years, models of critical literacy have undergone many changes due to regional, cultural, and political contexts (Luke, 2012). In the late 1900s in the United States, reading research emphasized critical reading, which focused on comprehension and higher-order skills. Schools focused on the meaning made between background knowledge and the text. However, schools did not yet question how texts and curriculum worked to reinforce political and cultural viewpoints (Luke). Then Rosenblatt’s (1987) reader response theory gained steam and educators began to accept that each person transacts with the text in their own individual way. This new approach to reading allowed for educators to understand that each child brought his or her own set of cultural knowledge to school (Luke 2012).

Another movement that shaped literacy instruction was the New Literacy Studies. Gee (2000) attests that the New Literacy Studies are based on the idea that, “reading and writing only
make sense when studied in the context of social and cultural practices of which they are but a part” (p. 180); thus, critical media literacy became an area of increased interest. While many frameworks exist to represent the idea of critical media literacy, Alvermann and Hagood (2000) synthesized these meanings to propose critical media literacy as:

understood to reside within theoretical perspectives aimed at engaging students in the analysis of textual images (both print and nonprint), the study of audiences, and the mapping of subject positions such that differences become cause for celebration rather than distrust. (p. 194)

Then in 2004, the International Reading Association formed a committee focused on Critical Perspectives in Literacy. This committee focused on implementing a critical perspective in the literacy classroom (Behrman, 2006).

Traditionally, critical literacy has been considered a theory more than an instructional approach (Behrman, 2006). There is no one single approach to critical literacy, but it does encompass educational commitment to social change and equity (Luke, 1997, 2012). Morrell (2008) advanced, “True literacy concerns an awareness of the effects of language; it understands the relationships between language and power and language and social institutions” (p. 42). Janks (2009) proposed that four orientations to critical literacy education work interdependently to encompass critical literacy education: domination, access, diversity, and design. Janks argued that language is used to maintain and reproduce social and political domination. Access works in conjunction with domination, as access to dominant forms of literacy is crucial to critical literacy; however, this access only further perpetuates dominance. On the other hand, without access to these dominant forms of language, students can remain marginalized. The diversity orientation acknowledges that different uses of language can create and sustain social identities.
The design perspective recognizes the range of meaning that can be created through the different semiotic signs. Additionally, Luke (2012) took the previous work of poststructuralist theory of discourse, analysis of speech genres, and cultural studies, to build a foundation for critical literacy today. Luke proposes these lines of research have led to:

(a) a focus on ideology critique and cultural analysis as a key element of education against cultural exclusion and marginalization; (b) a commitment to the inclusion of working class, cultural and linguistic minorities, indigenous learners, and others marginalized on the basis of gender, sexuality, or other forms of difference; and (c) an engagement with the significance of text, ideology, and discourse in the construction of social and material relations, everyday cultural and political life. (p. 6)

Common across these frameworks is a commitment to change. Therefore, critical literacy provides a very supportive theoretical framework for those interested in creating an equitable learning environment, because it lends itself to an equitable mindset and a need for change.

“Critical literacy and critical teaching require awareness of the social, historical, and linguistic factors that influence teaching, learning, and literate practice in order to work toward socially just ends” (Dozier et al., 2006, p. 168). Critical literacy embraces the importance of using students’ prior experiences in instruction (Soares & Wood, 2010). Through critical literacy, students are encouraged to critically examine the characters and messages they see presented in literature (Soares & Wood). This stance can lead to a discussion of whose stories are being told in children’s literature and in school in general. “A critical stance provides a space for questioning the usual ways of doing literacy, without providing easy answers” (O’Brien, 2001, p. 52). For example, O’Brien reexamined the texts in her classroom for gender stereotypes. She opened up a dialogue surrounding books that portrayed people in a stereotypical fashion,
particularly having to do with gender roles. O’Brien proved successful in her attempts to help her students question texts and the world. O’Brien posits that the challenge lies in using teaching practices to help students not only think of new perspectives but also take action to make change. Soares and Wood (2010) further support O’Brien’s practice of using literacy to question the world, as critical literacy provides an opportunity to rethink how “…harmful assumptions can to lead to stereotypes and unfair judgments about individuals and groups and thus to the establishment of social barriers” (p. 490). As Luke (2012) asserts, critical literacy is focused on social justice for marginalized populations. Therefore, literacy practices provide an appropriate medium for exploring issues of equity in education.

**Critical Literacy in Elementary School Settings**

In the review of the literature, critical literacy in elementary schools was focused on exploring multiple perspectives (Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Lewison, Flint, & Sluys, 2002; May et al., 2014; O’Neil, 2009), questioning the text and the world to examine issues of power (Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Jones et al., 2008; Lewison, Flint, Sluys, 2002; Wood & Jocius, 2013), and social action that can be taken (Assaf & Delaney, 2013; Dozier et al., 2006; Powell et al., 2001). Also, the literature clearly portrays that there is no one prescribed way to “do” critical literacy (Comber & Nixon, 2004). There are various types of texts used to support social justice in the elementary school classroom. For example, the notion of the New Literacy Studies has been included more recently in the classroom. Additionally, the literature on critical literacy includes film and performance pedagogy (i.e., Comber & Nixon, 2004; Medina & Costa, 2013). The types of literature being used to promote social justice include picture books and fairy tales, combined with a use of literature circles to promote critical discussions (Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Jones et al., 2008; May et al., 2014; Soares & Wood, 2010).
Multiple perspectives. One key aspect of critical literacy highlighted in the scholarly literature is the importance of examining multiple perspectives (Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Lewison et al., 2002; May et al., 2014; O’Neil, 2009). O’Neil (2009) expressed the benefits to using literature to explore multiple perspectives:

Immersion in literature that generates critical analysis of the status quo can open students to new perspectives, prepare students for current and coming challenges to traditional ways of being, and perhaps even stimulate them to launch their own challenges to the old order. (p. 41)

To investigate different perspectives, O’Neil (2009) used postmodern picture books and found that consideration of alternative viewpoints can improve children’s sense of justice. O’Neil posits that through these postmodern picture books, children are able to consider another point of view than the typical, oftentimes hegemonic, perspective. Soares and Wood (2010) also suggested the strategy of examining multiple perspectives in order to raise the critical awareness of the students. Soares and Wood (2010) focused on promoting social responsibility through the use of literature. In these articles (O’Neil, 2009; Soares & Wood, 2010), the authors offer more of a practitioner’s approach to conducting critical literacy rather than specific recounts of students’ reactions to critical literacy. Therefore, these articles offer insight into a place to start critical literacy with elementary aged students.

Similarly, Clarke and Whitney (2009) used fairy tales to explore multiple viewpoints. In this article, teachers were encouraged to allow students to recreate fairy tales from the perspective of another character in order to learn about power and positioning (Clarke & Whitney). The authors found that through examining multiple perspectives in a story, students were able to determine how power and perspective can leave one side silenced (Clarke &
Whitney). Additionally, May et al. (2014) stressed the importance of not only selecting culturally relevant books for classroom read-alouds, but also having critical conversations about the literature. Through a one-on-one conversation with a six-year-old child in this article, the PST was able to determine relevant information about the child’s life that could be used in further connecting with the child, just through a conversation brought on by a read-aloud. To echo the importance of dialogue, Fain (2008) led discussions with first- and second-graders to explore oppression and racism by looking into diverse perspectives presented in picture books. Fain found that the children in this study faulted ignorance for oppressors’ actions and felt compelled to forgive oppressors. Children specifically expressed a desire not to become oppressors themselves (Fain). Additionally, the fifth grade students in Lewison et al.’s (2002) study began to contradict whose voices were being heard in literature while exploring multiple perspectives.

**Power structures.** By exploring multiple perspectives, teachers can lead students to discussions about power structures in society and more global issues. Clarke and Whitney (2009) affirm that examining power structures was a key tool in making connections to larger social issues. Students were able to make connections between perspectives portrayed in text and how oppression plays a part in silencing people’s voices. Wood and Jocius (2013) specifically wrote about the disengagement of black males in schools overcome with white privilege. They build upon Bishop’s (1990) assertion that black youth must see themselves reflected in the literature in a classroom. Wood and Jocius (2013) promote the use of culturally relevant texts and critical conversations surrounding these texts in order to help black males find their place in the literacy classroom. The authors found that giving young black males a chance to see themselves reflected in text helped them to realize they were not invisible and that other people faced similar experiences and challenges (Wood & Jocius). In another study, Lewison, Flint, and Sluys (2002)
discussed the use of both picture books and young adult literature to specifically focus on issues of race, class, poverty, homelessness, and gender. They found literature could be used to challenge their students to move from a personal connection to larger sociopolitical issues (Lewison et al.). Furthermore, Fain (2008) conducted a yearlong qualitative study in which first and second grade students examined issues of language and diversity in literature circles. The class specifically used literature to address issues of racism and oppression (Fain). Students within this study were able to better understand the role of oppressor, feel compelled to forgive oppressors for their ignorance, and work to avoid being in the role of oppressor. Jones, Webb, and Neumann (2008) explained the importance of using literacy as a place for students to connect with their community and explore multiple perspectives. The authors suggest students develop a greater sense of social responsibility when considering ideas from multiple perspectives.

**Social action.** While many of the articles discussed thus far make mention of the importance of social action and even lead up to social action, much is left to be desired. Human beings are active agents capable of transforming the world. As Dozier et al. (2006) profess, “...language is social action, its meaning dependent on the context” (p. 21). Therefore, critical literacy can provide a place for social action to emerge in the classroom. In a two-year qualitative case study of inquiry, Assaf and Delaney (2013) looked at the work of two in-service teachers (elementary and secondary) during a graduate program. The teachers used multiple texts and inquiry to engage in critical literacy and specifically look at racism. Assaf and Delaney (2013) found the students started to gain a voice and stand up for themselves when directly confronted with racism. In another study conducted with fourth grade students, social action played a large role (Powell et al., 2001). After learning more about Kentucky’s Black Mountain,
these students banded together to save Black Mountain. They read texts to gather research on Black Mountain and wrote a ten-page proposal to officials that included recommendations to save Black Mountain.

As shown through these articles, critical literacy can transform an elementary school classroom. Teachers can foster an environment where children examine global or local issues through multiple perspectives. Students can be encouraged to question texts and read the world they live in. In the previously mentioned articles that focused on exploring multiple perspectives and engaging in critical dialogue about these diverse perspectives with students (Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; May, et al., 2014; O’Neil, 2009; Soares & Wood, 2010), the authors briefly touched on social action. However, social action (a key piece to critical literacy) took a backseat. Clarke and Whitney (2009) acknowledge that simply exploring multiple perspectives is insufficient; however, it is a foundation for the next step of social action. The authors supplied a list of social action ideas, but the scope of this article does not allow a full explanation and details on each idea. Lewison et al. (2002) acknowledged that “…social action and promoting social justice was less evident in the classrooms of novices to critical pedagogy” (p. 390), as these teachers focused primarily on disrupting commonplace ideas and examining multiple viewpoints. The authors proposed that all teachers (novice and experienced) need support when enacting critical literacy in the classroom (Lewison et al.). The teachers themselves admitted “conceptions of critical literacy were still shallow” and more learning was needed (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 390). Additionally, O’Neil (2010) used postmodern picture books not only to examine alternative viewpoints, but also to help students develop agency. O’Neil stated that through developing a sense of agency, children could become empowered to enact social change. O’Neil posited the importance of providing a safe space for children to imagine different
scenarios to life events in order for students to develop this agency. The author goes on to provide brief examples of how to further promote social action, but, once again, these descriptions are limited.

**Critical Literacy in Teacher Education Programs**

When discussing teacher leadership, Jones et al. (2008) emphasized the need for literacy teachers to take the reigns as social justice leaders in schools. As future educators, PSTs can leverage literacy to become leaders. Jones et al. contended that language and literacy is vitally linked to issues of emancipation and empowerment within the classroom. Therefore, Jones et al. promoted “…students’ use of language to empower and transform themselves and to participate within various social communities or discourses” (p. 9). Teachers can use children’s literature and literacy pedagogy as a space for empowerment in the classroom. Pinhasi-Vittorio (2011) specifically discussed using critical literacy to empower marginalized groups. Critical literacy allows a space for students to question what they see and read in texts and the world (Pinhasi-Vittori, 2011). As students grow and continue to experience critical literacy, they may use literacy for political action and to transform the world around us (Pinhasi-Vittori, 2011).

Throughout the literature on critical literacy in teacher education programs, many different strategies are used in a variety of contexts. Across the scholarly literature, authors used dialogue (Bruna, 2007; Johnson & Rosario-Ramos, 2012; Ryan & Scott, 2008; Sluys, Laman, Legan, & Lewison, 2005), literature (Dedeoglu, Ulusoy, & Lamme, 2012; Marshall & Klein, 2009; McTigue, Thorton, Wiese, 2012), role play (Marshall & Klein, 2009), popular literacies (Medina & Costa, 2010), debates (Marshall & Klein, 2009), literacy lesson planning (Norris, Lucas, & Prudhoe, 2012), examination of literacy events through a historical lens (Ciardiello, 2012; McTigue et al., 2012), and inquiry (Medina & Costa, 2010; Scherff, 2012; Skerrett, 2012).
as strategies in teacher education programs. These studies were set in multiple contexts within teacher education programs. For example, the studies took place in online forums (Ryan & Scott, 2008), a Social Studies course (Marshall & Klein, 2009), an adolescent literacy course (Skerrett, 2010), teacher education programs in a more general sense (Johnson & Rosario-Ramos, 2012; Rodriguez & Cho, 2011; Zipin & Brennan, 2006), language arts courses (Dedeoglu et al., 2012; Medina & Costa, 2010; McTigue et al, 2012; Scherff, 2012; Sluys et al., 2005), a multicultural course (Bruna, 2007), fieldwork (Ciardiello, 2012; Mosley, 2010), and early childhood courses (Norris, Lucas, & Prudhoe, 2012). Additionally, this literature set explored several international settings such as Turkey (Dedeoglu et al., 2012), Australia (Zipin & Brennan, 2006), and Puerto Rico (Johnson & Rosario-Ramos, 2012; Medina & Costa, 2010).

**Pedagogical strategies.** Since this literature reflected a variety of contexts and strategies used to support critical literacy, it is difficult to draw conclusive themes. It has been reiterated in the literature that there was no one specific framework or definition of critical literacy (Assaf & Delaney, 2013). Many scholars believed critical literacy should be implemented and applied differently depending on the context (Comber, 2001; Luke, 2000; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). More research needs to be done on the types of strategies used in critical literacy and the contexts in which these strategies are used to promote social justice before any big themes can emerge.

From this literature review, the many goals of teacher education programs were often accomplished with pedagogical strategies centered on stories or “text.” These stories took different forms, such as role play, children’s literature, historical accounts, counter-storytelling, journaling, etc. but all led to the end goal of social justice. Common across this literature was
Freire’s idea of reading the world; however, each author used a variety of “texts” when reading the world.

For example, Marshall and Klein (2009) used personal stories as a place for PSTs to recall their own histories and connect with immigration issues. Johnson and Rosario-Ramos (2012) also used students’ lives as a place for critical literacy. They found change “involves the deconstruction and reconstruction of traditional narratives about students’ abilities and experiences…” (Johnson & Rosario-Ramos, 2012, p. 52). The use of literature in a variety of ways was prominent when using stories for critical literacy. Skerrett (2010) found that groups of PSTs used literature to explore social class with their inquiry projects. Similarly, Dedeoglu et al. (2012) used LGBT literature to help PSTs more deeply understand themselves and others. In a study of undergraduates in a reading method course, Sluys et al. (2005) used literature circles to foster dialogue among PSTs. Ciardiello (2012) explored the stories of African-American leaders to critically examine the impact of literacy on freedom through a historical lens. McTigue et al. (2012) also used historical texts to explore critical literacy. In this article, the authors used historical fiction with PSTs because it offered a window into people and places of the past. Medina and Costa (2010) had their PSTs in Puerto Rico “read” popular culture to better connect literacy practices with the interests of their students. For example, PSTs develop literacy practices centered on video games, board games, art, music, television, etc. Bruna (2007) also had PSTs look at the surrounding world and specifically asked PSTs to develop steps to achieve the kind of world they envision.

**Social justice umbrella.** This literature on critical literacy and teacher education drew on different aspects of social justice frameworks. Since social justice is a very broad and undefined term, many different variations of social justice are used to support this literature. Several articles
that focused on power (Johnson & Rosario-Ramos, 2012; Sluys et al., 2005; Zipin & Brennan, 2006) fell under the umbrella of social justice by specifically examining different aspects of power in education. For example, Johnson and Rosario-Ramos (2012) used discourse and counter-storytelling to examine issues of power in education. Additionally, Zipin and Brennan (2006) looked into social positioning and identity as a means of power relations.

Another area of scholarship came from the Social Studies literature, which could be considered a subset of the social justice framework (Ciardiello, 2012; Marshall & Klein, 2009; McTigue et al., 2012; Skerret, 2012). For example, McTigue et al. (2012) used historical fiction texts with their elementary PSTs to engage in an authentication project to foster a more critical look at historical events. Similarly, Ciardiello (2012) offered ideas for use with PSTs to examine the literacy narrative of freedom by exploring the story of African-American historical leaders. Ciardiello (2012) found students were able to see the interconnectedness of social practices such as literacy, freedom, voice, and identity. Skerret (2012) discovered PSTs experienced “deep engagement and satisfaction from learning about and developing an action plan to address serious problems that personally affected them or the broader human community” (p. 63). Marshall and Klein (2009) also found that using critical literacy and social studies together can lead to more productive and informed citizens that are focused on the common good of all. As seen in these articles, critical literacy instruction and Social Studies can be interwoven rather seamlessly to promote social justice work.

Identity-based research offered a framework found in this literature as well (Dedeoglu et al., 2012; Rodriguez & Cho, 2011). The construction of identity is a very social process and depends largely on personal experience in the world. Rodriguez and Cho (2011) explored teacher identity in terms of traditionally marginalized groups. They posited that teacher education
programs will only further perpetuate existing hierarchies unless they “create dialogic spaces for making the ‘silenced’ voice heard” (Rodriguez & Cho, 2011, p. 503). Dedeogly et al. (2012) also examined the identity of a commonly marginalized group (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender individuals) with PSTs in a teacher education program. The authors reported both negative and positive themes from the PSTs in the study.

Another framework seen in this literature was culturally responsive teaching (Norris et al., 2012). Norris et al. (2012) claimed, “Critical literacy is culturally responsive pedagogy” (p. 60). They used critical literacy with a group of PSTs in the early childhood classroom to promote culturally responsive teaching and better prepare literacy lessons for all learners. PSTs were able to see how critical literacy could promote critical thinking, help understand multiple perspectives, develop awareness of issues in society, and learn about other cultures (Norris et al.). Additionally, Zipin and Brennan (2006) directly used a social justice stance to explore issues of power/positioning when addressing individual needs of preservice literacy teachers.

Common across all of these articles and respective frameworks was a focus on critical literacy as means to question texts and the world, and as a result, a closer examination of power structures. These main themes directly foster a social justice agenda. While not all of the research extends to the social action piece of social justice, the research provides a starting place for this transformation.

**Implications for Future Practice in Teacher Education**

When looking across the implications provided in these articles, there was a clear need for dialogue in teacher education preparation (Rodriguez & Cho, 2011; Ryan & Scott, 2008), an explicit model of how to use critical literacy (Norris, Lucas, & Prudhoe, 2012), professional
development for teacher educators (Zipin & Brennan, 2006) and supportive professional networks (Skerrett, 2010; Zipin & Brennan, 2006).

Rodriguez and Cho (2011) examined the experiences of two bi/multilingual PSTs in two different teacher education programs. From this work, they argued “…deliberate effort to seek out the voice of linguistic minorities in teacher education programs permits us as practitioners and researchers to shift power relations in challenging certain dominant academic discourses while legitimizing marginalized voices” (p. 503). Therefore, Rodriguez and Cho (2011) made the argument for supporting voice of PSTs themselves in order to make teacher education programs more equitable. Additionally, Ryan and Scott (2008) find the need for critical discourse among educators.

While this literature promoted the importance of critical literacy, educators do still face challenges. Norris et al. (2012) explored critical literacy in an early childhood context with PSTs. They found while many PSTs realized the benefit of critical literacy, challenges still emerged. For example, they found PSTs expressed discomfort and anxiety with addressing “difficult” topics. The PSTs often raised the question of parental approval and a desire not to overstep any boundaries. Additionally, PSTs raised a concern about meeting mandated standards while engaging in critical literacy. As a result, Norris et al. (2012) asserted the importance of “…teaching preservice teachers about the practice and showing them how to utilize it in developing effective critical literacy lessons appropriate to the classrooms in which they will teach” (p. 62). Not only was it important for preservice teachers to understand the benefit of critical literacy, but they must also have a clear model of how to use critical literacy in their classrooms.
Additionally, in-service teachers attending graduate education programs appear frequently in the studies surrounding critical literacy. These studies also came from a variety of contexts, especially international settings (Neophytou & Valianes, 2013; Sangster, Stone, & Anderson, 2013; Cooper & White, 2012). Since there is a field of literature focused on how to do the work of critical literacy with in-service teachers, it would be beneficial to start this work with future teachers within their teacher education programs.

The concept of critical literacy can provide a place to foster a social justice focus within teacher education programs (See Figure 3). Teacher educators can help PSTs gain content knowledge in literacy while using critical literacy to transform their teaching practices within the field experience. Central to this process is teacher learning in order to enact critical literacy to support student learning. More specifically, teacher learning can be promoted through practitioner inquiry.

![Figure 3. Social justice teacher education and critical literacy concepts apparent in the literature.](image-url)
Teacher Learning and Professional Development

The definition of what constitutes professional development is wide and varied; however, Desimone (2009) asserted that professional development research is mainly focused on changes in knowledge, practice, and student achievement. Professional development should aide teachers in developing an increase in knowledge and a change in attitude (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2002). Following this change in attitude, teachers can create a change in their classroom instruction (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2002). As a result, this change in instruction can lead to increased student achievement (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2002). Several factors influence professional development such as the context (Bodur, 2012; Cornbleth, 2010; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Desimone, 2009; Hagevik, Aydeniz, & Rowell, 2012; McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Timperley, 2006), teacher life cycles (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997), career stages (Berliner, 1994; Dozier et al., 2006), opportunities for collaboration (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Guskey, 2002; Hagevik et al., 2012; Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007; Mule, 2006; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Rock & Levin, 2002), and teacher buy-in (Guskey, 2002). Banks et al. (2007) posited that teachers need to know how to inquire into their students’ backgrounds in order to better connect their teaching to students’ needs. Professional development should also involve and draw upon teachers’ experiences (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Feiman-Nemser (2001) asserted "...professional development should be built into the ongoing work of teaching and relate to teachers' questions and concerns" (p. 1042).

Practitioner Inquiry

One vehicle for professional development that has been used with preservice teachers (Grossman, 2005; Price, 2001; Price & Valli, 2005; Valli, 2000; Yendol-Hoppey, Gregory,
Jacobs, League, 2008), inservice teachers (Kinchenoe, 2011; Yendol-Hoppey et al., 2008), and teacher educators (Cochran-Smith, 2003b) is practitioner inquiry. Practitioner inquiry can be defined as systematic, intentional study by educators of their own practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Related terms to practitioner inquiry include teacher research, action research, self-study, participatory action research, etc. However, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) proposed that practitioner inquiry acts as an umbrella to capture these varying terms. Some major commonalities among these terms include: the practitioner as the researcher, professional context as the research site, systematic collection and analysis of data, and collaboration (Cochran-Smith & Lytle). Cochran-Smith (2004) asserted that inquiry could act as a place for change within education. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) maintained that inquiry as the means by which teachers can blur the lines of formal knowledge versus practical knowledge to lead to a “fuller conception of teacher learning across the professional life span” (p. 19). Through the work of inquiry, both novice and expert teachers need to engage in the same learning process. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) suggested that novice and expert teachers can work together in inquiry communities to pose questions, examine varying viewpoints, and make a change in teaching practices.

**Professional knowledge development through teacher inquiry.** Teachers can develop professional knowledge through their engagement in teacher inquiry. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) made clear distinctions among these sources of teacher knowledge to be for practice, in practice, and of practice.

Knowledge for practice refers to the how, when, and what of "formal" knowledge. The act of knowing more equates to teaching more effectively. Teachers are not the knowledge generators but the users of knowledge. The "...goal is for each and every teacher to enact
practices consistent with the knowledge base and with empirically certified best practices..." (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 259). Teacher learning is a connected process that occurs over time. Within this framework of knowledge for practice, teaching has a specific knowledge base and initiatives focus on compiling this knowledge base into formal knowledge of teaching. The emphasis is typically on content area knowledge and associated skills/strategies. It is believed, "...highly skilled teachers have deep knowledge of their content areas and of the most effective teaching strategies for creating learning opportunities for students" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, pp. 254-5). Typically, knowledge for practice comes to teachers in the form of workshops or trainings, book studies, speakers, and research articles.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) explained that knowledge in practice emphasizes "...what very competent teachers know as it is expressed or embedded in the artistry of practice, in teachers' reflections on practice, in teachers' practiced inquiries, and/or in teachers' narrative accounts of practice" (p. 262). This concept focuses on the cyclical process of thought and action, reflection and inquiry. Knowledge in practice is the knowledge developed as teachers learn how to respond to the everyday happenings of the classroom. This type of knowledge requires that teachers make decisions about teaching while in action based on previous teaching experiences and reflection on these teaching experiences. Therefore, knowledge in practice is not developed by outside theory but is largely cultivated in the classroom and teaching profession. As a result, “teacher learning hinges on enhancing teachers’ understandings of their own actions—that is, their own assumptions, their own reasoning and decisions, and their own inventions of new knowledge to fit unique and shifting classroom situations” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 267). Teachers may develop knowledge for practice from a workshop or training; however, they construct knowledge in practice when they try out an idea within their classrooms.
The experienced teachers develop the practical knowledge valued in this category and share this expertise with novice teachers. Knowledge in practice can be supported and developed through coaching and reflective supervision as well as collaboration with peers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle).

Lastly, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) defined knowledge of practice as knowledge developed "... as a pedagogic act co-constructed in the context of use, intimately connected to the knower, and...inevitably a process of theorizing" (pp. 272-3). Knowledge of practice comes from engaging in systematic inquiry within a collaborative community. Inquiry communities at this level work together to examine their own assumptions and link these beliefs with theory and research. In this process, teachers construct local knowledge of larger political and social issues. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) suggest, “what goes on inside the classroom is profoundly altered and ultimately transformed when teachers’ frameworks for practice foreground the intellectual, social, and cultural contexts of teaching” (p. 276). Teachers work together through inquiry to create new learning, and then use this new learning to create change.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle moved beyond knowledge of practice to “inquiry as a stance.” Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) proposed inquiry as stance “as a grounded theory of action that positions the role of practitioners and practitioner knowledge as central to the goal of transforming teaching, learning, leading, and schooling” (p. 119). Through a systematic implementation of inquiry and multiple experiences with inquiry, preservice teachers can develop an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014).

Through this process of engaging in inquiry, preservice teachers learn knowledge in practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Once the preservice teachers finish this inquiry process, many realize the importance of inquiry (Rock & Levin, 2002). By engaging in the inquiry process, PSTs will develop their own identity as a teacher (Mule, 2006; Lynn & Smith-Maddox.)
2007). After the PSTs complete and reflect on the inquiry process, they develop knowledge of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). As PSTs continue to grow as practitioners and engage in inquiry, the goal is to develop inquiry as stance.

Inquiry as a tool for cultivating situated knowledge. The inquiry process can be utilized as an authentic activity that helps PSTs develop the knowledge needed to teach (Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007; Hagevik et al., 2012; Martin, 2005; Rock & Levin, 2002; Mule, 2006). Preservice teachers form pivotal knowledge within the field experience. The field experience is “at once difficult and exciting and without a doubt one of the most defining moments in a teacher’s career” (Pena & Almaguer, 2007, p. 105). Context is one aspect of the field experience that is crucial to the formation of the preservice teachers’ knowledge in their field experience, because the context in which teachers live and work “…shapes effective teaching, what teachers know, what knowledge is seen as essential for teaching, and who is warranted to produce knowledge about teaching” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 24). The context in which preservice teachers live and work may directly impact the knowledge they bring to their individual inquiries. As Kincheloe (2011) asserted, “what we “see” as researchers is shaped by particular world views, values, political perspectives, conceptions of race, class, and gender relations, definitions of intelligence…” (p. 88). Hagevik et al. (2012) found preservice teachers constructed actions based on their school context. PSTs’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions are shaped by the context in which they are conducting inquiry within the field experience (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). Cornbleth (2010) asserted that in addition to university coursework, “school sites also ‘teach’” (p. 295). This learning will directly impact what they choose to inquire about in their specific classroom context. If PSTs are to inquire into their own teaching practices, they must be able to marry the theoretical knowledge of coursework with the
practical knowledge of the field experience. The context of the field experience and any subsequent learning community will impact the nature of the preservice teachers’ inquiries. Putnam and Borko (2000) asserted that cognition is situated in the inquiry process. To help preservice teachers develop knowledge of the school community, authentic activities (such as inquiry) are crucial.

**Inquiry as a catalyst for change.** Inquiry can be utilized as an authentic activity that helps PSTs develop the knowledge needed to teach (Hagevik et al., 2012; Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007; Martin, 2005; Mule, 2006; Rock & Levin, 2002). The goal of teacher inquiry “…is understanding, articulating, and ultimately altering practice and social relationships in order to bring about fundamental change…” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 279). Practitioner inquiry directly promotes action and reflection, or praxis (Freire, 1970). To further support this point, Kincheloe (2011) found inquiry as a means in which people could self-reflect and use their knowledge of the world to create change. Therefore, a close examination of the change process is imperative. Change requires continuous development and support (Guskey, 2002). Change necessitates “…the encouragement, motivation, and occasional nudging that many practitioners require to persist in the challenging tasks that are intrinsic to all change efforts” (Guskey, 2002, p. 388). All stakeholders will need ongoing support to facilitate and implement inquiry into the field experience. Mule (2006) found support was imperative to the success of inquiry with preservice teachers. Preservice teachers will also need support as they develop an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

**Inquiry and social justice.** By engaging in inquiry, PSTs can become change agents, particularly in the area of social justice. Cochran-Smith (2003a) postulated that in order to learn to teach for social justice, inquiry should focus on “ongoing uncertainties, confusions,
misgivings, and concerns” (p. 81). Gore and Zeichner (1991) upheld the belief that while it is difficult work, PSTs have the potential to use inquiry to raise moral and political questions. Lytle (1996) suggested that inquiry becomes a place where teachers can develop “local” solutions to concerns within education. Kincheloe (1991) posited, “Critical action research facilitates the attempt of teachers to organize themselves into communities of researchers dedicated to emancipatory experience for themselves and their students” (p. 88). A study conducted by Lynn and Maddox (2007) focused on using inquiry to explore social justice with PSTs. They found “Inquiry became a space where novices could reflect openly and honestly about these issues while drawing important relationships between theory and practice” (Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007). Kincheloe (2012) also promoted inquiry as a place for teachers to be active producers of knowledge, instead of simply consumers. Additionally, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) asserted that when teachers join together “…as highly professionalized teacher-researchers, they become increasingly articulate about issues of equity, hierarchy, and autonomy and increasingly critical of the technocratic model that dominates much of school practice” (p. 9). Furthermore, Athanases, Wahleithner, and Bennett (2012) noted that inquiry promoted reflection and knowledge that supports instruction. PSTs in this study took care to learn about their students as human beings in order to provide more equitable instruction. These articles demonstrate that inquiry is a highly reflective process.

Collaborative inquiry. Inquiry communities can provide an intellectual community where teachers can work together to solve common concerns (Lytle, 1996). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) found inquiry communities to be both social and political. Cochran-Smith (2004) asserted that teacher education for social justice is a learning problem, and, therefore, suggested that teachers need continued learning over time within learning communities. In these learning
communities, teachers can learn from each other in order to learn to teach for social justice. Through inquiry communities Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) posited that members can make “...problematic the current arrangements of schooling; the ways knowledge is constructed, evaluated, and used; and teachers’ individual and collective roles in bringing about change” (p. 18). Learning communities can provide a place for critical dialogue about shared concerns to occur (Snow-Gerono, 2005). Through engaging in inquiry with a community of learners, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) suggested, teachers “...tacit knowledge more visible, call into question assumptions about common practices, and generate data that make possible the consideration of alternatives” (p. 294). Since dialogue requires critical thinking (Freire, 1970), the members of the learning community will create dialogue and, thus, critical thinking. In that way, inquiry can become the impetus for change for teachers engaged in this community of learners.

Cochran-Smith (2004) posited that teachers within a learning community develop collaborative resonance, or an opportunity to collaboratively learn about teaching. Throughout the inquiry cycle, preservice teachers will continually need support and collaboration (Guskey, 2002; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). The inquiry community can become a place for this support (Lytle, 1996). Through inquiry, knowledge is constructed collaboratively with all stakeholders in order to provide a more equitable curriculum and access to learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle). DuFour (2004) found that professional learning communities focused ongoing learning on what educators want students to learn and how to achieve these learning goals. The purpose of a professional learning community is to work collaboratively to ensure learning for all students.
In alignment with Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) knowledge of practice, Cochran-Smith and Lytle assert that the knowers and knowledge are directly connected to larger political and social agendas. Within this framework, knowledge is constructed collaboratively. To further the knowledge of practice, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) suggest inquiry communities in which teachers and researchers collaborate. This relationship does not mirror the hierarchical position of the expert-novice relationship, however, all parties bring their own unique perspective to the group. These communities require face-to-face interactions with one another over time. The goal of inquiry communities is “…understanding, articulating, and ultimately altering practice and social relationships in order to bring about fundamental change in classrooms, schools, districts, programs, and professional organizations” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 279). Cochran-Smith and Lytle build upon Freire’s (1970) position that critical reflection is key. In inquiry communities, teachers and researchers examine and uncover assumptions before they can investigate other more global issues. Inquiry communities “…provide the social and intellectual contexts in which teachers at all points along the professional life span can take critical perspectives on their own assumptions as well as the theory and research of others and also jointly construct local knowledge that connects their work in schools to larger social and political issues” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 283).

Additionally, in a study of professional development of inquiry within a learning community, Snow-Gerono (2005) found learning communities to be an environment in which teachers could safely questions their own beliefs and teaching practices as well as more global policies and practices in education. Snow-Gerono emphasized the power of dialogue within learning communities to be a place of problem-posing. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) detail the initiative of community learning at the preservice teacher level. They posit that communities are
established in order to offer multiple viewpoints and establish a culture of questioning. These communities create time to work collaboratively to share practical experiences and explore classroom data in order to enhance teacher learning.

Wenger (1998) posited that “the transformative practice of a learning community offers an ideal context for developing new understandings because the community sustains change as part of an identity of participation” (p. 215). Therefore, learning communities are not only a place to support teacher learning but also to create new ways of knowing and transforming one’s identity. In addition, Abt-Perkins (1996) proposed that teachers engage in transformative learning when they participate in dialogue about their practice, or tell stories about their teaching. Through this storytelling, teachers construct their own identity. Abt-Perkins asserted, “Stories could be shared with others in the school community with the intent of being part of a continuing analytic dialogue so that others could become collaborators in the inquiry process” (p. 183). This storytelling and dialogue is a key component to the collaborative, and potentially transformative, nature of the learning community.

Summary

Due to the growing diversity within schools, teacher education has evolved throughout the years. Teacher education for social justice includes a focus on providing opportunities for all students to have access to quality education and be successful. The components of social justice teacher education include examination of beliefs, attention to content knowledge and culturally responsive teaching for diverse students, and field experiences in diverse settings. Within this literature are also descriptions of pedagogical practices within teacher education that focus on social justice.
Critical literacy provides a place to focus further on content knowledge and culturally responsive teaching for diverse learners. Critical literacy instruction with elementary students focuses on exploring multiple perspectives, examining power structures, and the importance of social action. Teacher education programs can utilize critical literacy with PSTs to promote critical literacy within their pedagogical practices in the field experience. In order to change their pedagogical practices, PSTs need to engage in continuous professional growth. Practitioner inquiry can be a conduit for this evolution in PSTs’ instructional practices as inquiry provides a place for change (See Figure 4.).

Figure 4. Explanation of the literature and concepts guiding this study.

Chapter three will focus on the methods used in this study. I will outline the theoretical underpinnings of this study, my decision to conduct a multiple case study, and data collection and analysis methods.
Chapter Three: Methods and Design

This multiple case study (Yin, 2014) explored how preservice teachers made meaning of critical literacy instruction in the elementary classroom while engaged in practitioner inquiry within a learning community with other preservice teachers during a field experience. This study was conducted with a constructivist lens (Crotty, 1998), taking place in the real world context of a field experience within an elementary teacher education program and an inquiry-focused learning community in order to capture the experiences of the participants (Yin).

Research Questions

There is a scarcity of research on the use of inquiry focused on critical literacy with PSTs and supporting PSTs in making theory to practice connections relative to issues of social justice within the field experience. Therefore, I developed my research questions for this study to directly address these gaps.

The research questions that guided this study included:

1. How do elementary PSTs engaged in practitioner inquiry make meaning of critical literacy instruction within a facilitated learning community?
2. How do PSTs enact critical literacy instruction in the field experience elementary classroom while engaged in practitioner inquiry in a facilitated learning community?
   a. What facilitates PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom?
b. What inhibits PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom?

This chapter begins with an overview of why case study was selected as the method for this qualitative study. Then, I will outline my paradigm of constructivism followed by a description of the study context in terms of the teacher education program and, specifically, the learning community. Next, I will outline my participant selection, data collection methods, and specific protocols for data collection. Then, I will provide a detailed description of the process for data analysis. Finally, I will review any possible limitations to this study.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is interpretive in nature. An interpretive perspective brings to light that “we can never completely separate what is being described from the describer” (Bochner, 2005, p. 121). Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be completely separate from the researcher and the participants.

This study draws upon a constructivist paradigm. Constructivism is an interpretive stance that involves people actively making meaning as a group (Lincoln, 2005). Constructivism clearly rejects the objective human science of positivism (Lincoln, 2005). In constructivism, participants and the researcher work collaboratively to construct knowledge and reality (Hatch, 2002). In that way, the researcher is engaged in the construction of meaning with the participants. The reality constructed is unique because it is based on how individuals (participants and researcher) experience and interpret the world (Hatch, 2002; Lincoln, 2005). This construction of knowledge is crucial as it will determine how people will interact with each other, interpret events, and frame thinking (Lincoln, 2005). Constructivism has the potential “to enable and increase social
justice” (p. 63). Therefore, constructivism provides a clear match for the goals of this study of critical literacy instruction and inquiry as aspects of a social justice teacher education program.

Constructivism is drawn from the epistemology of constructionism. Constructionists believe truth and meaning is made through an interaction with the world (Crotty, 1998). Meaning is interpreted through this interaction with the world. As a result, there is no valid truth or interpretation, rather multiple useful interpretations (Crotty). Constructionism “assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24). Crotty made a clear distinction between constructivism and constructionism. He suggested the use of constructivism as an epistemological consideration when focused on the meaning making of the individual, while constructionism focused on the collective generation of meaning. Constructivism focused more on the unique experience of the individual. As a result, constructivism provides a theoretical framework for this study as I aim to examine each PST’s meaning making process.

**Case Study**

I decided to conduct a multiple case study as I sought to investigate a contextualized phenomenon with specific boundaries (Hatch, 2002). I chose to do a case study as Yin (2014) suggested it is appropriate for answering “how” and “why” questions such as my research questions. Each individual PST within the learning community context was a separate case. I examined each PST as a separate case, and then looked across these cases for themes through a cross-case synthesis. A key component to conducting a case study is a rich description of the context of the study. Therefore, within my study design I provided a very detailed description of
the learning community context and university component of the context. I collected multiple types of qualitative data to add to the strength of this case study.

Yin and Stake are two leading methodologists in case study research. Both Yin and Stake ground case study work in the constructivist paradigm (Baxter & Jack, 2008). I chose to align my work with Yin’s multiple case studies over Stake’s collective case studies because Yin’s use of cross-case synthesis for analysis with multiple cases more directly aligns to my beliefs about the importance of regarding each case separately before I looked across the cases for themes.

Context

This study took place in a large Southeastern United States university teacher education program. The university was located in an urban community within one of the largest school districts in the United States. According to U.S. census data, the county population estimate for this school district in 2014 was 1,300,000. The county demographics were comprised of 52.3% White, 26.0% Hispanic or Latino, 17.4% African American, 3.9% Asian, 0.5% American Indian, and 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The median household income was approximately $49,600, with 16.8% of the population living in poverty. The elementary school contexts in this study represent a specific area in the county where the population has been increasing rapidly over the last few years.

Teacher Education Program Context

This particular elementary undergraduate teacher education program was comprised of approximately 350 preservice teachers. The teacher education program is guided by the conceptual underpinnings of what are called the 4 I’s. These include: inquiry, inclusion, integration, and innovation. These 4 I’s guide the coursework and fieldwork in this teacher education program. Inquiry involves the systematic and intentional study of PSTs’ own teaching
practice. **Inclusion** focuses on issues of equity and creating learning opportunities for all students. **Integration** stresses the importance of integrating content across the curriculum and creating theory to practice connections. **Innovation** relies on the use of technology and creativity to enhance learning.

This program utilized a cohort model in which PSTs completed coursework and field experiences with the same group of PSTs throughout the program. Beginning several years ago, the program implemented the inclusion of a field experience within each of the five semesters of the program. These field experiences take place within twenty-two partnership schools.

PSTs completed the first two field experiences in the same elementary classroom. The first field experience was one full day per week and the second experience was two full days per week. During the summer between their junior and senior years, the PSTs engaged in an alternative field experience at the Boys and Girls Club. The next internship took place within the same school as the first year of field experience but PSTs changed classrooms (moved from primary to intermediate or vice versa). This internship was two full consecutive days per week. The final internship may be completed within this same school or another school within the district. This final internship is five full days per week. The classroom field experiences were supplemented by a weekly seminar meeting where relevant topics were discussed. A collaborating teacher (practicing teacher in the elementary school) and university supervisor supported PST learning. The program strove to keep the same university supervisor at a partnership school over several semesters. Through this model the PSTs were able to develop a deeper understanding of the elementary school context because of their extended time within the school.
During each field experience, PSTs engaged in practitioner inquiry. Practitioner inquiry can be defined as systematic, intentional study by educators of their own practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The inquiry process started with the Level I field experience and continued throughout field work as early entry into inquiry can equip teachers with strategies and inquiry tools to ask questions, observe and inquire, generate evidence, and build arguments” (Athanases et al., 2012, p. 43). See Table 1 for a breakdown of inquiry across the semesters. In the seminar component of the field experience, PSTs worked with the university supervisor to learn about the inquiry process by using one official textbook for this course, Dana & Hoppey’s (2009) *The Reflective Educator’s Guide to Classroom Research: Learning to Teach and Teaching to Learn Through Practitioner Inquiry*. Each semester the inquiry became more involved and the preservice teachers engaged in the inquiry process more independently. Through repeated practice, the goal was that PSTs moved closer to developing an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). During this field experience, the inquiry focused on an individual student’s learning within a content area. Throughout the semester, the PSTs systematically studied their own practice while working with students in the elementary field experience. PSTs developed a wondering, collected data, read scholarly literature, and delivered data-driven instruction within a content area (See Appendix A for full assignment description).

Table 1

*Inquiry Across Field Work*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Inquiry Focus Area</th>
<th>Inquiry Skills</th>
<th>Inquiry Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level One</strong></td>
<td>Individual Student</td>
<td>♦ Defining inquiry ♦ Developing a wondering ♦ Beginning data collection</td>
<td>Reflections on Process Multimodal Presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Inquiry Focus Area</th>
<th>Inquiry Skills</th>
<th>Inquiry Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level Two</strong></td>
<td>Individual Student</td>
<td>♦ Using practitioner-oriented outside research ♦ Selecting actions &amp; collecting data on actions More varied data collection measures</td>
<td>Inquiry Brief Poster Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level Three</strong></td>
<td>Learning in an Alternative Setting</td>
<td>♦ Student voice Integration of arts as data collection</td>
<td>Digital Story/Artistic representation of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level Four</strong></td>
<td>Individual Student</td>
<td>♦ Data Analysis-learning varied analysis methods Collecting more formal data through assessment measures. Using empirical research to guide inquiry process ♦ Intern engaging in data collection selection better understand wondering ♦ Making claims supported by data</td>
<td>Inquiry Poster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level Five</strong></td>
<td>Intern Choice</td>
<td>♦ Intern choice in data collection methods measures and plan. Using inquiry process to document student learning</td>
<td>Inquiry Conference Presentation and Inquiry Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to previous work with inquiry in the field experience, participants had an introduction to critical literacy within a Children’s Literature course. The PSTs in this study were students in my Children’s Literature course during the previous school year. The university’s course description (Children’s Literature Syllabus, 2014) promoted an understanding of diverse perspectives through literature:

Building on an appreciation for children’s literature, the purpose of this class is for undergraduate teacher candidates to learn how to select quality literature for children and to demonstrate instructional strategies for developing children’s engagement with literary texts, children’s understanding of diverse and global perspectives, and children’s knowledge of text structures.

The complete syllabus can be found in Appendix C.

To help my PSTs understand the importance of examining the children’s literature they chose to use in their classrooms, I guided them to examine ideologies of texts. It was important to note all texts communicate implicit or explicit ideologies to its readers depending on the ideological positioning of the texts within a culture (McCallum & Stephens, 2011). Teachers should examine texts for ideologies, so that they are aware of the implicit and explicit messages being conveyed to students. Often these “Ideologies may thus serve to establish or maintain social dominance, as well as to organize dissidence and opposition” (McCallum & Stephens, 2011, p. 360). Teachers should also introduce texts that contradict the dominant ideals of society and allow marginalized groups to be represented in the classroom.

As their instructor, I helped my PSTs create connections between the Children’s Literature course and their field experience at this time (first field experience practicum). For their first lesson plan, I allowed them to practice selecting literature for a read aloud lesson. I met
with each PST to discuss his or her literature selections and lesson ideas. I also allowed the PSTs
time in class to talk with each other and experiment with these lesson plans in a safe
environment. In addition, my PSTs conducted an investigation into the portrayal of diverse
populations within children’s literature. For this assignment, (see Appendix C) PSTs were
responsible for choosing a diverse population, surveying recent children’s literature publications,
and presenting themes across the literature they found. The PSTs were to pay particular attention
to whose stories were being told in the texts, any possible stereotypical portrayal of groups, and
ideas for classroom use.

Also during this Children’s Literature course, I specifically addressed the topic of
As another resource, we read and discussed McDaniel’s (2004) article about critical literacy.
Since, “Critical literacy transcends conventional notions of reading and writing to incorporate
critical thinking, questioning, and transformation of self or one’s world” (McDaniel, 2004, p.
474), I believed that the introduction of this topic would be appropriate to help my PSTs closely
examine children’s literature. After this discussion, we used Meller and Hatch’s (2008) protocol
for questioning literature through a critical literacy framework to actually examine books my
preservice teachers brought to class that day. Upon reflection of my teaching, there are several
aspects of critical literacy that I did not teach in this Children’s Literature course due to time
restraints and my own lack of knowledge. In the future, the connection between the theory of
critical literacy and the enactment of critical literacy can be made more explicit. For example, I
can add more practitioner articles throughout the semester that focus on issues of diverse
representations of populations, power relationships, multiple perspectives, etc. By embedding
this knowledge more prominently in the course, the students may develop a deeper
understanding of critical literacy. In addition, these practitioner articles will provide practical ideas and examples for these novice teachers to explore. Furthermore, I would like to add more space for modeling and practice in terms of the enactment of critical literacy instruction. I could model several lessons throughout the semester and even have students create and practice lessons within small groups.

Because I was able to teach these PSTs in Children’s Literature with a focus on critical literacy I wanted to have these particular students as my participants for this study. I had the opportunity to expand upon what I have taught them previously and address the limitations of my own instruction outlined above.

**Participant Selection**

I purposefully selected PSTs from the cohort I taught Children’s Literature to in Fall 2014 to participate in this study (Patton, 2002). Since I was their methods instructor I knew what was taught regarding critical literacy and the use of diverse texts in the classroom. I was also able to gain some insight into the participant’s literacy teaching as I worked closely with them on a read aloud lesson. This pool included a total of 34 possible participants.

All these potential participants were in their fourth field experience. This field experience took place in fall of their senior year and entailed two full days per week in the classroom. This particular semester was the beginning of a yearlong inquiry experience. Within this semester, PSTs were learning to search for research literature and read about their area of inquiry focus. In addition, they collected data within their context to gain a deeper understanding of the focus of inquiry in their context.

The 34 potential PST participants engaged in a late field experience within two particular partnership schools. Both of the field experience elementary schools in this study were located in
a suburban community that is growing rapidly. According to the U.S. Census, the area had a total population of approximately 12,000 in 2000 and increased to 71,000 by 2010. This community was comprised of 70.2% White, 17.0% Black, and 21.0% Hispanic/Latino residents (U.S. Census 2010). The Black and Hispanic/Latino population both increased from the 2000 U.S. Census while the percentage of White residents decreased. At one of the elementary schools, Sands*, the school population had sixty percent of students on free or reduced lunch. Furthermore, there were fifty-nine percent students of color. Based on the Florida school grading system, this school received an A rating for the 2013-2014 school year (http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/). The other school, Colts*, was a brand new school opening for its first year. Forty-six percent of its student population was Black, 31% Hispanic, 11% White, 7% Multiracial, 3% Asian, and less than 1% Native American. The population of students on free or reduced lunch and the school grade were not yet available at this school was new. During the summer before this internship, each preservice teacher engaged in an alternative field experience. Most of these PSTs completed the internship at the Boys and Girls Club, however, several students travelled aboard to work in elementary schools in Cambridge.

In order to recruit participants, I reached out to the PSTs in this cohort via email and offered them the opportunity to join this learning community that met on a long-term basis to support their work through inquiry focused on critical literacy instruction (see Appendix A for the flyer). I shared that this learning community would provide extra coaching and opportunities for collaboration on their literacy-focused inquiries. Any PST across this cohort interested in critical literacy instruction was welcome to join. I made it clear to the PSTs that this learning community required a time commitment of two meetings per month.

* Pseudonym used
After receiving responses from those interested in participating, I decided to select all nine PSTs who expressed interest to begin this study. However, before we even met for our first learning community meeting, three of the nine PSTs decided not to participate. I believed it would be beneficial to have all six of these PSTs participate in the learning community to promote meaningful dialogue and to account for any possible attrition. I wanted the group to be big enough to foster this dialogue but still intimate enough so that there would space for all voices. Table 1 below provides information about each participants.

Table 2

Summary of Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Field Experience School</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Inquiry Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jodi</td>
<td>Sands</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Engagement in writing instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>Sands</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Engagement in Science instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tira</td>
<td>Colts</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Literature circles with small group of readers to increase achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandie</td>
<td>Sands</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Engagement in Science instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>Sands</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Reading engagement for ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiarra</td>
<td>Colts</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Increase word knowledge through writing instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After finishing data collection and engaging in initial analysis, I purposefully selected a sample of three PSTs for my cases. In making this selection, I first eliminated one student, Angel, who missed one session and would readily admit that he did not engage consistently in the inquiry process. I eliminated a second student, Brandie, who did come to every meeting but, due to her quiet nature, did not participate consistently in our discussions. This left me with four
possible participants to choose from for my cases: Jodi, Tira, Zoe, and Kiarra. I chose Jodi as a case because she was able to enact critical literacy in her elementary school classroom and acted as a model for her peers in the PLC. Zoe participated in every PLC meeting and often spoke up about her thoughts to foster more dialogue among the group. Zoe made meaning of critical literacy conceptually but struggled with the enactment of critical literacy. I chose Tira as she was able to enact critical literacy through literature circles with her kindergarten students. Each of these participants had different experiences in their field experience classrooms and with our professional learning community. These PSTs used these diverse experiences to make meaning of critical literacy in their own unique ways. Therefore, these three cases offer a variety of portrayals of making meaning of and enacting critical literacy. Each PST’s individual cases will be illustrated in chapter four, five, and six.

**Inquiry-Focused Learning Community Professional Development Plan**

This study took place in a professional learning community of six PSTs in their fourth field experience. I met with the participants bi-monthly throughout the semester for an hour and a half. My plan for professional development was based on the conceptual framework discussed in chapter one. I created a space for dialogue about critical literacy and inquiry in order to support PSTs’ ability to make sense of and enact critical literacy in their field experience classrooms.

During the learning community we explored critical literacy as conceptual knowledge and practical tools for critical literacy enactment. During this learning community we read and discussed articles about critical literacy. An introduction to critical literacy helped my PSTs closely make sense of critical literacy and start to consider applications of critical literacy in the
classroom. In addition, we used our time together to discuss applications of critical literacy and
to work through the inquiry process.

The learning community sessions were based largely on the needs of the PSTs. I had a
plan of tentative discussions and ideas to approach with the PSTs; however, these plans changed
due to PSTs’ needs. Table 3 provides the actual events that took place in our learning community
meetings.

Table 3

Plan for Professional Development with Learning Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Community Meetings</th>
<th>Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting     | • Literacy platform/autobiography of literacy  
  • Picture of ideal literacy classroom  
  • Critical literacy as theoretical knowledge- Read article (Ciardiello, 2004)  
  • Discuss how to conduct an audit of texts in the classroom  
  • Reflection |
| 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting     | • Share what was found during audit.  
  • Read article (Fain, 2008)  
  • Share initial ideas for inquiries  
  • Reflection |
| 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting     | • Share status of inquiry  
  • Provide feedback on inquiries  
  • Action plan for inquiry  
  • Reflection |
| 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting     | • Critical literacy as practical tool-Discuss scholarly literature about critical literacy and pull ideas to try (Meller, Richardson, & Hatch, 2009)  
  • View video of critical literacy in action  
  • Checked in with inquiries  
  • Reflection |
| 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting     | • Read vignette (Lake, 1990)  
  • Debrief progress on inquiries-analyze data  
  • Action plan for inquiry  
  • Reflection |
| 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting     | • Work with inquiry-analyze data and develop future ideas for practice |
Table 3 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Community Meetings</th>
<th>Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How to incorporate critical literacy into future instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each meeting had a similar structure. At the beginning of each meeting was an open forum opportunity for PSTs to check-in with each other to share anything about their work in the field. Next, I shared scholarly literature for us to read together and discuss or we engaged in an activity. Then, I asked the PSTs to add to their conceptual map of critical literacy and/or a plan of action for the next steps with inquiry. At the close of each meeting, I gave PSTs time for reflection. I asked PSTs to reflect on specific topics to further inform my research and allow space for a more general reflection on their learning.

Meeting One

During the first meeting, I asked the PSTs to draw a model of their ideal literacy classroom to foster discussion on literacy beliefs. In addition, we did a jigsaw reading of Ciardiello’s (2004) article to explore the theoretical basis of critical literacy. This article focused on using historical events and figures to promote democracy and social justice through critical literacy. I picked this article since I thought that seeing an example of critical literacy enactment in Social Studies might help my PSTs envision what critical literacy could look like in their own classrooms. I had each PST read a section of the article and summarize their thoughts with the group. All members of the group read the last section that focused on critical literacy moving to social change. Then, the PSTs started a conceptual map of critical literacy. I encouraged PSTs to conduct an artifact audit of texts produced in the classroom (Comber & Nixon, 2004) within the next two weeks, so that we could discuss their findings as a group in our second meeting. PSTs reviewed and added to the list of questions on the literacy audit.
Meeting Two

Each PST shared what they found in the literacy audit. We discussed any similarities and differences across the group. Then, we read an article (Fain, 2008) about engaging in critical literacy with young elementary students. I selected this article because the PSTs had expressed concern with having difficult conversations with younger children. This article detailed the author’s use of literature circles to have conversations about racism and oppression with first and second graders. After reading the article, the PSTs added their thinking to their conceptual map of critical literacy. I continually asked the PSTs to revisit and add to this map throughout our time together. Finally, the PSTs shared their initial wonderings for their individual inquiries. I offered suggestions on how to connect these wonderings to critical literacy.

Meeting Three

In the third meeting, we discussed the PSTs inquiry questions more in-depth. For the majority of this meeting, PSTs shared their inquiries, and we helped each other refine wonderings. After each PST shared their inquiry, I asked them to also give us an idea of their plan for the coming weeks. We used this information to fill out an inquiry action plan chart to prepare to use specific strategies and collect relevant data. The group helped each other decide how to collect data based on their specific strategies.

Meeting Four

In our next meeting, Jodi shared a video-recording of a critical literacy lesson. While, I encouraged all participants to video-record a literacy lesson, Jodi was the only willing participant. Jodi explained her lesson choice and shared her video. While we watched the video, Jodi paused at certain intervals to clarify students’ responses and her own instruction. After Jodi shared this video-recording, I asked the other PLC members to share anything they noticed about
Jodi’s instruction. This conversation evolved into Jodi’s reflection about her teaching. Next, we focused on practitioner literature to explore practical ideas for incorporating critical literacy into the classroom. I asked the PSTs to bring in specific scholarly literature about critical literacy instruction to discuss as a group. Only one participant, Jodi, shared an article with the group. Jodi chose this article to share as she used ideas from this reading to plan her critical literacy lesson from the video. We read and discussed Meller, Richardson, and Hatch’s (2009) article on incorporating critical literacy read alouds into the elementary school classroom.

Meeting Five

In our fifth meeting, I had the PSTs read a vignette, Indian Father’s Plea (Lake, 1990), detailing the thoughts and feelings of a Native American father about his son’s experiences in a traditional school setting. I selected this article to help illuminate the importance of understanding students and valuing them as individuals for the assets they bring to school. After we read the article, I started the conversation by asking each PST to share what they were thinking as they read. After this discussion, the PSTs updated the group on the status of their inquiries by sharing data and their initial findings. The other PSTs provided feedback and offered further suggestions for the remaining weeks.

Meeting Six

At our last meeting, we spent most of the time working together to analyze inquiry data and create a plan for future work with critical literacy in classroom. I had each PST summarize their inquiry findings using data to support their claims. As a group, the PSTs discussed their inquiries and helped each other make sense of the data and findings. The conversation focused on helping each other vocalize how the data supported their findings. Then, we turned the conversation back to critical literacy. I had each PST take a few moments to outline practical
ideas for how to incorporate critical literacy into their classrooms. Each PST shared their ideas with the group. After this session, I met individually with my participants for a final interview.

**Role of the Teacher Educator and Researcher**

During this study, I worked closely with these PSTs to provide more support and coaching through the inquiry process and focus our work on critical literacy. I had previously instructed these students in the field experience as well as coursework, however, was not their instructor during this time. Since conversations about critical literacy require a focus on social justice and issues of equity, I consistently stressed my openness to hearing and discussing diverse opinions when working with these PSTs. I tried to establish and maintain a safe environment for my participants to freely share. In order to maintain my ideals in constructivism, I created meaning with my PSTs and was forthcoming with my own assumptions and biases. My previous relationship with these students as their course instructor helped to build a supportive and trusting relationship that was needed to discuss issues connected to social justice and critical literacy. However, this closeness also presented a few obstacles. For example, the PSTs felt very comfortable expressing concerns about their field experience in specific regards to issues that arose with their collaborating teachers, administration, and field supervisors. There were times when these concerns and needs far outweighed our work together in the PLC with critical literacy. In an effort to be responsive to their needs as students of our university, I gave them a space to share and offered advice and encouragement. For example, during one of our meetings I did not even start our work or the audio recording until forty-five minutes into our session in order to address these specific and private needs of my PSTs.

During this study, I made a conscious effort to learn about my PSTs as people and teachers. I tried to create an environment in which the PSTs felt comfortable sharing their
thoughts and opinions about any topic we encountered. Additionally, I sought to understand each PST’s teaching beliefs. As we engaged in dialogue, I tried to stay aware of my own assumptions and how these thoughts may impact my group of PSTs. As a writer, my interpretations of the events in this study were impacted by my personal characteristics and identity (Creswell, 2013). As a researcher, I tried to be reflexive in my study and be aware of my own values, experiences, and biases (Creswell, 2013). I was cognizant of my own cultural and political perspective and those of my participants (Patton, 2015). I brought my own past experiences to this study. Before my doctoral work I was an elementary school teacher in the intermediate grades for four years. After the leaving the classroom I worked as a graduate assistant and supervised PSTs for three years. As a classroom teacher, I conducted inquiries in my own classroom for purposes of professional growth. As a doctoral student, I engaged in inquiries focused on my work with preservice teachers, specifically in regard to culturally responsive teaching. I worked closely with PSTs for the last two years in exploring inquiries of their own. My experience with critical literacy in the classroom started with my own intermediate grade classroom and extended to Children’s Literature and Instructional Planning courses at the university. All of these past experiences combined have given me the desire to conduct this study. I drew upon these experiences when planning for the learning community meetings and giving the PSTs individual help with inquiry.

I can be superficially perceived as a young, white middle-class woman who is highly educated. I am aware of these outside perceptions but also my own deeper, hidden culture. While these aspects do characterize me, I am also a very family-centered person as I come from an Italian family. I connect with issues of oppression due to family connections. From experiences with my family, I have gained more insight into how systems, including educational systems,
might hinder people. While these are only a few aspects of my life, they do affect my everyday experience and core belief system.

When I find myself making assumptions about my students, I am now able to stop myself to think about my actions and thoughts. In this study, I used researcher’s journal as a place to think about my own actions and the decisions I made throughout this study. Furthermore, I met with a critical friend (Patton, 2015) bi-monthly to discuss data and my work in the learning community.

**Facilitator of Learning Community**

My role as the researcher within this learning community was to facilitate PST learning about critical literacy and enacting critical literacy instruction. In this role, I operated as a coach to support the PSTs through parts of the inquiry process. I acted as a “supportive outsider” to “…push others to question their own assumptions and reconsider the bases of actions or beliefs” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 271). As the facilitator of the learning community, I planned this professional development. While I took into account the needs of the PSTs, it is important to note that my role as the facilitator did extend to planning and implementing professional readings and activities for the PSTs. However, I did not act as an expert only dispensing knowledge at the PSTs. I did not lecture or only impart knowledge. I offered more explanation of concepts or demonstrated how to teach using different strategies when the PSTs expressed a need for this type of facilitation. Conversely, I did not simply observe PSTs leading their own learning community. As a facilitator and coach, I offered theoretical knowledge of critical literacy and social justice as well as practical tools to use in the field experience classroom, such as strategies to use in literacy lessons and ideas for culturally responsive teaching.

As part of my role in the learning community I planned to use a variety of pedagogical
skills to support a focus on social justice and critical literacy (Burns & Badiali, 2013; Jacobs & Casciola, 2015). Pedagogical skills that can be used to promote a focus on social justice include the use of questioning, modeling, and framing. Each learning community meeting followed a similar structure. We started the meeting with an open forum for PSTs to share and reflect on their experiences in their individual classrooms. During this time, I encouraged PSTs to share any and all experiences from their classroom that they felt compelled to talk about, not strictly critical literacy or the process of inquiry. However, if I found PSTs were struggling with a particular aspect of teaching, such as classroom management, I helped the PSTs to frame their interpretation of what is happening in the classroom (Jacobs & Casciola, 2015). I prompted PSTs to reframe the situation by thinking critically about what was really happening. If possible, I linked these conversations back to our topics of equity in the classroom, adapting instruction to meet the needs of individual students, critical literacy instruction, etc. I used the pedagogical skill of questioning to reframe these conversations (Jacobs & Casciola, 2015).

In order to engage in these conversations, our learning community needed to be a place of trust and openness. While I did not supervise these PST during this time, I previously served as their supervisor and had some knowledge of each PST as a beginning teacher and cultural being. I used my established relationships and insight into each PST to build our relationship further and push PSTs to critically think about their decisions as teachers. To focus our work on social justice, I needed the interpersonal skills to further build trusting relationships with these PSTs (Glickman et al., 2014; Jacobs & Casciola, 2015; Nolan & Hoover, 2011). Therefore, when we shared our thoughts about teaching and life we built upon these relationships and formed a community.

Within the learning community, I fostered critical dialogue to aid in critical
consciousness raising, as “only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking” (Freire, 1970, p. 92). During this pivotal time of dialogue, I participated in the conversations and modeled critical reflection and questioning (Jacobs & Casciola, 2015). For example, I reflected on my own time as an elementary school teacher, offered stories from my own teaching experiences, and shared my ongoing process of critical reflection on my teaching practices, etc. As I participated openly within these conversations, I offered a model of my own ongoing journey of critical reflection (Abt-Perkins, Hauschildt, & Dale, 2000).

Overall, my role as a facilitator in this learning community was multifaceted. I prompted PSTs to think further while making decisions regarding each inquiry and questioned PSTs in a way to help them explore various perspectives and approaches to working with their students. I offered a place for PSTs to work together to troubleshoot issues they were experiencing in the classroom, offer support to each other, and find a voice as beginning teachers. During our work together, I not only provided more information about critical literacy as a concept but also provided models of practical examples of how to enact critical literacy instruction. To ensure I was responsive to my PSTs’ development needs, I adjusted my facilitation during our learning community based on these individual needs.

**Data Collection**

In order to investigate my research questions I collected data on each individual PST within the learning community and then used this data to decide on the cases. Creswell (2013) suggested data collection should be extensive and collected from multiple sources. Therefore, I collected data in the form of transcripts of learning community meetings, individual participant interviews, artifacts from individual inquiries, documents (action plans, concept maps, literacy
beliefs, literacy audits, plans for each meeting), PSTs’ reflections, video-recorded literacy lessons, and a researcher’s journal. Table 4 shows the connection between each research question and data source.

Table 4

*Research Questions and Corresponding Data Sources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How do elementary PSTs engaged in practitioner inquiry make meaning of critical literacy instruction within a facilitated learning community make?                          | • Researcher’s journal  
• PST reflections  
• Learning community meetings transcripts  
• Interviews  
• Documents (Concept map, Literacy Platform, Plans for learning community sessions)                                                                                       |
| How do PSTs enact critical literacy instruction in the field experience elementary classroom while engaged in practitioner inquiry in a facilitated learning community? What facilitates PSTs’ enactment of critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom?  
What inhibits PSTs’ enactment of critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom? | • Researcher’s journal  
• PST reflections  
• Learning community meetings transcripts  
• Interviews  
• Video-recordings of literacy lessons                                                                                                                             |

**Transcripts from Learning Community Meetings**

In order to explore how the PSTs made meaning of critical literacy and enacted critical literacy, I audio recorded and transcribed each learning community meeting as a form of data collection. These transcriptions captured the dialogue within this inquiry community. From this dialogue I saw how and when PSTs reflected about critical literacy, how they enacted literacy, what facilitated or inhibited this enact of critical literacy, and the role of inquiry in this learning process. I structured these meetings so that PSTs had opportunities to express their thoughts
openly. At the beginning of each meeting we had an open forum to discuss the field experience. We also had time during each meeting to discuss critical literacy specifically and any ideas to try in the classroom.

**Documents from Learning Community Meeting**

In this study, I collected documents as forms of data. I chose documents as data sources because these documents remained stable during our time in the learning community and crossed over a span of time (Yin, 2014). Below I specifically describe each type of document.

**Concept map.** At the first meeting, I had the PSTs draw a visual representation of their ideal literacy classroom. This visual acted as a discussion starter for our group focused on beliefs about literacy instruction in the elementary classroom. During subsequent learning community sessions, PSTs added to this conceptual map to illustrate revisions or additions to their thinking. I took a picture of each PST’s modified after each lesson community session. At the end of the study, I examined how the concept map evolved across the semester. This helped me understand how PSTs made meaning of critical literacy instruction.

**Plans for each meeting.** I kept detailed plans for each learning community meeting. I adjusted these plans based on PSTs’ feedback and ideas so that I was responsive to their needs. Before I planned for each meeting, I reviewed my researcher’s journal to unpack my initial reflections on the previous session. I recorded specific reasons for the activities and readings I planned for each learning community meeting and used the researcher’s journal and my PSTs’ reflections to direct and support my decisions for the future.

**Literacy beliefs platform.** I collected PSTs’ literacy beliefs platforms at the beginning of the semester to explore PSTs’ beliefs about literacy instruction. The PSTs wrote these initial literacy platforms during the previous semester in another literacy course. I had my PSTs reflect
on ways to include critical literacy within their instruction. I analyzed these initial literacy beliefs and the concepts maps in order to note any changes in beliefs over the course of the semester.

**Preservice Teachers’ Reflections**

After each learning community meeting, the PSTs reflected on the topic of the day. These reflections were handwritten and collected after each meeting. I used specific prompts after each meeting to aid in PSTs’ reflections on our intended topic of the day but also allowed an open space for PSTs to reflect on their learning in more general terms. These reflections provided a space for the PSTs to address my research questions on an ongoing and evolving basis. PSTs reflected on their own beliefs about literacy instruction, enactment of critical literacy, journey through inquiry, etc. See Appendix E for reflection questions.

**Interviews**

In order to gain more insight into all of my research questions, I conducted two rounds of interviews with the PSTs. These interviews were semi-structured (Kvale, 1996) with open-ended questions to promote a conversational tone and provide insight into each PST’s meaning making process (Yin, 2011). The interview questions acted as a guide so that all participants were asked the same basic topics (Patton, 2015). I utilized a framework of interview questions, however, the questions varied from participant to participant depending on the context of our conversation (Yin, 2011). In the first interviews at the beginning of the semester, I explored PSTs’ beliefs about critical literacy instruction and the role of inquiry in the classroom. These interviews took place before we even met as a learning community. I wanted to obtain the PSTs’ thoughts and beliefs about critical literacy and literacy instruction in the elementary school classroom before we started our focused discussions and work together as a learning community. At the end of the semester, I interviewed each participant again. During this interview I encouraged participants to
look back on their reflections and concept map for reference as we discussed the PSTs’ beliefs about critical literacy instruction. In addition, we discussed how and why they were able to make changes in their literacy instruction (if they did), or how and why they struggled making changes in their practice. See Appendix G for a list of interview questions.

**Video-recorded Literacy Lessons and Lesson Plans**

To address the research question, “How do PSTs enact critical literacy instruction in the field experience elementary classroom while engaged in practitioner inquiry in a facilitated learning community?” I collected a PST’s video-recorded literacy lesson and lesson plan. I asked PSTs to record any instances in which they enacted critical literacy instruction in the field experience classroom. Only one PST felt comfortable enough recording and sharing a critical literacy lesson. This PST was asked to video-record this lesson and share the video clip with me via Google Docs. This data was kept secure in a password protected Google Docs account. The video was not shared with anybody except the researcher and participants. While I encouraged the PSTs not to include the faces of any students in these videos, the students also signed a video release form approved by the university as an added precaution. The PSTs also supplied a formal lesson plan for this critical literacy lesson. I used the recorded lesson and lesson plan as data in this study to analyze PSTs’ enactment of critical literacy instruction and to foster dialogue and collaboration within the learning community. Additionally, this PST shared a video clip of this critical literacy lessons during the learning community meeting. The video clip prompted critical discussion about the PST’s experience enacting critical literacy in the classroom.

**Researcher’s Journal**

The researcher’s journal allowed me to openly reflect on what was happening during this study and my thoughts and feelings about the study (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2015).
Hatch (2002) advanced that the researcher’s journal allows the researcher to gain distance from the research process. The researcher’s journal addressed all of the research questions throughout the study. Immediately following each learning community meeting, I took some time to reflect in my researcher’s journal to capture my initial reactions to the session. I used this space to record my own thoughts on how the meeting went, my interpretation of the PSTs’ meaning making process, my thoughts on how PSTs were doing with inquiry and critical literacy instruction, possible challenges, and ideas for future meetings. See Appendix H for an excerpt from the researcher’s journal. Table 5 provides a timeline of data collection throughout the study.

Table 5

Data Collection Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Frequency of Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s Journal</td>
<td>• After each learning community meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• After data transcription to reflect on data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• After meeting with critical friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Map</td>
<td>• Concept map and plans: Bi-monthly after each meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans for learning community sessions</td>
<td>• Literacy Platforms: beginning and end of the semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Platforms</td>
<td>• Classroom literacy Audit: Meeting Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom literacy audit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PST reflections</td>
<td>• Bi-monthly at the end of each meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning community meeting (audio recording and</td>
<td>• Bi-monthly will record during each session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transcription)</td>
<td>• Will transcribe after each session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews (audio recording and transcription)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Before first learning community meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• After last learning community meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video-recorded literacy lessons</td>
<td>• Once</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

After each interview and learning community meeting, I transcribed the data verbatim. Then I imported the interview data and learning community data into HyperResearch. HyperResearch is a qualitative research software that aids in data analysis. In HyperResearch I was able to organize the data, keep records of codes, and look through the data in different ways (by code or by case). Figure 5 below illustrates this process.

![Figure 5](imageURL)

*Figure 5. Steps from data collection to data analysis.*

I used Hatch’s (2002) inductive approach to data analysis (see Figure 6). This approach is highly connected to Spradley’s domain analysis.
I began by reading through the data starting early on in my work (Hatch, 2002). After I conducted the initial interviews, I transcribed and read through all of the interview data. I used this initial analysis to plan where to start with my participants in our first meeting. I completed this same process after each learning community meeting. As I read over each learning community meeting transcript, I planned my next steps with my group. This preliminary analysis included open-coding of the data (see Table 6 for a list of these codes).

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Codes</th>
<th>Initial Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic level</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Across content</td>
<td>Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Multiple perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset</td>
<td>Nature of inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrations</td>
<td>Negotiating curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Censor</td>
<td>Parent conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change/social action</td>
<td>Personal experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As I gathered new data, I reread the data as a whole and adjusted codes accordingly. This process helped me think more clearly about my frames of analysis going forward. As I read the data, I used my research questions, data sets, and specific conversations with my participants to guide my choices for frames of analysis and give me an idea of how to look at the data (Hatch). For example, I coded the data based on specific aspects of critical literacy, Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) knowledge for, in, and of practice, inhibitors and facilitators to critical literacy enactment, and dialogic tools. I created a codebook based on these initial codes I developed. In this codebook, I categorized codes by critical literacy concept, knowledge for practice, knowledge in practice, knowledge of practice, support of enactment, hindrance to enactment, resistance, culturally responsive teaching, and dialogue. For each code, I provided a description, sub-codes, and descriptions of the sub-codes. An excerpt from this codebook can be viewed in Appendix I. The next step outlined by Hatch is to create domains based on semantic relationships.
found within the frames of analysis. To start this process, I read the data to develop a set of categories of meaning, or domains, to represent the relationships found in the data. I created the following categories: sensemaking, enactment, facilitators, and inhibitors. I defined these categories by reading through all of the data with specific semantic relationships in mind. When defining a domain I identified “included terms” to label the members of the category of data and “cover terms” to name the category in which all of the included terms fit (Hatch). The full list of included terms and cover terms are outlined in Figure 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Included Terms</th>
<th>Cover Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge for practice</td>
<td>• Build knowledge for practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge in practice</td>
<td>• Build knowledge in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of practice</td>
<td>• Making meaning of critical literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engaging in dialogue in PLC</td>
<td>• Build knowledge of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Problematizing practice</td>
<td>• Dialogue in PLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promoting larger political agenda</td>
<td>• Enacting critical literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Questioning the status quo</td>
<td>• Inhibit enactment of critical literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating curriculum</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Modeling critical literacy</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Suggestions/encouragement</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Critical reflection</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developing culturally responsive teaching</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Praxis</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fear of parental conflict</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of CT support</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curriculum mandates</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Time constraints</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. Included terms and cover terms used in data analysis.

In the next step, I narrowed the focus of my frames of analysis and refined my domains. For example, I created the following domain for Jodi’s case: knowledge for, in, and of practice are steps in making meaning of critical literacy. For this domain, my included terms were “knowledge for practice,” “knowledge in practice,” and “knowledge of practice.” The cover term was “making meaning of critical literacy.” Once I established domains, I developed codes to keep track of the domains. Then, I reread the data with these specific domains in mind. I kept a
record of where each domain was found in the data (an example is provided in Appendix J).

Next, I examined the data found that represented each domain to ensure there was enough quality data in each domain. I made sure to include any counterexamples found in the data such as discrepancies in facilitators and inhibitors to enact for each case. I looked into each domain separately and then searched for themes across domains. I looked for any connections that could be determined across the data. I then created a master outline within and among domains to express the relationships found in the data for each case. I selected data to support each element in this master outline of the data. The next step was to determine the critical incidents and corresponding data for each case. Flanagan (1954) defined a critical incident as “…any specifiable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act” (p. 327). As I read back over all of my data and analyzed this data using the semantic relationships, I found three pivotal moments in each PST’s case that illuminated an aspect of their sensemaking or enactment of critical literacy. My decisions for selecting each critical incident are detailed in chapters four, five, and six. At this point, I looked to my other data for evidence to strengthen these critical incidents and the initial themes I began to discover. For example, I examined the concept maps of critical literacy, literacy beliefs platforms, PSTs’ reflections, researcher’s journal, lesson plans, and the video-recorded lesson. Once I selected these critical incidents, I went back over all of the coded data available for each critical incident to develop my themes. For example, in critical incident one of chapter four, I noticed Jodi used the knowledge for practice she gained from the article we read within the PLC to make meaning of critical literacy. As I analyzed her concept map and read through the learning community transcripts again, I formed the theme: Knowledge for practice helped Jodi make meaning of critical literacy. After I developed the themes for each critical
incident, I analyzed these themes to determine assertions. I developed assertions following Erickson’s (1986) suggestion to “think of the entire data set as a large cardboard box filled with pieces of paper on which appear items of data. The key linkage is an analytic construct that ties strings to these various items of data” (p. 168). For example, I noticed across these critical incidents that Jodi not only needed knowledge for practice to make sense of and enact critical literacy, but also knowledge in and of practice. Therefore, I developed the following assertion: By fluidly moving in and out of building knowledge for, in, and of practice as a process of praxis, Jodi was able to make sense of and enact critical literacy.

Since I conducted a multiple case study, I did a cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2014). I let the data drive the themes and findings without entering the analysis with any preconceived categories (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2011). However, then I engaged in a cross-case analysis as I looked across all the PST cases and developed themes across these cases. I created a list of all themes and assertions from each case. I further analyzed these themes and assertions to select larger claims across the cases. For instance, as I looked across these cases I noticed it was difficult to discern the meaning making process from enactment. Therefore, I developed the assertion that making meaning of critical literacy and critical literacy enactment are an interwoven process that informs each other. As I established each assertion across the cases, I once again returned to the data to support these assertions.

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

In order to promote the credibility of my study, I provided a detailed and thick description of the context of the study, my decisions as a researcher, and my participants’ actions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This thick description allows the reader to better understand the data and analysis in order to “draw [their] own interpretations about meanings and significance”
(Patton, 2002, p. 438). A thick description was vital to analysis and interpretation of the study (Patton, 2015). I utilized the critical incidents to frame this description for the reader. Additionally, I analyzed multiple data sources for data triangulation in order to increase trustworthiness (Patton, 2002). By analyzing multiple data sources, I increased the construct validity of this study (Yin, 2014). To increase my study’s credibility I employed the help of another doctoral student to act as a critical friend during data analysis (Patton, 2015). After each learning community meeting, I took my data to a critical friend. I asked this critical friend to review the data. We discussed the data together. I encouraged this critical friend to ask questions and provide another perspective to the data. During these discussions, this critical friend provided me with a more objective perspective of the data as I had more of a first person vantage point. From these discussions I was able to see instances in which my participants were being critical in their reflections on teaching. My critical friend also gave me ideas for how to approach the PLC in future meetings. Furthermore, as I developed my assertions across my cases, I checked these assertions with the assertions I found in each case. Once again, I used data triangulation to strengthen the assertions. I determined the multiple sources of data available to support these assertions and used the data detailed in each case to support the validity of my assertions across cases.

**Ethical Considerations**

Participation in this study was strictly voluntary. I gained consent from all participants and thoroughly explained the purposes of the study (Yin, 2014). Participants were informed they could withdraw at any time from the learning community. The purpose of the study was clear to the participants. Since participants revealed personal information about their beliefs and assumptions, I made sure the learning community environment was as open and safe as possible.
I shared my own personal beliefs and assumptions with the group in order to help the participants feel comfortable being uncomfortable. Pseudonyms were used for all elementary school student work the PSTs brought into the learning community. During transcription, I also made sure to use pseudonyms for all participants.

**Limitations**

One possible limitation of my study is that the context of the particular field experience classroom may limit the participants’ experience engaging in critical literacy instruction. Since this study promotes the use of critical literacy instruction in the classroom, PSTs may need to make adjustments to the ways in which literacy is currently taught with the field experience classroom. Reluctant collaborating teachers hindered this process of critical literacy instruction. My role within the learning community was to help the PSTs negotiate these situations. In addition, PSTs felt restricted by curriculum standards and upcoming standardized testing when making changes to instruction. Since we worked closely to promote social justice through critical literacy instruction, I continually disclosed my openness to differing opinions and ideas to help my PSTs feel comfortable being honest within our learning community setting. I tried to build a strong sense of community with these preservice teachers throughout the semester so they felt more comfortable engaging in honest and open dialogue. However, my previous role as instructor and supervisor with these PSTs was a hindrance. While this relationship allowed for a level certain level of comfort and openness, I had to delicately balance my new role as facilitator of the learning community. I was no longer their instructor or supervisor; however, the PSTs utilized the learning community as an opportunity to discuss struggles with collaborating teachers and supervisors at certain points during our time together. I felt obligated to lend a listening ear and prompt the PSTs to address these struggles with the main people involved
rather than me. I offered advice on how to approach any difficulties they had during the field experience. Furthermore, while I do not strive for this research to be generalizable, it is applicable to cohorts within our teacher education program (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).
Chapter Four: Jodi’s Case

In this chapter, I will start with a detailed description of Jodi as a person, her educational experiences, and her previous teaching. Then, I will illustrate several critical incidents in which Jodi makes meaning of critical literacy within the learning community and enacts critical literacy in her field experience. Flanagan (1954) defined a critical incident as “…any specifiable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act” (p. 327). The critical incidents chosen in this chapter provide the means to make inferences about Jodi’s ability to make meaning and enact critical literacy. Within these critical incidents, I found themes of Jodi’s development in her conception of knowledge for, in, and of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) and how this knowledge contributed to her sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy. The facilitators and inhibitors to enactment of critical literacy emerge in the assertions across the critical incidents as these factors impacted Jodi’s work overall. The themes led to the development of the following assertions: (1) Jodi’s conception of critical literacy and ability to enact critical literacy evolved throughout this process from conceptualizing critical literacy in Social Studies as multiple perspectives to critical literacy for social change, (2) By fluidly moving in and out of building knowledge for, in, and of practice as a process of praxis, Jodi was able to make sense of and enact critical literacy, (3) Jodi was inhibited to enact critical literacy due to stringent curriculum guidelines, time restrictions, and fear of parental conflict, and (4) Jodi’s ability to enact critical literacy was facilitated by the support of her collaborating teacher and the PLC.
Jodi’s Story

Jodi is a white, twenty-one year old undergraduate student. In this section, I will describe Jodi’s educational experience growing up, her beliefs about teaching literacy, her previous teaching experiences in her internships, her current classroom context, her future career plans, and her journey as a researcher.

Jodi’s Personal Experience

Jodi described herself as being personally invested and naturally curious about the world around her. In our first interview she said, “I really love exploring the cultural and social-all that impacts on thoughts and everything…since I am more interested in it, I’m more interested in teaching it to my students” (Interview 2). Growing up, Jodi attended a very diverse high school. In our first meeting she told the learning community she could not recall when she started to notice race as she was so accustomed to experiencing diversity in her community. She seemed to take on more of a color blind perspective as a child by not taking notice of race. Jodi reflected, “I went to a really diverse school. When we’re going over content like this, I try to think back and be like, ‘When did I notice that I was different or that the black kids and the white kids, maybe things were a little different and everything?’ I just feel like I never was aware of that ever” (PLC 1). However, as an adult she expressed some acknowledgement of white privilege: “I feel like that's something that as we're white—we're the majority in so many situations, so then I feel so weird when I'm a minority” (PLC 1). She went on to explain that she often tried to put herself in the shoes of other groups of people so that she could try to understand what it would feel like not to be the majority.
Jodi’s Literacy Beliefs

In her previous coursework, Jodi reflected on and presented her beliefs about literacy instruction in the classroom. In our first PLC meeting, we shared and reviewed these literacy beliefs platforms. Jodi indicated that when planning for literacy instruction, she focused on different learning styles, differentiating products of student work, and taking account of students’ individual needs (Literacy Platform). She reported that she would like, “Hands-on definitely with all subjects in my ideal classroom. I want the students really engaged and out of their seats. So a lot of acting it out and a lot of discovery learning is what I think” (Interview 1). She goes on to explain that she would like to be able to pick the texts used in the classroom because “I see the text we are reading in class and I don't think they are interesting or very effective for the students” (Interview 1). Even in this first interview, Jodi was already hinting at understanding critical literacy. When questioned about what she believed critical literacy looks like in the classroom she emphasized the importance of creating dialogue about text. She wanted to go:

A couple steps beyond just reading―being able to read a text and being able to comprehend so that's really being able to read a text and being engaged. So like being able to use higher order thinking skills and like sympathizing with the characters and being able to have that dialogue in your head with what is going on in this book is making me feel this way and why is that and also making personal connections with the text that is so important. (Interview 1)

Jodi’s Field Experiences

Jodi spent three consecutive semesters engaged in field experiences within her teacher education program at the same elementary school, Sands elementary school. Sands was rated an “A” school based on Florida’s grading system. This elementary school was becoming
increasingly diverse, with sixty percent of the students receiving the benefit of free or reduced lunch. For the first year, Jodi interned in a fourth grade classroom. She had a very supportive collaborating teacher. She was given the freedom to incorporate lessons in her own way. When referring to her time with her collaborating teacher, Jodi shared, “Not only will she let you do whatever you want, she'll be like ‘I love that idea’” (PLC 5). Jodi recounted the lesson:

Last year in my 4th grade class we did tableaux and I really, really love that they loved that so much that my teacher then did tableaux also on the days that I was not there. So I feel like that was in a fourth grade classroom and they weren't used to getting out of their seats because it was something novel and different. I think still if you build that into the classroom then it would still be able to really engage them. (Interview 1)

Even in the first year of her internship, Jodi exhibited a willingness to take risks and explore the curriculum further. Throughout our time together in the learning community, Jodi recounted experiences from this fourth grade classroom and what she learned from her teacher. On one occasion, Jodi noted her, “classroom management was flawless” (PLC 1). During the summer semester, Jodi engaged in a summer teaching experience in Cambridge in which she focused on how literacy instruction took place in these schools.

During the duration of this study Jodi was in a late field experience in a second grade classroom at this same suburban elementary school. When asked to describe literacy instruction in this classroom context Jodi expressed, “In second grade it is really a struggle. They just like read all of this boring stuff and they have to fill in graphic organizers” (Interview 1). In this classroom, “right now we are building up our stamina and independent reading time so they are just like reading for 20 minutes and then they will go to RTI. You will not really talk about reading so that is something they do not facilitate and incorporate a love of reading” (Interview
1). Jodi informed the learning community that her teacher pulled small groups for guided reading, “the first time I ever saw groups being pulled for differentiation was in my second grade class” (PLC 3). Jodi went on to explain that the county mandates and guidelines drive instruction. Due to this adherence to the county guidelines, Jodi expressed, “…I think literacy could probably be taken in a different approach” (Interview 1). Jodi reflected:

Sometimes I feel like, in my second grade classroom I feel like my teachers, I have two teachers, are so focused on enforcing the rules and enforcing stay on task, do this, do that, that the kids almost never hear praise. I'm just curious if that's how it is a lot of primary classrooms. It's co-teach so there's double numbers. I'm just curious in a primary classroom to maintain focus and everything, if you really have to focus on being that strict and sticking on the straight and narrow to really be able to be like, "Hey, let's sit down and have a few minutes to empower this student who probably needs it. (PLC 1)

Jodi also reflected on the classroom management style of her teacher. Jodi found in her classroom, “what she [the collaborating teacher] does to manage her classroom is threats and negative punishment” (PLC 1).

**Jodi as a Researcher**

Upon first meeting with Jodi before we started the PLC, she already exhibited an inquiry mindset and noted the importance of knowledge for and in practice. In our first interview together, Jodi supported the importance of engaging in inquiry and using teaching strategies she found from research. Jodi noticed the power that inquiry can have in the classroom in making theory to practice connections. She stated:

Then with our inquiry where we are reading the research and then going out into the field and testing it with real kids that we have connections with and only want them to succeed
so it’s not only stimulating intellectually and mentally it is stimulating emotionally because it's like, oh they are my responsibility and I want to be doing this research and see what really works with a student. (Interview 1)

By engaging in inquiry in the field experience, Jodi was able to gain knowledge through research and make changes to her practice.

**Critical Incidents for Jodi**

Below are three critical incidents from throughout the PLC meetings that highlighted Jodi’s sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy. I chose these three critical incidents because they portray a clear picture of how Jodi’s understanding of critical literacy evolved and how her ability to enact critical literacy changed throughout this process. In the first critical incident, Jodi shared a Social Studies lesson on the Constitution and reflects on this lesson with the PLC. In the next critical incident, Jodi shared a video-recording of another Social Studies lesson in which she attempted critical literacy instruction in a lesson about Malala, a Pakistani activist. The third critical incident revealed Jodi’s desire to create a Native American unit designed to highlight the realities Native Americans faced and foster critical discussions with her students. Table 7 displays these critical incidents and corresponding themes. The themes across each critical incident remain consistent and directly inform the assertions I will discuss.

Table 7

*Summary of Jodi’s Critical Incidents and Corresponding Themes.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Incident</th>
<th>Themes for Each Critical Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Critical Incident One | • Knowledge for practice helped Jodi make meaning of critical literacy.  
• Jodi built knowledge of practice through engagement in dialogue with PLC. |
| Critical Incident Two | • Jodi developed knowledge for practice to foster conversation with students. |
Table 7 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Incident</th>
<th>Themes for Each Critical Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Critical Incident Three | - Jodi developed knowledge of practice by engaging in dialogue with the PLC.  
- Jodi made meaning of critical literacy through knowledge for practice.  
- Jodi developed knowledge of practice by engaging in dialogue with PLC. |

As Jodi engaged in critical literacy instruction in her internship classroom, her knowledge in practice grew through her enactment. As I will illustrate in these critical incidents, Jodi was able to enact critical literacy as her conceptual knowledge of critical literacy continued to grow throughout this process. Her sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy is interwoven. As Jodi continued to develop this understanding of critical literacy, she would enact critical literacy in more depth.

**Critical Incident One: Jodi’s First Step Towards Understanding Critical Literacy: Change through Multiple Perspectives on the Constitution**

Jodi walked into our professional learning community on day one already having tried critical literacy with her second graders even though she had not intentionally created her lesson for this purpose. In this first meeting, we read Ciardiello’s (2004) article on how to use critical literacy within Social Studies to promote democracy. This article explicitly outlined the many aspects of critical literacy as well as provided practical examples of how to enact critical literacy in Social Studies. As we all read the article, Jodi made a connection to a Social Studies lesson she attempted that week. It was Constitution Day in her classroom and she decided to read a picture book about the Constitution with her students. Jodi focused some of this lesson on the multiple perspectives (i.e. Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Lewison et al., 2002; May et al., 2014; O’Neil, 2009) of the Constitution, such as the missing voice of women, and power structures (i.e. Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Jones et al., 2008; Lewison, Flint, Sluys,
2002; Wood & Jocius, 2013) that led to the writing of the Constitution. Jodi reported as she read the picture book she noticed only white men were portrayed in the text, however, she did not explicitly start a conversation with her students about this issue. Instead of purposefully talking about this distinction, Jodi seemed to expect her students to notice women’s voices were not heard. She said, “I was wondering if any of the students would be like, ‘Hey, what about the girls?’” (PLC 1). She readily admitted, “I didn’t think about all the African American kids in my class” (PLC 1). Even though she claimed she was not consciously thinking about the demographic make-up of her class as she was designing her lesson, Jodi still posed this question to her class: “Who made the Constitution?” (PLC 1) and specifically put an answer choice of, “men from all over America” (PLC 1). Therefore, when Jodi planned this lesson she focused on the gender distinction of the writers of the Constitution, but not all of the other non-represented groups. Jodi reflected, “None of them questioned anything about the men, about only white people, nothing” (PLC 1). She was disappointed her students were not as critical as she wanted and wondered if she failed to push their thinking enough. Jodi did not explicitly start a conversation with her students about the lack of diverse perspectives represented in this historical document.

As the conversation continued within our PLC, Jodi expressed hesitation in explicitly engaging in critical dialogue with her second graders, especially conversations about race. She noted, “It’s kind of hard to bring that up if the students aren’t aware of it” (PLC 1). However, Jodi wanted her students to notice women did not have a voice in the Constitution. As Jodi expressed this hesitation, one of her fellow peers, Angel, pushed her to think about the students that already face adversity in their everyday lives. Angel asserted, “If you’re doing it [having a critical conversation with students] the right way, it [this dialogue] benefits them than hearing
something on the news or something and not having something to connect it to” (PLC 1). Angel stressed the importance of guiding this conversation with students rather than ignoring the topic altogether. As our meeting continued, Jodi started to open up more to the idea that young children are capable of expressing their thoughts and feelings on what adults sometimes deem “more sensitive” topics. She commented children are “…pretty hyper aware though” (PLC 1). Jodi was able to critically reflect on her first attempt at critical literacy and confront her assumptions about having conversations with her second graders through dialogue within the PLC.

As this learning community meeting came to a close, Jodi reflected, “I now have a better understanding of critical literacy! Especially with Social Studies” (PST Reflection 1). She decided, “I want to do a Social Studies lesson that involves multiple perspectives. If I can, I think it would be nice to connect this back to my Constitution lesson. I’ll have to do some research” (PST Reflection 1). Jodi used this critical reflection in the learning community meeting to expand her own thinking and make plans for future enactment.

**Critical Incident One Themes**

As Jodi reflected on this lesson, she used her new knowledge of critical literacy from the Ciardiello (2004) article we read to make better sense of critical literacy. Jodi used the knowledge built in practice from her previous enactment of critical literacy in the lesson on the Constitution. She also used knowledge for practice from the article to make sense of critical literacy. She questioned her teaching and developed knowledge of practice through this reflection with the PLC. These themes are detailed below.

**Knowledge for practice helped Jodi make meaning of critical literacy.** After we read Ciardiello’s (2004) article, Jodi used the PLC as a place to reflect more deeply on the Social
Studies lesson she had just conducted. Jodi’s knowledge for practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) developed when she used the formal knowledge she acquired about the concept of critical literacy in Ciardiello’s (2004) article to name what she did in her previous lesson. When I asked Jodi what influenced her ability to make sense of critical literacy Jodi asserted:

I think it was the first article we read where it really went in depth about what critical literacy was and the purpose of critical literacy. I feel like it’s something that’s talked about vaguely and it’s ambiguous, but that article went in depth and gave examples and really talked a lot about it. (Interview 2)

By hearing a more concrete definition of critical literacy, Jodi was able to name that she was, in fact, trying critical literacy in the classroom and specifically examining multiple perspectives and the impact of power on society. In addition, Jodi resolved to try another critical literacy lesson in Social Studies, specifically involving multiple perspectives. As indicated in the critical incident, Jodi stated that she would need to do some research to plan this lesson. This instance acts as another example of Jodi’s need to build her knowledge for practice in order to be able to enact critical literacy.

**Jodi built knowledge of practice through engagement in dialogue with PLC.** As Jodi engaged in dialogue within the PLC she built knowledge of practice. Specifically, Angel stressed to Jodi the importance of facilitating a critical conversation with students about race rather than ignoring the topic due to fear. He helped her to question the status quo—ignoring race and dialogue about race. Angel urged Jodi to challenge the power structures of mainstream American curriculum and not simply accept white men wrote the Constitution without consideration for the voices of the marginalized. Jodi moved from hesitations and fear of explicitly talking about race
with her students to rethinking the idea that second graders are too young to have critical conversations.

**Summary of Themes for Critical Incident One**

Jodi used knowledge for practice to identify her first attempt at critical literacy when examining multiple perspectives on an event in history—writing the Constitution. In this critical incident, Jodi reflected on her teaching and questioned her approach. She developed knowledge of practice as she considered alternative approaches to this lesson with the help of the learning community.

**Critical Incident Two: Jodi Takes a Risk and Uses Malala’s Fight for an Education to Foster Dialogue**

Just a few short weeks later, Jodi again enacted critical literacy in her classroom through Social Studies. At the end of learning community meeting three, each PST made a plan for their next steps in the classroom. Jodi told us her plan was to “…talk about how some people didn’t have guaranteed rights and some people still don’t have guaranteed rights” (PLC 3). She noted in her reflection she wanted to “…have a discussion about how the students feel and what they think about it” (PST Reflection 3). She did just that. In meeting four, Jodi shared a video of a lesson she completed on Malala, the female Pakistani education activist. In this one lesson, Jodi was able to enact many aspects of critical literacy. Jodi utilized a diverse text, Jeanette Winter’s *Malala: A Brave Girl*, to allow the voice of Malala to be heard on the issue of education for females in Pakistan. This text highlighted the power structure in Pakistan that prohibited girls from receiving an education and what one woman endured to take a stand. Jodi read aloud this picture book about Malala to her students. She noted that she “wanted to go find a book that like kids or people didn’t have the same rights as the kids in the United States so that’s what I was
tying it back to. I went and I bought a book about Malala” (PLC 4). Jodi chose this book because, “I love Malala, so I—whenever I found that book, I was, ‘This is really somebody that my students should know about’” (Interview 2). She connected this book back to a previous Social Studies lesson that Jodi did not describe in detail to the PLC. She reflected, “I read that after I had taught my students about the rights that they have” (Interview 2).

After she decided upon the text for this lesson, Jodi took it upon herself to research practitioner articles focused on critical literacy in the elementary school classroom. She located an article by Meller, Richardson, and Hatch (2009) that provided practical ideas on how to do a critical literacy read aloud. Jodi specifically used ideas from this article to help her create questions to ask her class. Jodi planned to ask the students the following questions during the read aloud: What rights does Malala not have that you have? How would you feel if you were Malala? Do you think girls should be allowed to go to school? Why? (Lesson Plan).

After Jodi conducted the read aloud, she gave groups of students an opportunity to discuss the text. Jodi supplied her students with several questions to discuss in groups in order to foster conversation about the text. For example, Jodi asked, “What were you feeling when I read the story?” (Video). Her students responded with comments such as “shocked,” “sad,” “scared for Malala,” and “disappointed in the people who did not help” (Video). Jodi continued to ask her students to “Think about the rights you have as citizens of the United States and the rights the girls in Pakistan do not have. What rights do the girls in Pakistan not have that we do?” (Video). When the groups shared their answers with the whole class, the conversation centered on the girls of Pakistan not having the freedom to learn, play, speak their minds, or tell the government what they wanted (Video). Then Jodi asked her students, “Do you think it’s fair how things are in Pakistan? Should it change? What might your response be?” (Video). Several students spoke
about how it was not fair that the girls could not go to school but the boys were able to get an education (Video). The overwhelming response from the class was people living in other countries with these freedoms should speak up for the girls in Pakistan and try to create a change because we are all citizens of the same world (Video). When Jodi reflected on this discussion with her students, she stated: “I was very surprised and impressed at their answers which showed that they understood that they are global citizens and have responsibilities to people outside the country, just like they have to those in their country” (Lesson Reflection).

As Jodi shared her video with the learning community, another member of the PLC asked:

*Angel:* Wait. Did your teacher let you tell them about her getting shot, or did you have to—

*Jodi:* No. I had to skip that page. My teacher was like—

*Zoe:* Like, “She got hurt.”

*Facilitator:* Then what did you say? Can you let me know?

*Jodi:* Because it said like the schools were getting bombed and stuff. Then we just said, “Since the schools were getting bombed, like a lot of the girls were getting hurt.” That’s something I wanted to talk about, too.

*Facilitator:* Yeah.

*Jodi:* Should we have talked about her getting shot in the face? Because my teacher’s thing was like, we don’t want the kids to go home and be like, I’m gonna get shot in the face.

*Facilitator:* Right.

*Zoe:* 9/11, though, they talk a little bit about it and they say that some bad people came
and they took planes and they hit buildings and a lot of people got hurt. You don’t say the
details of it, but you could’ve said like some bad people thought…she should get hurt
and—

*Jodi:* I feel like that’s what we did.

*Facilitator:* You feel like you got the point across, but just not specifics?

*Jodi:* Yeah, but some of my kids did know that she got shot in the face.

Jodi questioned her CT’s decision not to discuss that Malala was shot since some of her students
already knew this detail of the event. Jodi further explains what they did to avoid this section of
the book:

*Jodi:* Put a sticky note over that [the page in the text].

*Facilitator:* My goodness. I wish I had seen this.

*Jodi:* We showed the picture of like the schools getting bombed, and then like, he—like,
there was some sort of airplane, and then there was a picture of her recovering.

*Facilitator:* Right.

*Jodi:* We just said, “A lot of schools were getting bombed, so some of the girls got hurt
and they recovered.”

Through this dialogue with her peers, the participants demonstrated knowledge of practice.

**Critical Incident Two Themes**

In critical incident two, Jodi developed knowledge for practice from Meller, Richardson,
and Hatch’s (2009) article that she applied to her enactment of critical literacy in her lesson on
Malala. Jodi reflected on this enactment within the PLC and began to question her teaching. This
dialogue led to knowledge of practice.
**Jodi developed knowledge for practice to foster conversation with students.** In order to design her lesson, Jodi researched and found an article that helped her plan a critical literacy read aloud. From this article, Jodi developed knowledge for practice. In Jodi’s last critical literacy lesson portrayed in critical incident one, she struggled to create conversations about the text to help her students understand the lack of perspectives taken into account in the Constitution. Jodi specifically sought out scholarly literature to improve her questioning techniques in this lesson. She told the learning community, “That’s what I needed, I was just like I don’t know what I’m supposed to do with this book” (PLC 4). Jodi used Meller, Richardson, and Hatch’s (2009) article to create questions to prompt deeper discussion from her students. Jodi specifically told our PLC she used the Meller, Hatch, and Richardson article (2009) in planning her lesson:

The first day I did a read-aloud and I followed some of the things in the article that-I was like, ‘Tell me how you would feel if you were in Malala’s situation? Is this fair? What right does Malala have that we—or doesn’t have that we have?’ That’s kind of what the first day was like. (PLC 4)

Despite Jodi’s effort to improve her practice by seeking out ideas in the literature, Jodi still felt her questioning could be improved upon in the future. She noted, “my questions could be put in a better order. My CT and I discussed that it’s important to scaffold questions so that the order makes sense to the student and guides them from one idea to the next idea” (Lesson Reflection). Jodi’s goal was to include more higher order thinking questions with her students. After this lesson she reflected, “students need to be thinking deeply on these issues. No surface level assumptions!” (PST Reflection 4). Jodi used knowledge for practice to better enact critical literacy.
Jodi developed knowledge of practice by engaging in dialogue with the PLC. During this time, Jodi expanded her knowledge of practice through reflection on her experiences with critical literacy in her classroom. Jodi used the PLC to critically reflect and engage in dialogue with her peers. As shown in the critical incident, Jodi modeled this critical literacy lesson for the group. After Jodi shared this video-recording of her lesson, Jodi reflected on this lesson with her peers. Her collaborating teacher asked her to skip the page in the text in which Malala was shot. Jodi questioned her decision to honor her CT’s wishes and asked the PLC for feedback. Jodi was troubled because she did not want to go against her collaborating teacher’s wishes; however, she noted that some of her students were aware of the accurate events of the story. Her peers also questioned this decision to shield the class from the reality of the violence of Malala’s situation. Her peers brought up other violent acts in history such as 9/11. In this dialogue, Jodi started to problematize her collaborating teacher’s practice when she said, “Yeah, but some of my kids did know that she got shot in the face” and discussed what to do differently with the PLC. As shown in this critical incident dialogue with the PLC, Jodi’s decision not to express how Malala was shot helped her to question her practice and the constraints she faced in the classroom while teaching this lesson. This dialogue with the PLC helped Jodi build knowledge of practice and specifically question her own instruction and her teacher’s reservations about the violence in this text. At the end of learning community meeting four, Jodi’s renewed intent after she built knowledge of practice came through in this quotation: “We need to be ready to challenge parents. Think of what students need, not what would please parents” (PST reflection 4).

Summary of Themes for Critical Incident Two

Jodi again enacted critical literacy. She discussed multiple perspectives and highlighted the silenced voice of women in Pakistan. Jodi planned to extend this lesson even further by
creating a writing activity where students could reflect upon a time when they took action; however, her plan did not come to fruition. The fact that Jodi was able to design a lesson where social action was the ultimate goal is an improvement for her and demonstrates her conceptual knowledge of critical literacy as a means for social justice. Jodi created this lesson to further expand her students’ knowledge of the world by discussing the larger political issue of schooling for females in Pakistan. Jodi asserted:

> It was a really good experience. My kids really responded well to it, and they were really involved in, ‘Well, that’s not fair. Why is it like that? I would feel sad, and I feel sad for Malala, and we should care because we’re citizens of the world.’ It was a good experience. (Interview 2)

Jodi took this opportunity to foster her students’ ability to question the status quo and empathize with others who are not treated equitably.

**Critical Incident Three: Jodi Continues to Question as she Explored Native Americans in the Curriculum**

As Jodi continued to design the Social Studies curriculum in her classroom and took the lead on these lessons, her next attempt at critical literacy occurred during a unit on Native Americans. With the approach of Thanksgiving, Jodi found it imperative to create a unit on Native Americans that accurately portrayed the events of the time period rather than the typical, one-sided stories our schools tend to perpetuate. At the end of learning community meeting four, Jodi stated that her plan moving forward was to “Start teaching students about the Native Americans. Slowly move to the ideas about what REALLY happened between Native Americans and English immigrants” (PST Reflection 4). Jodi found the curriculum standards for second grade and designed her unit with these standards in mind. Jodi found, “One of the social studies
standards for second grade is actually the impact of English migration on the Indians. I think that’s a really valuable standard for the students to realize, that it wasn’t all Thanksgiving and sharing food” (Interview 2).

Jodi questioned the way in which Thanksgiving is typically portrayed in our schools. She mused, “Yeah, because isn’t Thanksgiving actually a really dark thing?” (PLC 6). Despite Jodi’s attempts to find literature that offered multiple perspectives, Jodi was not able to provide her students with some of the harsh realities of life for Native Americans during this time. She noted, “I guess that is what I’m worried about because I feel like I can’t find any books where it’s like all the Indians were slaughtered” (PLC 6). Her peer, Zoe, pushed her to keep searching for texts as she said, “Yes, but it terms of, like 9/11’s really dark, but they have children’s books that portray it in a certain way” (PLC 6). Jodi also worried because the text authors that she did find about Native Americans were outsiders to the community. The conversation then shifted to conversations with students about current events such as the Syrian conflict. Jodi wondered if her students were aware of this conflict. She stated, “That’s what I’m so curious about. I feel like, even though they’re in second grade, that news is on at their house. Their parents are talking about it” (PLC 6). Another participant, Angel, shifted the conversation again, this time to stereotypical thoughts about Muslims. Angel recounted a classroom experience in which his student used a stereotypical view of Muslims. Angel reported the student said, “Are the bad people the guys with the beards, the people with beards that wear white? (PLC 6). Angel reflected, “I think that’s what they see, and then that’s exactly what they believe, and especially if their parents think that, too” (PLC 6). This dialogue in the learning community fostered knowledge of practice for Jodi and her peers.
Jodi attempted to incorporate critical literacy by exploring multiple perspectives and promoting critical conversations about power in the ways Native Americans were treated. Her agenda was further supported during learning community five as we read a vignette by Robert Lake, a member of the Seneca and Cherokee tribes and father to a son in public school. In this reading, Lake described his son’s experience in school and the assets he possessed due to his upbringing as a Native American boy (Lake, 1990). The father described how these assets were not valued by mainstream America and this reading highlighted the effects of deficit-based thinking on children. As we read this article in learning community meeting five, Jodi reflected on her own teaching practice and possible effects on her students. Jodi stated, “I feel like when you're reading about this you're so quick to be like, oh, she's a bad teacher” (PLC 6). However, Jodi was also able to relate to how the teacher in this situation may feel as she said, “When you're actually in the field then we can see how you're just trying to get through all the things you're trying to get through” (PLC 6). Jodi spoke about the pressure to keep students on track: “I feel like it's so easy to just feel like, okay, you two stop fighting in line, pull it together and just completely not really pay attention to any of what might be going on with them” (PLC 6). She appreciated this reading by Lake (1990) because “I feel like it's really good to have this reflective kind of text to just realize these are little humans in your classroom” (PLC 6). Jodi was particularly drawn to Lake’s emphasis on asset-based thinking. She reflected:

I really liked the part that says, “my son is not an empty glass coming into your class, but he's a full basket.” I feel like that is maybe something that some educators are taught. In kindergarten they don't know anything, so you're starting from zero. You really aren't starting from zero. (PLC 5)

This reading prompted Jodi to reflect on her teaching and her effect on future students.
Critical Incident Three Themes

As portrayed above, the dialogue in learning community six fostered knowledge of practice for Jodi and her peers. Yet again, Jodi used knowledge for practice from Lake’s (1990) vignette that she was able to apply to her thoughts about teaching.

Jodi made meaning of critical literacy through knowledge for practice. Jodi was able to make sense of critical literacy further after reading the vignette by Lake. She used this reading as a space to reflect on her teaching and think about how this father highlighted the assets of his son, not valued in American public schools. After reading this vignette together, Jodi reflected on implications for practice in the classroom. She said, “It was talking about like, ‘oh, my son has long hair and super this and this, but the kids make fun of him.’ I felt that was such a powerful section to read to your kids” (PLC 5). As we read this piece of literature about life as a Native American child in an American public school, Jodi developed knowledge for practice by gaining more information about teaching. The reading prompted her to reflect on the complexities of teaching in our diverse society. Jodi began to portray an understanding of how her actions as a teacher can affect children. She also noted the struggle teachers may face when immersed in the day-to-day happenings of the classroom and pressure of teaching. In practice, teachers are expected to balance daily teaching with the demands of outside pressures such as mandated curriculum, testing schedules, and response to intervention. Jodi reflected on how she would handle this situation if she were the classroom teacher. She would say:

Sometimes things are different and I hear you guys making remarks about him. Maybe you should think a little deeper and think about what these remarks are saying to the person and what impact they're having on them. To just have the students reflect more critically on their actions and the effects of their actions. (PLC 5)
Jodi used this reading as impetus to think more deeply about how to push students to change their behaviors. One of the ultimate goals of critical literacy is social action. In this learning community, Jodi began to visualize how she could use a vignette to foster a conversation about change with her students.

**Jodi developed knowledge of practice by engaging in dialogue with PLC.** As the conversation continued in the next PLC meeting, Jodi further explained her experiences with creating curriculum for this unit. During the one week of time that elapsed between the learning community meetings five and six, Jodi had started her unit on Native Americans. She introduced various Native American tribes to her students. However, Jodi still struggled to find the materials she desired to promote multiple perspectives on the historical events of English settlement and the lives of Native Americans during this time. Jodi told us, “I know exactly what I’m looking for” (PLC 6). She explained, “I wanted to find some literature that shows how Native Americans were maybe mistreated or the other side” (PLC 6). She even reached out to the PLC for help with finding resources to share with her students. While none of her peers had a specific reading for her to utilize, they did suggest finding a primary source account or searching for articles on the Internet. This dialogue resulted in an even deeper conversation about how to discuss harsh realities in our history and in current events such as 9/11, Syrian conflict, and Paris terrorist attacks. Through this dialogue in learning community meeting six, the PSTs worked collaboratively to develop their knowledge of practice. The dialogue above showed how the PLC questioned messages in texts, parents’ perspectives, and their students’ ability to handle conversations about current events. This questioning helped the PSTs make sense of the realities of teaching against mainstream curriculum and texts.
Summary of Themes for Critical Incident Three

In this critical incident, Jodi questioned the status quo of how schools portray Native Americans and Thanksgiving. Jodi’s knowledge of practice developed as she engaged in dialogue with the PLC about her Native American unit. Lake’s (1990) vignette prompted Jodi to think more deeply about her actions as a teacher and the effects on students.

Assertions Across the Critical Incidents

As I looked across Jodi’s development this semester in the PLC, several assertions can be made about her ability to make sense of critical literacy and to enact critical literacy. These assertions include: (1) Jodi’s conception of critical literacy and ability to enact critical literacy evolved throughout this process from conceptualizing critical literacy in Social Studies as multiple perspectives to critical literacy for social change, (2) By fluidly moving in and out of building knowledge for, in, and of practice as a process of praxis, Jodi was able to make sense of and enact critical literacy, (3) Jodi was inhibited to enact critical literacy due to stringent curriculum guidelines, time restrictions, and fear of parental conflict, and (4) Jodi’s ability to enact critical literacy was facilitated by the support of her collaborating teacher and the PLC.

Table 8

Summary of Jodi’s Critical Incidents with Corresponding Themes and Assertions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Incident</th>
<th>Themes for Each Critical Incident</th>
<th>Assertions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Critical Incident One | • Knowledge for practice helped Jodi make meaning of critical literacy.  
• Jodi built knowledge of practice through engagement in dialogue with PLC. | • Jodi’s conception of critical literacy and ability to enact critical literacy evolved throughout this process from conceptualizing critical literacy in Social Studies as multiple perspectives to critical literacy for social change.  
• By fluidly moving in and out of building knowledge for, in, and of practice as a process of praxis, Jodi was able to make sense of and enact critical literacy. |
Table 8 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Incident</th>
<th>Themes for Each Critical Incident</th>
<th>Assertions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Critical Incident Two | • Jodi developed knowledge for practice to foster conversation with students.  
• Jodi developed knowledge of practice by engaging in dialogue with the PLC. | • Jodi was inhibited to enact critical literacy due to stringent curriculum guidelines, time restrictions, and fear of parental conflict.  
• Jodi’s ability to enact critical literacy was facilitated by the support of her collaborating teacher and the PLC. |
| Critical Incident Three | • Jodi made meaning of critical literacy through knowledge for practice.  
• Jodi developed knowledge of practice by engaging in dialogue with PLC. |  |

Assertion One: Jodi’s Conception of Critical Literacy and Ability to Enact Critical Literacy Evolved Throughout This Process From Conceptualizing Critical Literacy in Social Studies as Multiple Perspectives to Critical Literacy for Social Change

As illustrated in the first critical incident, Jodi came to the PLC already enacting critical literacy with her lesson on the Constitution. In this lesson, Jodi started a conversation about multiple perspectives on the writing of the Constitution. Jodi tried to illuminate the fact that only men had the power to write the Constitution and women were not part of this milestone in history. Not only did Jodi incorporate multiple perspectives, but she also emphasized the power structure of gender in American society. As Jodi reflected on this lesson, she realized she could have also impressed upon her students the fact that white men held the power during this time. Through this critical reflection, Jodi realized she enacted critical literacy with a focus on multiple perspectives in her lesson on the Constitution. In critical incidents one and two, her enactment of
multiple perspectives focused on gender. As she reflected, Jodi conceptualized multiple perspectives to include race as well. Her sensemaking of critical literacy as examining multiple perspectives evolved from a generalized idea to multiple perspectives based on gender and then race. In Jodi’s first iteration of the conceptual map of critical literacy, she was able to articulate her sensemaking of critical literacy to be about challenging, evaluating, and investigating (Figure 8). Jodi held a solid conceptual understanding of critical literacy as she entered the PLC that continued to evolve throughout this semester. For example, Jodi understood critical literacy to include multiple points of view and challenging the dominant perspective. Jodi tried to enact these aspects of critical literacy in the Constitution lesson.

In this next critical incident, Jodi again concentrated on the gender distinction of power with her lesson about Malala. Jodi once again took it upon herself to examine multiple perspectives (i.e. Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Lewison et al., 2002; May et al., 2014; O’Neil, 2009) and examine power structures (i.e. Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Jones et al., 2008; Lewison, Flint, Sluys, 2002; Wood & Jocius, 2013). Furthermore, Jodi pushed her notion of critical literacy in this lesson as she connected the lesson to a more global picture of power in different societies around the world. Since Malala did not have the right to education,
decision-making, freedom of speech, etc. in Pakistan, Jodi developed this lesson to highlight the differences in people’s rights as citizens depending upon their location in the world. The students were able to understand that Malala and Pakistani women lacked a voice in their country. Jodi fostered these critical conversations with her students because she utilized her questioning strategies to prompt and deepen these discussions. As Jodi added to her conceptual map of critical literacy after learning community meeting four, she added what she learned about questioning and its place in critical literacy instruction (Figure 9). In this critical incident, Jodi had wanted to take her lesson a step further to connect this lesson to social changes by incorporating a writing component in which each student reflected on a time when they stood up for something they believed in; however, time constraints inhibited her plans. This critical incident highlighted Jodi’s conception of critical literacy evolving from multiple perspectives and power to understanding the need for a voice (Malala’s voice and the women of Pakistan) and making steps towards social change.

Figure 9. Jodi’s conceptual map of critical literacy about her Malala lesson.
In the final critical incident, Jodi was once again trying to explore multiple perspectives. This time her focus was on Native Americans and their treatment by English settlers. In this unit, Jodi aimed to investigate the power dynamics at play between the settlers and Native Americans. As conversations about this unit continued within the PLC, Jodi and her colleagues connected this unit to current events and global issues facing the world today such as the Syrian conflict. Jodi’s progress with this unit was cut short due to the semester ending and her time in the classroom coming to an end as well. Her intent to have her students delve into the realities of how English settlers treated Native Americans was stunted by these time constraints. In our final interview together, Jodi explained critical literacy as follow:

I would describe critical literacy as finding different texts for your students to read and analyze critically, which means that they would look deeper into a text and try to see maybe what would be wrong with the text or some of the implications that the text might have for the world. Then it’s also about creating social action. I remember that.

(Interview 2)

As seen in this example and illustrated in Figure 10 below, Jodi’s conceptual understanding of critical literacy evolved by the end of the learning community meetings to include the need for social action.

Figure 10. Jodi’s sensemaking of critical literacy across a continuum.
In critical incident one, Jodi conceptualized critical literacy as examining multiple perspectives and enactment critical literacy when highlighting the missing voice of women in writing the Constitution. Then, in critical incident two, Jodi once again emphasized multiple perspectives as she presented her lesson on Malala. She also stressed the power dynamics that silenced women of Pakistan. Jodi even tried to extend this lesson to a focus on social action with a writing assignment. In critical incident three, Jodi once again explored multiple perspectives as she focused on Native American treatment during English settlement. However, time constraints of the field experience restricted her from actualizing this Native American unit as she envisioned.

Assertion Two: By Fluidly Moving in and out of Building Knowledge for, in, and of Practice as a Process of Praxis, Jodi was Able to Make Sense of and Enact Critical Literacy

In these critical incidents Jodi demonstrated she fluidly moved through Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) conceptions of knowledge for, in, and of practice while engaged in this professional learning community. Knowledge for practice is the formal knowledge gained about teaching through scholarly readings. Knowledge in practice develops through learning experiences in practice as teachers engage in teaching and reflection on teaching. Knowledge of practice is developed as a community of learners engage in dialogue to reflect on their own practice to create new learning and question the status quo. Figure 11 illustrates Jodi’s continuous cycle in and out of knowledge for, in, and of practice.
Figure 11. Jodi’s movement in and out of knowledge for, in, and of practice to make meaning of and enact critical literacy.

As portrayed in the first critical incident, Jodi built on her conception of knowledge in practice as she recounted her lesson on the Constitution within a community of learners. She was able to give a narrative account of the lesson and rethink some of her decisions as a teacher, such as the decision to focus on gender instead of race as well. Then, while Jodi was in learning community meeting one, she developed knowledge for practice as we read Ciardiello’s (2004) article about critical literacy practice in Social Studies. As Jodi stated, this article helped her to “have a better understanding of critical literacy! Especially with Social Studies” (PST Reflection 1). In addition, Jodi was able to develop knowledge of practice within dialogue in the PLC as she began to problematize her own practice as a teacher and question her decision to only focus on gender rather than race with her students. This conception of knowledge of practice continued to grow as Jodi attempted to connect her lesson to a larger political agenda, the power dynamics of men and women in America during the writing of the Constitution. Jodi learned in this lesson and reflection in the professional learning community that she needed to focus on her
questioning skills to foster deeper conversation with her students. She used this knowledge in practice to seek out knowledge for practice through professional literature.

Since Jodi decided she needed help to develop questions to prompt deeper discussions with her students, she set out to find a journal article to help her develop her next critical literacy lesson. Jodi found Meller, Richardson, and Hatch’s (2009) article on critical literacy read alouds and used this article to help her plan her questioning in the Malala lesson. In this critical incident, Jodi developed her conception of knowledge for practice with this practitioner article after reflecting on her previous teaching in her lesson on the Constitution. As Jodi and her colleagues engaged in dialogue during the learning community meeting, Jodi developed knowledge of practice further by questioning her CT’s decision to have Jodi put a sticky note over the picture in the book where Malala was shot. Jodi came to the PLC feeling uncomfortable about this decision to limit her students’ conversation about the text and her colleagues pushed her to think about all of the students who already knew that Malala was shot. This learning community meeting led Jodi to develop more confidence in the need to teach with the students in mind, not their parents, as was seen in Jodi’s reflection at the end of the meeting. Jodi took this new resolve into her next teaching unit.

In this last critical incident, we read a vignette by a Native American father that inspired Jodi to create this unit on Native Americans. As Jodi began to develop her unit on Native Americans, she once again took it upon herself to research diverse texts to use in her teaching. Jodi sought out these readings so she could build on her conception of knowledge for practice. However, Jodi told the learning community she was unable to find the diverse texts she needed to portray the realities of English settlement on Native American land. This set-back spurred a conversation in the learning community in which Jodi developed knowledge of practice further.
She questioned how history is taught in schools today in reference to Thanksgiving and Native Americans. This questioning led the learning community to talk about current political issues such as 9/11 and the Syrian conflict once again. Jodi and her colleagues began to question the inhibitors that teachers face when teaching children about the realities of history and current events.

Throughout this semester and the time in the learning community, Jodi constantly built knowledge in practice as she actively developed her pedagogical skills, especially in relation to critical literacy and Social Studies instruction. Each time Jodi came to the PLC with another narrative of her teaching and engaged in reflection on her teaching, she further developed and built upon the knowledge in practice acquired from her experiences in the internship classroom. Through the interaction between building this knowledge in practice within the field and the dialogue and readings prompting knowledge for and of practice within the learning community, Jodi was able to engage in praxis. Praxis consists of reflection and then subsequent action based on this reflection (Freire, 1970). Specifically, Freire discusses “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1970, p. 51). Each time Jodi enacted critical literacy she changed her teaching practice to delve deeper into critical literacy instruction with her students. In Figure 12, I demonstrate Jodi’s process of continually building knowledge for, in, and of practice while engaged in praxis.
In the learning community Jodi reflected more deeply on changes she could make as a teacher and furthered her enactment of critical literacy. After we discussed critical literacy instruction examining multiple perspectives within our first learning community meeting, Jodi explained her Constitution lesson to the PLC, saying it was “not a good example” and “a learning experience” (PLC 1). Critical incident one was the first instance in which Jodi demonstrated the professional learning community was a place for praxis, or action and reflection toward transformation. She used the PLC as a place to critically reflect on her teaching experience and then change her practice. Since Jodi was in an environment that fostered exploration of the topic of critical literacy, she grew as a teacher. She noted, “I feel like if I hadn’t been encouraged by the PLC and exposed to it [critical literacy], then I definitely would’ve not paid any attention to it [critical literacy]” (Interview 2). The PLC provided Jodi a place to develop knowledge for, in, and of
practice and engage in praxis. Jodi vocalized her thought process in planning and executing the Constitution lesson, allowing her a space to further consider how she could have probed her students more deeply. She was then able to examine her assumptions about what second graders were capable of talking about and started to change her preconceived notions after prompted by her peer. Then, Jodi pursued action as she used her reflection to impact how to enact critical literacy again. This could be seen in critical incident two where she began to go deeper in her questioning skills to foster discussion with her students. In our final interview, I asked Jodi what influenced her conception of critical literacy, and she expressed the PLC played a large role in her development. She said, “…in that PLC—that was just like a little community where we could really focus on just our stuff and speak really openly and truthfully about what we were experiencing” (Interview 2).

Another element that prompted Jodi’s critical reflection during the PLC was the readings. One specific reading and corresponding dialogue stuck out in Jodi’s mind:

The PLC meeting where we read that article about how to incorporate critical literacy with the read-alouds. I felt like that was really helpful because that was a brainstorming session about how to incorporate critical literacy. That was a lot of us talking about, ‘Well, this is what I’m doing. This is what I’m doing. How can we change that into critical literacy? Does that apply to critical literacy?’ I thought that was really helpful. (Interview 2)

Assertion Three: Jodi was Inhibited to Enact Critical Literacy due to Stringent Curriculum Guidelines, Time Restrictions, and Fear of Parental Conflict

Despite Jodi’s great efforts to enact critical literacy in her second grade field experience, she still faced many barriers to her development (see Figure 13). Jodi was inhibited by the
curriculum guidelines and mandates set forth in this school district. She worked to negotiate these guidelines and tie all of her critical literacy lessons to already existing Social Studies standards. In addition, Jodi was inhibited by the time constraints of only spending two days per week in this field experience. Time also factored into planning and executing her lessons within this narrow timeframe. Another inhibitor to Jodi’s enactment of critical literacy was her fear of parental conflict, as was seen in critical incident two with her Malala lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Fear</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• County Mandates</td>
<td>• Only 2 days per week in internship</td>
<td>• Parental Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CT’s strict adherence</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Age of students</td>
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Figure 13. Jodi’s inhibitors to enactment of critical literacy.

**Curriculum restrictions.** Rigid literacy curriculum inhibited Jodi’s ability to enact critical literacy instruction to the fullest. “In my second grade classroom they’re books that I would like them to read, but on the reading guide it has specific texts and then specific questions and blah, blah, blah” (PLC 3). Jodi struggled to find a balance between what was expected by her school district and what she wanted to try in this field experience. Jodi reflected, “…that’s one thing I’m struggling with in my classroom because I like want them to do all these fun activities. Then there’s like this rigid curriculum that you have to stick too. I’m just like uhh” (PLC 3). Jodi found the students had to read photocopied texts provided by the county rather than reading from tradebooks or texts of their choice: “They’re just getting these pieces of paper with black and white. Sometimes they’ll be looking at them and they won’t even—they’ll be like, ‘what is that?’” (PLC 3). Jodi also struggled with these curriculum restrictions because her teacher followed these guidelines very closely. She lamented, “They just like really follow whatever they’re given” (PLC 3). In looking towards her future internship in another classroom and
school, Jodi felt critical literacy was possible to implement as part of her instruction. She said, “I think that it’s definitely doable, but it’s just trying to make it fit with all the other standards” (Interview 2). Despite these setbacks, Jodi was able to make her Social Studies lessons fit with the curriculum standards as portrayed in critical incidents one, two, and three. However, Jodi still felt this pressure to conform to her CT’s way of teaching and the mandates of her school district.

**Time constraints.** Since Jodi was only in the classroom for one semester, two days per week, she struggled to implement lessons within this timeframe. In reference to her Malala lesson in critical incident two, Jodi told me she wanted to expand this lesson even further by making a connection to writing but time became a conflict. She asserted:

> What I did want to do was have a connection for a letter and have them tell me about a time where they stood up for something they believed in like Malala did. That’s like getting them to realize they can embody that social change. Maybe they already have. If they couldn’t think of a time where they stood up for something, what would something be that they would want to stand up for? That’s getting them thinking like what you’re talking about. I definitely think it would be—if I was in the classroom the whole semester or for the rest of the year, I definitely think I would be able to—especially if I could get them involved and maybe letter-writing to an organization where there’s girls who need help or something like that. That’s one of those things. (Interview 2)

However, Jodi was not able to complete this aspect of the lesson extension due to time constraints. When vocalizing her struggle to find a balance between what she wanted to try in the classroom and her collaborating teacher’s comfort level, Jodi noted “Sometimes I just feel like it’s not my place” (PLC 3).
Unfortunately, Jodi also admitted that time was a factor for her in completion of the Native American unit she had planned. They started this Native American unit just as Jodi was about to finish her internship days in the classroom, and she told the learning community, “I think we’re gonna finish that when I’m not in the classroom” (PLC 6).

**Fear.** Jodi expressed hesitation and fear about her decisions as a teacher throughout these critical incidents despite her ability to take risks and implement critical literacy. During the first critical incident, I noticed some trepidation in Jodi as she questioned how far is too far to push a conversation about race and gender with second grade students (Researcher’s Journal 1). Dialogue within the PLC helped to push Jodi’s thinking about her students’ capabilities and to make changes to her practice. However, this feeling of fear persisted. When discussing her current classroom and approaching her collaborating teacher to take risks with her instruction, fear also became a factor. Jodi expressed, “I feel like I'm just not assertive enough” (PLC 1).

As expressed in critical incident two, Jodi’s peers supported and further encouraged her to reflect more deeply on the impact of critical literacy on the students in her classroom through dialogue about her critical literacy lesson on Malala. During this critical incident, Jodi’s fear of parental conflict emerged. Even as Jodi reflected on how to handle the situation of censoring the Malala text differently, she still hesitated because of fear of parental conflict. She said, “when we were talking about this, I was already thinking of the parents that would probably have a problem with that” (PLC 4). However, at the end of learning community meeting four, Jodi seemed to gain more confidence in her decisions as a teacher. As seen in critical incident two, Jodi noted that as teachers we need to do what is best for the students, not the parents. Despite this resolve, Jodi still hesitated in our final interview. Even after Jodi enacted critical literacy with her second graders successfully, she confessed:
I might not worry about it once I establish myself in a school and get in the swing of things, but in that first couple of years, I don’t want my parents to be, “Well, who is this first-year teacher, and she’s giving my child all this crazy stuff that they’re too young to know? Honestly, my first couple years, I’ll probably just try to avoid it and be on the safe side, or I might—if I feel like it’s really important, then I would probably lean on my principal or assistant principal for support. (Interview 2)

**Assertion Four: Jodi’s Ability to Enact Critical Literacy was Facilitated by the Support of her Collaborating Teacher and the PLC**

While Jodi felt some trepidation as stated above in being assertive and taking risks in this field experience classroom, she was also supported in several ways by her collaborating teacher. Her CT’s willingness to compromise and allow Jodi to create curriculum supported her ability to enact critical literacy. Jodi felt:

> My teacher really likes doing things her way. That’s something I’ve been getting slowly better at is being like, “okay well I really wanna do this.” Then we’ll like meet in the middle. She’s like, “probably not do all of that, but we can start doing a little of that.” I’m just like, “okay.” (PLC 3)

When Jodi wanted to try something new in the classroom, she told us:

> I always just brought in what I wanted to read, and then she was just, “Yeah. Maybe you shouldn’t read that part, but that sorta sounds good.” If I was without my teacher—my CT guiding me, then I don’t know what I would’ve done. (Interview 2)

Another aspect of her CT’s support came through in Jodi’s autonomy in Social Studies. Jodi reflected, “…all my lessons that I did, I just designed by myself. Then she [CT] would make little changes or give me some feedback before I did them. Most of it was just all on my own,
with the help of the PLC” (Interview 2). Jodi was given the opportunity to take the curriculum standards and create lessons that highlighted these standards with almost complete autonomy. In this field experience, Jodi was able to enact critical literacy in these Social Studies lessons. Jodi chose to integrate critical literacy into Social Studies because:

Social Studies is so text heavy and then you can like weave in language arts for in a large part of social studies and all of social studies really is about people of the past so that is so easy to like think about how these people would feel, think about how you would feel, if these people didn't do exactly what they did and how what might the world be. And how you think critically about the impacts of these people in history in your life today so you can just fold it on in there. (Interview 1)

Despite the fact that Jodi did not share this lesson in the PLC she did note another instance in which she attempted critical literacy within Social Studies. She spoke about this lesson in her final interview. Jodi described the lesson as follows:

Well, I did a civics lesson about how to be a responsible citizen, and I guess maybe that could be critical—we didn’t really read anything, but we did reflect on how our actions—because we did examples and non-examples. It was like students were acting out how responsible citizens would act and how irresponsible citizens would act in different situations. Then we reflected on how the—our actions as irresponsible citizens and responsible citizens impacted the environment around us. I was kind of taking that idea of your actions—how can you be a change in a world, either a good one if you’re a non-example or a—or a bad one if you’re a non-example and a good one if you’re an example. (Interview 2)
This recollection acts as just another example of how Jodi was able to integrate Social Studies and critical literacy into her second grade classroom due to the support of her collaborating teacher.

Her peers in the learning community also supported Jodi. She used this learning community as a place to reflect on lessons and listen to feedback from her peers. Jodi felt, “in that PLC—that was just like a little community where we could really focus on just our stuff and speak really openly and truthfully about what we were experiencing” (Interview 2). Jodi found one specific learning community meeting aided in her development. In reference in PLC 4, Jodi stated:

The PLC meeting where we read that article about how to incorporate critical literacy with the read-alouds. I felt like that was really helpful because that was a brainstorming session about how to incorporate critical literacy. That was a lot of us talking about, “Well, this is what I’m doing. This is what I’m doing. How can we change that into critical literacy? Does that apply to critical literacy?” I thought that was really helpful. (Interview 2)

As discussed above, dialogue with the PLC helped Jodi engage in praxis and take risks with her critical literacy instruction.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I used critical incidents from Jodi’s journey throughout the study to make sense of critical literacy and enact critical literacy in her second grade field experience classroom. Jodi developed knowledge for, in, and of practice and engaged in praxis as she engaged with the learning community and attempted to enact critical literacy in her classroom. Through this process, Jodi gained a deeper understanding of critical literacy and worked towards
creating change in her literacy instruction. Her growth was facilitated by her collaborating teacher’s support and a space to develop Social Studies curriculum in her classroom. However, Jodi was still inhibited by constraints in the curriculum, time in the classroom, and fear of parental support. In the next chapter, I will use critical incidents to highlight Zoe’s growth throughout the time of this study.
Chapter Five: Zoe’s Case

In this chapter, I will begin with a description of Zoe as a student, her previous internship experiences, and her literacy beliefs. Then, I will explain three critical incidents in which Zoe makes meaning of critical literacy. These critical incidents were selected to illustrate how Zoe evolved in her sensemaking. Within these critical incidents, I found themes of Zoe’s ability to make meaning of critical literacy through dialogue with the PLC and by building knowledge for practice. Zoe questioned her peer’s enactment but was unable to enact critical literacy herself. These themes led to the following assertions: (1) Zoe made meaning of critical literacy as she developed knowledge for practice, (2) Zoe’s ability to make sense of critical literacy was supported by dialogue with her peers and Jodi’s knowledge in practice; however, she still was unable to build knowledge in practice through enactment of critical literacy, (3) Zoe engaged in critical questioning and dialogue within the learning community to support the development of knowledge of practice in her peers, and (4) Zoe was inhibited to enact critical literacy due to the relationship with her collaborating teacher and her developmental readiness in her own teaching.

Zoe’s Story

Zoe is a twenty-five year old white undergraduate student. In this section, I will describe Zoe’s educational and personal experiences growing up, her beliefs about teaching literacy, her previous teaching experience in her internships, and her current classroom context.
Zoe’s Personal Experience

Zoe grew up in a rural area on a farm (PLC 1). Zoe told the group, “I noticed pretty young though…” in regard to racial differences as she grew up in a fairly segregated area (PLC 1). She told us, “My school was like 90 percent black…in my neighborhood…there was this road that split and then this section was mostly white people and then this section was black people” (PLC 1). At school, Zoe said, “I feel like I didn’t really fit in because I’m like this little white country girl” (PLC 1). Even currently, Zoe commented on how her town in North Carolina is “…so segregated even now” (PLC 1). Zoe felt compelled to tell us she grew up in a household where racism was prominent. “My stepdad who was 21 years older than my mom grew up in the North Carolina Mountains and is kinda racist. He’d say the N word a lot…” (PLC 1). Then, when Zoe moved to Florida she noticed “…like in Florida it’s so diverse…” compared to the often-segregated schools where she grew up in North Carolina (PLC 1).

Zoe’s Literacy Beliefs

In our first interview together, Zoe reported she believed literacy should be integrated with all content areas. This sentiment echoed the thoughts Zoe outlined in her previously written literacy beliefs platform. Zoe said that literacy instruction should be built upon a balance of the five pillars of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary (Literacy Platform). When designing her literacy instruction, Zoe stated, “I will need to be flexible in the classroom, and I need to be able to fit the individual needs of the students as situations arise” (Literacy Platform). In order to vary her instruction, Zoe stated “I will always be researching and creating unique ways of teaching literacy in the classroom” (Literacy Platform).
Zoe’s Field Experiences

For Zoe’s previous two internships she was placed in a fifth grade classroom at Sands, the same large suburban elementary school as Jodi. When asked about the literacy lessons in this fifth grade classroom, Zoe noted she “…didn't really get to see how they started the literacy lessons” (Interview 1). She did notice the class would read aloud as a whole group and then discuss the text (Interview 1).

During this study, Zoe was placed in a fourth grade classroom in the same elementary school. Zoe reported her CT’s management style as strict but also caring. For example, Zoe stated, “I feel like my teacher’s a balance though because she definitely, she has a strict, ‘I don't play.’ You can see it on her face, but then she gives a little winky thing” (PLC 1). In this classroom, Zoe described the literacy experiences as follows: “Then this year we are doing a lot of reading while pointing and then how to do inner thoughts and what they're thinking while active reading. The recording your inner thinking while you're reading and making note of that” (Interview 1). For example, her students wrote down thoughts such as, “I thought that was interesting. I connected it to this. I remember when I had this. I wonder what this word means? I found it here” (PLC 2). Zoe also noticed her fourth grade classroom consisted of mostly nonfiction texts and informational essay writing (PLC 2). When reflecting on literacy in this classroom, Zoe stated, “Some things that are absent are more student viewpoints and creative fiction or imagination stuff” (PLC 2). However, Zoe did note that when reading independently, “They get to pick their own books when they're reading” (PLC 2). In regards to independent reading, Zoe found:
When they're reading their own books, they're doing a lot of the typical age books where it's like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. It is kid-related. They're doing "Battle of the Books" in fourth grade, so a lotta kids are reading those. (PLC 2)

**Critical Incidents for Zoe**

In the following section, I will illustrate the critical incidents in Zoe’s journey to make sense of critical literacy in this study. Throughout our time in the learning community, Zoe’s conceptual understanding of critical literacy grew as we read articles about critical literacy, shared ideas for practice, and engaged in dialogue within the PLC. However, Zoe was unable to enact critical literacy in her field experience classroom. Zoe focused her inquiry this semester on Science as this was the content area in which Zoe was able to teach most often during this field experience. Therefore, Zoe’s experiences with critical literacy were confined to this learning community. I chose the following three critical incidents since these situations illustrated Zoe’s sensemaking of critical literacy and her vital role in the learning community. From these critical incidents I found themes about how Zoe’s conceptual understanding of critical literacy evolved, the impact of the learning community on Zoe’s ability to make sense of critical literacy, and her desire to encourage change in other people’s teaching practice. Table 9 summarizes these themes.

Table 9

*Summary of Zoe’s Critical Incidents and Corresponding Themes.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Incident</th>
<th>Themes for Each Critical Incident</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Critical Incident One | • Knowledge for practice helped Zoe make sense of critical literacy.  
  • Zoe used Jodi’s teaching narrative about building knowledge in practice to make practical connections to critical literacy instruction.  
  • Zoe helped Jodi build her conception of knowledge of practice in her enactment of critical literacy. |
Table 9 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Incident</th>
<th>Themes for Each Critical Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Critical Incident Two | • Knowledge for practice helped Zoe make sense of critical literacy.  
• Zoe used Jodi’s teaching narrative about building knowledge in practice to make practical connections to critical literacy instruction.  
• Zoe prompted Jodi’s critically reflect which led to Jodi’s knowledge of practice. |
| Critical Incident Three | • Zoe encouraged Jodi to make changes to her enactment of critical literacy.  
• Dialogue in the PLC promoted Zoe’s sensemaking of critical literacy. |

**Critical Incident One: Reintroduction to Critical Literacy**

Before the PLC when I asked Zoe in our initial interview, “What do you believe critical literacy is?” her response was, “I am not really sure but I think maybe it's really important foundations of literacy but I don't really know for sure” (Interview 1). This answer was fairly common in my first set of interviews so I planned our first learning community meeting with this in mind. In this first learning community meeting, we read Ciardiello’s (2004) article on critical literacy in Social Studies. This article prompted discussion about what critical literacy is and how to enact critical literacy in the classroom. In this meeting as shown in the previous chapter, Jodi reflected on her critical literacy lesson on the Constitution. As Jodi explained her lesson on the Constitution and questioned whether second grade is too young to talk about race, Zoe pushed Jodi and shared personal experiences. Zoe stated:

If you live somewhere like in Florida it’s so diverse they’re just now having a high expanding of Hispanic culture there. For a long time it was just white and black everywhere. I think it also depends on where you live and so how much you’re gonna know when you're younger. (PLC 1)
Zoe urged Jodi not to think about age being a factor as she noticed race at an early age when saying, “I noticed pretty young though” (PLC 1). Zoe continued to share her personal experiences with race as a child.

Then, as we continued to discuss Ciardiello’s (2004) article, Zoe related the critical literacy content in the article back to Jodi’s lesson:

When you’re reading it, if you see that this is a dominant voice, realize that that's sorta like the white men with the Constitution and all that, and that there is a silent voice out there and try to maybe find it. If you can find that voice, then that might be really interesting to add that to that perspective too. (PLC 1)

Hearing Jodi’s narrative of teaching critical literacy in conjunction with reading Ciardiello’s (2004) article prompted Zoe to begin her journey of making sense of critical literacy. In this meeting, Zoe began to envision critical literacy in the classroom as “…having those books in the classroom that represent the different identities” (PLC 1). At the end of learning community meeting one, Zoe was able to make better sense out of her first notions of critical literacy. These initial thoughts were captured in her first iteration of the concept map of critical literacy. Zoe used a definition of critical literacy from Ciardiello’s (2004) article to start this conceptual map (Figure 14). She wrote that critical literacy is: “a set of literacy practices and civic competencies that help the learner develop a critical awareness that texts represent particular points of view while often silencing other views” (Concept map 1). In addition, Zoe added that critical literacy, “raises questions about dominant and oppressive ideas in text,” another ideas discussed in Ciardiello’s (2004) article (Concept map 1).
Figure 14. Zoe’s first conceptual map of critical literacy

Critical Incident One Themes

As Zoe participated in this learning community meeting she used knowledge for practice in Ciardiello’s (2004) article to help her make meaning of critical literacy. Through Jodi’s discussion and reflection of her lesson on the Constitution, Zoe made practical connections between ideas from Ciardiello’s (2004) article and teaching. During this dialogue, Zoe pushed Jodi to engage in knowledge of practice as she questioned Jodi’s teaching and mindset.

Knowledge for practice helped Zoe make sense of critical literacy. As written in critical incident one, Zoe used a definition of critical literacy written in Ciardiello’s (2004) article to start her concept map of critical literacy. It was this first experience learning more about critical literacy that started Zoe on her journey to make sense of critical literacy. As mentioned above, Zoe did not have a clear idea of what critical literacy was before we started this work in our PLC. This first critical incident showed Zoe’s introduction to a definition of critical literacy but also her first steps to connecting critical literacy to practice.

Zoe used Jodi’s teaching narrative about building knowledge in practice to make practical connections to critical literacy instruction. During the first learning community
meeting described in critical incident one, Zoe listened to Jodi give a narrative account of her
critical literacy lesson on the Constitution. After hearing Jodi’s narrative and then reading
Ciardiello’s (2004) article on critical literacy, Zoe was able to relate what she learned from the
article back to Jodi’s lesson. In this critical incident, Zoe made connections from the formal
knowledge she gained about critical literacy to Jodi’s practical applications of critical literacy
enacted in the classroom. Zoe used Jodi’s reflection as a place for learning of her own about
critical literacy instruction.

Zoe helped Jodi build her conception of knowledge of practice in her enactment of
critical literacy. Freire posited (1998) that teacher training goes beyond skills to include critical
and reflective consciousness fostered by dialogue. Dialogue is collective reflection and action,
and an integral piece of praxis (Freire, 1970). In this critical incident, dialogue was an integral
part of Zoe and Jodi’s journey. Jodi expressed hesitation with discussing race in her second grade
class. As Zoe listened to this fear, she reflected on her own experiences growing up and how she
noticed race at a young age. Therefore, in an effort to change Jodi’s enactment of critical
literacy, Zoe used her own personal experiences to push Jodi’s thinking about dialogue with her
second graders. Zoe also tried to explain her thoughts about her students growing up in a large
urban area of Florida. Zoe reminded Jodi that Florida is a very diverse area so students might
notice this diversity at a younger age. When sharing her thoughts on her students growing up in
Florida, Zoe tried to illuminate the diversity children are already experiencing due to where they
live. Because Zoe grew up in a diverse area and witnessed racism, she felt that this experience
made her notice race at a young age. Zoe used these personal experiences to question Jodi’s
teaching decisions. Zoe pushed Jodi to think about race when planning her lessons and fostering
dialogue with her students. Zoe helped Jodi to develop the knowledge of practice needed to
question her teaching. When Zoe questioned Jodi’s decisions, it caused Jodi to stop and reflect on having conversations about race with second graders.

**Summary of Themes for Critical Incident One**

In this critical incident, Zoe progressed in her sensemaking of critical literacy as she gained knowledge for practice from our reading in the PLC. As Jodi recounted her teaching experience, Zoe applied her new understanding of critical literacy to Jodi’s practical application of critical literacy. Through dialogue in the learning community, Zoe questioned Jodi’s teaching and, therefore, helped Jodi to build knowledge of practice.

**Critical Incident Two: Zoe’s Response to Jodi’s Enactment of Critical Literacy**

As portrayed in chapter four, Jodi modeled critical literacy for the professional learning community as she shared her critical literacy lesson on Malala and reflected on her teaching with her peers. After Jodi played the video recording of her class discussion, the PLC members reflected on Jodi’s questioning and the students’ involvement in the lesson:

*Angel:* It was like open-ended.

*Facilitator:* Very open-ended questions, yeah.

*Angel:* She wasn’t looking for a specific answer for what she said. She was looking for a question that isn’t just yes or no, like that could turn into something. Like that could actually possibly have been turned into a question that she hasn’t even like thought of.

*Facilitator:* Yeah. Absolutely.

*Brandie:* Even the answers were like sad, but when she asked them like why—who were they sad for there was thought behind it, it wasn’t just like, “Oh, cuz I’m supposed to be sad.”

*Zoe:* I was sad.
Brandie: People get hurt.

Zoe: Yeah.

Interviewer: Right.

Brandie: They knew why.

Facilitator: Absolutely.

Zoe: I feel like their answers are very like childlike in that they have the innocence behind them of like, “why aren’t we helping them?” They don’t have like, “it’s, well, these people do this and these people did that” and da-da-da-da-da. They’re very like, “We’re supposed to do that. We’re supposed to help them.” It’s like that deep thought of like, I don’t have all the politics of this or that behind it. It’s like we’re all people.

Zoe and her colleagues noticed how Jodi was able to prompt deeper responses from her students and their ability to demonstrate empathy. As the learning community continued, Jodi reflected on her decision not to share with her students that Malala was shot. As shown in chapter four, Zoe felt compelled to push Jodi’s thinking. Zoe urged Jodi to think about other topics in history such as the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Zoe insisted:

9/11 though, they talk a little bit about it and they say that some bad people came and they took planes and they hit buildings and a lot of people got hurt. You don’t say the details of it, but you could’ve said like some bad people thought she should get hurt.

(PLC 4)

Zoe continued, “Kids are super aware” (PLC 4) and provided an example from her own teaching experience in which a student discussed going to the food bank with her family because they did not have a lot of food. Zoe used this example to show evidence of just how aware young children can be about the realities of life.
As we continued to explore critical literacy in learning community meeting four, we read Meller, Richardson, and Hatch’s (2009) article on critical literacy read alouds in elementary school classrooms. Each member of the PLC shared aspects of this article that were helpful and relevant to their learning. Zoe stated:

I like when it said, it made me think of it like, kinda like a good way, what they said, find points in articles—find out critical points. I didn’t think of it in that way, like this point is a critical point. (PLC 4)

Zoe noted how the authors were able to take a text and find “critical points” in the text to use in discussions with students. She continued to explain:

I like how it, here it says don’t provide happily ever after endings for complex social problems. I remember like one of the—I don’t remember exactly what story it was or anything, but I remember the feeling of the first time we ever read a story and it didn’t end happily. I was like, I don’t know how I feel about that. (PLC 4)

Zoe also reflected on Meller, Richardson, and Hatch’s (2009) point about providing realistic portrayals of social issues for children instead of simply happily ever after stories. Zoe was able to take this idea and relate it to her own experiences. In addition, Zoe added this aspect of critical literacy to her concept map seen in Figure 15 (Concept map 4).
As we continued to discuss the article, the conversation quickly evolved into a discussion of the myth of meritocracy (Bell, 1973) and forms of oppression people face in the United States. Zoe felt that success in life was largely based on, “Who you know, what does your—who does your family know. What is your race, what is your gender?” (PLC 4). Zoe expanded on this idea:

There’s that one difference that maybe you have no control over that almost is like luck that you happen to be in your situation. You met someone on the street and this or that. Then the thing is sometimes that person didn’t work that hard the whole time. They happened to have that one little bit of luck right there, that one little day they turned left instead of right. It doesn’t always happen that way. (PLC 4)

Jodi related this conversation back to her critical literacy enactment. Jodi reflected, “I feel like that’s one of the hardest things about critical literacy today to discuss with your kids, is that why doesn’t this person have rights?” (PLC 4). Jodi echoed Zoe’s thoughts about the myth of meritocracy. Jodi stated how circumstances of life affected Malala:

Because that person was born there and they were born a girl. It’s not because they’re a
terrible person, and they deserve it. It’s because that’s the hand they got dealt. They’re
trying to change that hand for themselves and the future of little girls. (PLC 4)

Jodi continued to relate this to the lives of girls in America today. Jodi reflected, “I was gonna
say, ‘Well, girls, you didn’t have to fight that hard,’ but I was like, but we still have to fight for
our right” (PLC 4). Zoe echoed this sentiment with, “We have a different form of it” (PLC 4).

Zoe and Jodi were able to engage in critical reflection about the myth of meritocracy and the
oppression of women. Jodi connected this conversation back to her lesson on Malala and the
inequities women of Pakistan face every day. This conversation led both Zoe and Jodi to
acknowledge the oppression that women still face today in the United States.

Critical Incident Two Themes

In this critical incident, Zoe again made meaning of critical literacy through her
development of knowledge for practice with Meller, Richardson, and Hatch’s (2009) article on
critical literacy read-alouds. In this critical incident, Zoe again was able to make better sense of
critical literacy as Jodi’s recounted her own teaching narrative and engaged in reflection with the
PLC. Through this dialogue with the PLC, Zoe questioned Jodi’s teaching decisions and fostered
knowledge of practice.

Knowledge for practice helped Zoe make sense of critical literacy. Again, Zoe used
knowledge for practice that she gained from scholarly literature to help her make sense of critical
literacy. In Meller, Richardson, and Hatch’s (2009) article, Zoe acknowledged two main points
that stood out to her and helped her make sense of critical literacy. Zoe highlighted the point the
authors made about not simply reading texts to students that provide happily ever after endings
to complex social issues. Zoe also noted how the authors encouraged teachers to find critical
points in texts to promote discussion with students. As Zoe’s conception of knowledge for
practice grew in critical incident two, she added this new learning to her concept map of critical literacy as seen in Figure 15.

Zoe used Jodi’s teaching narrative about building knowledge in practice to make practical connections to critical literacy instruction. As Jodi modeled her critical literacy lesson on Malala, the PLC members specifically noted the types of questions Jodi asked her students to promote deeper conversations. Zoe and her peers noticed that Jodi asked her students, *why*, and used higher-order thinking questions with her class. At the end of this learning community meeting, Zoe also added higher-order thinking questions to her concept map of critical literacy (Figure 15). As described in critical incident one, Zoe was able to relate the content in Ciardiello’s (2004) article to Jodi’s practice, and, thus, increase her understanding of critical literacy. Then, in critical incident two, Zoe related Jodi’s critical literacy practice in her Malala lesson back to her own conceptual knowledge of critical literacy. Zoe was consistently making meaning of critical literacy instruction through Jodi’s own knowledge in practice.

Zoe prompted Jodi’s critically reflect which led to Jodi’s knowledge of practice. In critical incident two, Jodi gave a narrative account of her teaching a critical literacy lesson on Malala and played a video-recording on her class discussion. Jodi questioned her decision to follow her collaborating teacher’s suggestion and to skip the page in the text that showed Malala getting shot. Zoe immediately expressed her own thoughts on Jodi’s decision to skip this page. Zoe tried to relate this lesson to discuss other violent acts in history such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Zoe prompted Jodi to critically reflect on how to handle this discussion differently. Zoe encouraged Jodi to share the truth of what happened to Malala in her own way because young children are very aware of the world around them. This dialogue and questioning pushed Jodi to knowledge of practice.
Summary of Themes for Critical Incident Two

In this critical incident, Zoe developed knowledge for practice to make meaning of critical literacy as she read Meller, Richardson, and Hatch (2009). As Jodi recounted her lesson on Malala, Zoe’s sensemaking of critical literacy evolved to include higher-order thinking questions. Zoe also pushed Jodi to knowledge of practice through questioning and recounts of personal experiences.

Critical Incident Three: Practical Ideas for Critical Literacy

In our final learning community meeting, our conversations turned to how each person could incorporate critical literacy into their own instruction. Jodi shared her struggles to find texts that portrayed Native Americans and Thanksgiving in an accurate way. Zoe suggested, “What about a short story rather than an actual book?” (PLC 6). She continued on to say, “Yeah, and I saw a book that they shared about 9/11 that skimmed it, but didn’t overly skim it. There’s gotta be a book out there about the Native American situation that goes over it” (PLC 6). As the learning community meeting continued, each member shared their ideas for trying critical literacy in the classroom, specifically related to their inquiries. Therefore, Zoe spoke about critical literacy instruction integrated with Science content as she worked this semester mostly in Science lessons. Another peer, Brandie also shared her ideas for her future Science instruction. She suggested, “…we could talk about women in Science because we usually think about older men” (PLC 6). Zoe latched onto her peer’s idea for incorporating discussions of women as Scientists into her instruction. Zoe also devised her own ideas for critical literacy in Science instruction. Zoe wanted to incorporate science topics that may affect the world on a more global level such as, “…the water cycle, how it affects people in different places where they live, like if they live in the desert and they have issues with their water…” (PLC 6). Zoe also suggested
focusing instruction on “…what problems are with the environment and then doing stories about what kids are doing about it, something about kids” (PLC 6). Zoe thought she could emphasize for example, “…science changes, and how you can one day be a researcher that makes a change” (PLC 6). Zoe wanted to use these changes to inspire students as researchers. She reflected, “The kids can realize like, ‘One day I could research something further, and maybe I can develop it further.’ Then students write times that they interacted with science in their own lives” (PLC 6).

Another idea Zoe had to inspire her students as scientists was to incorporate scientists that are children:

> Then I thought kids as scientists because there’s kids that invent things all the time, so it’s realizing, as you said, like power to the voice, so the kids have more power than they think. Talk about, “How do you feel about how much power you actually have to do that stuff?” (PLC 6).

In this last learning community meeting, Zoe was able to see how to enact critical literacy within the Science content area she was in charge of teaching.

**Critical Incident Three Themes**

In this critical incident Zoe gained a greater ability to make sense of critical literacy as she engaged in dialogue with the PLC. After discussion of practical ideas for critical literacy enactment, Zoe created a long list of ideas for critical literacy in Science instruction. This critical incident marked the first time Zoe began to see how critical literacy could be enacted in her teaching through Science.

*Zoe encouraged Jodi to make changes to her enactment of critical literacy.* In this critical incident three, Jodi expressed frustration in trying to find literature to use in her Native American unit that accurately portrayed English settlement in America. Although Zoe did not
have any specific texts in mind to help Jodi, she did offer the suggestion of expanding her search to include short stories rather than just a picture book. Zoe continued to push Jodi to find diverse literature as she recounted her personal experience with a text about 9/11. Zoe encouraged Jodi to find a trade book just as she managed to find for her lesson on Malala. Again, Zoe tried to influence Jodi’s enactment of critical literacy.

**Dialogue in the PLC promoted Zoe’s sensemaking of critical literacy.** As Zoe continued to engage in dialogue within the learning community her ideas about how to actually do critical literacy in the classroom began to grow. Just as Jodi’s teaching impacted Zoe’s sensemaking in critical incidents one and two, dialogue in critical incident three influenced Zoe’s ability to make meaning of critical literacy. In this critical incident, Zoe was able to list several ideas on how to incorporate critical literacy into Science instruction in the future. She used Brandie’s idea of exploring women Scientists in her own list of possibilities for her future instruction. Zoe noted in our final interview that this learning community meeting was very influential in her understanding of critical literacy. Zoe stated:

> I wanna go back to that thing you had last time because that was more I was able to go, “Okay, instead of just doing literally literature, I can use science.” Now I can find ways that are creative with it. (Interview 2)

Zoe began to recognize how she could integrate critical literacy instruction into Science content.

**Summary of Themes for Critical Incident Three**

In critical incident three, Zoe’s ability to make meaning of critical literacy as practical ideas for implementation grew. Jodi’s questions about her Native American unit allowed Zoe to offer practical advice for implementation of critical literacy. Zoe used Brandie’s idea of women in Science to explore future ideas for her own instruction.
Assertions Across Critical Incidents

As I looked across the themes that emerged from these critical incidents I was able to form assertions about Zoe’s understanding of critical literacy and ability to enact critical literacy. The assertions in Zoe’s case focus on both main research questions and sub-questions: (1) How do elementary PSTs engaged in practitioner inquiry make meaning of critical literacy instruction within a facilitated learning community? (2) How do PSTs enact critical literacy instruction in the field experience elementary classroom while engaged in practitioner inquiry in a facilitated learning community? What facilitates PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom? What inhibits PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom? Assertions one and two addressed research question one. Assertion three focused on the intertwined nature of both research questions and assertion four addressed research question two. I developed the following assertions about Zoe’s time in this study: (1) Zoe made meaning of critical literacy as she developed knowledge for practice, (2) Zoe’s ability to make sense of critical literacy was supported by dialogue with her peers and Jodi’s knowledge in practice; however, she still was unable to build knowledge in practice through enactment of critical literacy, (3) Zoe engaged in critical questioning and dialogue within the learning community to support the development of knowledge of practice in her peers, and (4) Zoe was inhibited to enact critical literacy due to the relationship with her collaborating teacher and her developmental readiness in her own teaching. Table 10 displays the critical incidents with corresponding themes and assertion across.
Table 10

Summary of Zoe’s Critical Incidents with Corresponding Themes and Assertions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Incident</th>
<th>Themes for Each Critical Incident</th>
<th>Assertions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Critical Incident One | • Knowledge for practice helped Zoe make sense of critical literacy.  
• Zoe used Jodi’s teaching narrative about building knowledge in practice to make practical connections to critical literacy instruction.  
• Zoe helped Jodi build her conception of knowledge of practice in her enactment of critical literacy. | • Zoe made meaning of critical literacy as she developed knowledge for practice.  
• Zoe’s ability to make sense of critical literacy was supported by dialogue with her peers and Jodi’s knowledge in practice; however, she still was unable to build knowledge in practice through enactment of critical literacy.  
• Zoe engaged in critical questioning and dialogue within the learning community to support the development of knowledge of practice in her peers.  
• Zoe was inhibited to enact critical literacy due to the relationship with her collaborating teacher and her developmental readiness in her own teaching. |
| Critical Incident Two | • Knowledge for practice helped Zoe make sense of critical literacy.  
• Zoe used Jodi’s teaching narrative about building knowledge in practice to make practical connections to critical literacy instruction.  
• Zoe prompted Jodi’s critically reflect which led to Jodi’s knowledge of practice. |  |
| Critical Incident Three | • Zoe encouraged Jodi to make changes to her enactment of critical literacy.  
• Dialogue in the PLC promoted Zoe’s sensemaking of critical literacy. |  |

Assertion One: Zoe Made Meaning of Critical Literacy as she Developed Knowledge for Practice

As portrayed in critical incident one, Zoe struggled at first to understand the concept of critical literacy. When I first questioned Zoe about her conception of critical literacy in our interview, she was unable to confidently answer. She responded, “I am not really sure but I think maybe it's really important foundations of literacy but I don't really know for sure” (Interview 1). Despite her inability to vocalize her thoughts about critical literacy, she already started to incorporate some aspects of critical literacy into the classroom. During our first interview, I asked Zoe to tell me about a time when she presented an engaging literacy lesson. She recalled a
read aloud lesson in which she promoted multiple perspectives and helped students relate the content to their everyday lives: “We talked about different opinions or ways that we could change the ending or how it related to their own lives” (Interview 1). She continued, “I thought of it beyond just the words on the paper and they were able to think deeper about what was going on related to themselves” (Interview 1).

Then, in our first learning community meeting we read Ciardiello’s (2004) article about critical literacy instruction in Social Studies. As demonstrated in critical incident one, Zoe developed knowledge for practice from this article. She started to break down Ciardiello’s definition of critical literacy and connect these concepts to Jodi’s teaching in her lesson on the Constitution. As shown in critical incident one after reading Ciardiello’s (2004) article, Zoe conceptualized critical literacy as examining multiple perspectives on a topic and empowering the voice of marginalized people. She stated:

It sort of relates to the multiple perspectives, but realizing that whatever is written it has someone's voice behind it. You should learn how to recognize that it's someone's opinions and place and take that sort of for what it is. There's a dominant voice and a more silent voice. (PLC 1)

In critical incident two, Zoe’s conception of knowledge for practice grew as she read Meller, Richardson, and Hatch’s (2009) article on critical literacy. Zoe was able to expand her conceptual understanding of critical literacy to include knowledge she gained from this article such as going beyond a happily ever after ending and determining critical points in texts. Her revised concept map was shown previously in Figure 15. In this critical incident, Zoe continued to conceptualize critical literacy as examining multiple perspectives and gained a better understanding of how to utilize literature to provide students with differing perspectives. In
addition, she added, “Now, what can you do?” to her concept map of critical literacy, implying she understood the goal of critical literacy as social action.

Zoe used the formal knowledge of teaching she gained from reading practitioner articles in the learning community to further make meaning of critical literacy. Her sensemaking of critical literacy evolved from a foundation of literacy to multiple perspectives to social action as she developed knowledge for practice. This process is displayed in Figure 16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Critical Incident One</th>
<th>Critical Incident Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Foundation of literacy  
  • Multiple Perspectives  
  • Relating content to students' lives | • Knowledge For Practice  
  • Definition of critical literacy  
  • Multiple perspectives | • Knowledge For Practice  
  • Determining critical points  
  • Beyond "happily ever after"  
  • Goal: social action |

*Figure 16. Zoe’s sensemaking of critical literacy through knowledge for practice.*

**Assertion Two: Zoe’s Ability to Make Sense of Critical Literacy was Supported by Dialogue with her Peers and Jodi’s Knowledge in Practice, however, she was Unable to Build Knowledge in Practice Through Enactment of Critical Literacy**

In critical incident one, Zoe used Jodi’s narrative about teaching a lesson on the Constitution as a context to apply the knowledge she gained in Ciardiello’s (2004) article about critical literacy. Zoe noted Jodi had expressed multiple perspectives on the Constitution and highlighted the marginalized voice of women. Zoe connected the dominant voice to the white men writing the Constitution. In Jodi’s lesson she tried to have her students think of the women’s perspective during the time the Constitution was written in history. After we read Ciardiello’s (2004) article, Zoe was able to directly connect the content back to Jodi’s lesson. Zoe noticed the
white men had the dominant voice during this time in history. Zoe used Jodi’s knowledge in practice to make her own meaning of critical literacy instruction. As seen in Figure 14, Zoe started her concept map of critical literacy using the knowledge she learned from Ciardiello’s (2004) article.

Then, in critical incident two, Jodi shared a video-recording of her students’ discussion of Malala during her critical literacy lesson. As the PLC members discussed Jodi’s use of questioning, Zoe noted the importance of asking higher-order questions in order to prompt students to think more deeply. Zoe added this idea of higher-order thinking questions to her concept map of critical literacy as seen in Figure 15. In our final interview together, Zoe recalled how influential Jodi’s recollection of her critical literacy lesson on Malala was for her own learning:

> It was about how she was able to take the regular lesson and transform it, but also how we are able to talk about what could you say in your own classes and how it can be awkward. It is doable, and then she actually did it, but then knowing that even though she did do that, there was still that little bit of issue with her teacher going, “I don’t know about that.” It’s like just because you’re—you can always try a little bit even though you don’t actually go all the way, it’s still good that you tried. (Interview 2)

Again, Zoe used the knowledge in practice that Jodi built as she enacted critical literacy to make meaning of critical literacy. In critical incident two when Jodi shared her lesson, Zoe was truly able to see critical literacy instruction in action. As Jodi modeled critical literacy, Zoe used these components to build a better understanding of critical literacy.

In the third critical incident, another peer, Brandie, shared her idea of critical literacy integration with Science instruction. Brandie thought it would be possible to discuss the
contributions of women in Science, instead of solely focusing on male Scientists. In this suggestion, Brandie gave voice to the marginalized women in Science. Zoe found this suggestion to be a great idea and one she wanted to enact in her future instruction. After our last learning community meeting together, Zoe had a better understanding of how to integrate critical literacy into other content areas. As presented in critical incident three, Zoe developed practical ideas for how to integrate critical literacy and Science instruction in the future. Zoe continued to reflect on ways to integrate critical literacy into her instruction in our final interview. In thinking about possible upcoming Science lessons, Zoe reflected:

Well, I liked how it would say—when I wrote about getting the opportunity to see a simple science lesson where you learn about the water cycle, but then going, “Okay, where do you see it affecting—.” I was like on a real cause and effect coming in, like maybe some places don’t get a lot of water. Maybe I wanna do something about that, so how you can develop a world with simple learning possibility. (Interview 2)

Despite her growth in making sense of critical literacy, Zoe struggled to build her own knowledge in practice as she was unable to enact critical literacy. Zoe felt the Science curriculum she was teaching at the time did not easily lend itself to integration with critical literacy. However, Zoe still reflected that she did not try as deeply as she would have liked to enact critical literacy. Zoe noted:

And then, in science class, we were talking a lot about properties of matter and feeling it and touching it. I feel like there could be ways that you could talk about different elements. I don’t know. I feel like I could have thought about it deeper and maybe even find a way to connect it to life. (Interview 2)

Zoe herself even noted her progress from the first learning community meeting until the end of
the semester in terms of her conceptual understanding of critical literacy. Zoe reflected,

> From the beginning I was like, “I’ll just literally write the definition that I find in this little article.” Now I can actually work with it a little bit and give more of an opinion—ideas, not stuff that I literally read but stuff that I can think about critically going there. (Interview 2)

While Zoe did not actually enact critical literacy, she developed her understanding of critical literacy through Jodi’s knowledge in practice and Brandie’s ideas for instruction. As Zoe continued throughout the PLC, she made deeper meaning of critical literacy. Figure 17 summarizes Zoe’s sensemaking of critical literacy through knowledge for practice, seeing Jodi implement critical literacy and reflect on her teaching, and dialogue within the learning community. Each of these components aided in Zoe’s sensemaking of critical literacy.

**Figure 17.** Zoe’s process to making meaning of critical literacy.

**Assertion Three: Zoe Engaged in Critical Questioning and Dialogue Within the Learning Community to Support the Development of Knowledge of Practice in her Peers**

Even though Zoe was unable to enact critical literacy in her own field experience classroom, this did not stop her from promoting the learning of other PLC members. Particularly,
Zoe fostered knowledge of practice within the community as she consistently questioned and pushed her peers to change their practice and to question the status quo.

Zoe consistently expressed her thoughts that young children are very aware and able to have critical conversations about events in history. In the critical incidents one, two, and three, Zoe asserted that young children are very aware of the world and that they are able to talk about difficult topics. In critical incident one, Zoe asserted young children can talk about race as they are aware of race. Then, in critical incident two, Zoe questioned Jodi’s decision to exclude the page in the text in which Malala was shot in the face. In critical incident three, Zoe pushed Jodi to find diverse texts that portrayed Native Americans and English settlement authentically to her students. Not only did Zoe think young children could engage in critical literacy, but she also thought that the primary grades were a place to integrate critical literacy into the curriculum in order to avoid the strict curriculum constraints she faced in the intermediate grades. Zoe questioned the status quo when Jodi recounted lessons and the learning community engaged in dialogue. This dialogue oftentimes led to conversations about how to teach students about historical events in history such as 9/11 or current events today, such as the Syrian conflict. Zoe pushed Jodi to reflect on her teaching and rethink how she approached discussions with her students.

**Assertion Four: Zoe was Inhibited to Enact Critical Literacy due to the Relationship with her Collaborating Teacher and her Developmental Readiness in her own Teaching**

Zoe lacked confidence in her own teaching skills at this point in her development. She expressed hesitation and even stated, “I wanna see her example before I do it” when referring to Jodi’s upcoming lesson on Malala that was outlined in critical incident two (PLC 3). Even
though Zoe lacked this readiness to enact critical literacy, she was very interested in learning more about critical literacy as a concept and how to enact it practically in the classroom.

   Zoe expressed a desire to enact critical literacy but felt stifled due to her collaborating teacher’s strict adherence to the curriculum guide. In our final interview, Zoe stated:

   I don’t know. It was just like I wasn’t able to quite go with that because of the point of the lesson, that my teacher would say like, “Let’s get it and go,” was about just reading and reflecting on the questions. I think that would have been a nice opportunity to take those articles that we have to read and talk about it further. (Interview 2)

Zoe even questioned her collaborating teacher’s literacy instruction. In her fourth grade classroom, Zoe noticed a concentration on independent reading and thinking rather than discussions about texts. In regard to her collaborating teacher Zoe felt, “she’s very—a little bit that old-school thing. She’ll say stuff joking like, ‘You come in with all these new fresh ideas, and you’re just in school!’” (Interview 2). Zoe reflected, “but I don’t see why you can’t try because I think sometimes the critical thing about trying is that you do the creative things to see if one of them works” (Interview 2). However, Zoe did not feel comfortable taking risks and trying in this field experience classroom so she was not able to enact critical literacy.

   Zoe felt another possible inhibitor to her enactment of critical literacy was her placement in an intermediate classroom. As mentioned earlier, her collaborating teacher kept the students on a tight timeframe in order to adhere to the curriculum guide. Therefore, Zoe thought:

   If you get a younger class, you might have a little bit of wiggle room. I’m not sure. I don’t know. It’s like in older classes you need to have—get certain things done. You have a certain session to do. (Interview 2)
Zoe also felt restricted as her collaborating teacher limited Zoe’s instruction to the Science content area. Zoe noted, “I never got an opportunity to work too much with the English literature stuff” (Interview 2). As Zoe continued to reflect on possible inhibitors to her enactment of critical literacy, she also noted the absence of Social Studies in her classroom. Since Zoe had previously seen Jodi exhibit success with integrating critical literacy into Social Studies, Zoe was limited by her inability to teach Social Studies in this field experience. Zoe felt stifled because:

In my classroom, we didn’t really have anything—we didn’t—weren’t able to learn about Thanksgiving. They just literally do reading and reflecting. That’s a lot of what they’re trying to do in reading. There’s not a lot of content involved as much when it comes to reading now. It’s a lot of independent reading time. It’s about animals and stuff. It’s not a lot of creative whatever, and then when I did science it was speed and running, so I wasn’t able to think that creatively how it could translate and play with it so that we could see other classes when they had situations where were about topics that were either controversial. (Interview 2)

Zoe’s classroom context and her inexperience with teaching restricted her ability to take risks in the classroom. Zoe’s inhibitors to enactment of critical literacy instruction are summarized in Figure 18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborating Teacher and Placement</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Readiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• CT’s teaching style/literacy beliefs differed from her own</td>
<td>• Focused instruction in Science</td>
<td>• Lack of confidence in teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intermediate classroom</td>
<td>• Strict curriculum guides</td>
<td>• Need to &quot;see&quot; how to do critical literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limited Social Studies taught</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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*Figure 18. Zoe’s inhibitors to enactment of critical literacy.*
Chapter Summary

In this chapter, Zoe’s journey to make sense of critical literacy within this learning community is highlighted. Her development of the conception of knowledge for practice and seeing her peer, Jodi, enact critical literacy greatly impacted her conceptual understanding of critical literacy. Even though Zoe’s ability to make sense of critical literacy evolved, she was unable to enact critical literacy in her field experience. Zoe’s enactment was inhibited by her developmental readiness to change her teaching practice, her collaborating teacher’s pre-established literacy practices, and the restrictive curriculum. In the next chapter, I will explore the case of Tira, another PLC member whose inquiry focused on literacy instruction.
Chapter Six: Tira’s Case

In this chapter, I will use critical incidents to illustrate Tira’s sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy in a kindergarten classroom. During this semester, Tira engaged in an inquiry with a small group of high achieving readers in her kindergarten classroom. In the learning community, Tira’s conceptual understanding of critical literacy grew as she conducted this inquiry. I chose three critical incidents to highlight Tira’s sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy in the PLC. Each of these critical incidents plays a part in Tira’s ability to make meaning of critical literacy through the work we did in the PLC or Tira’s enactment of critical literacy through her inquiry in the field experience. Through the critical incidents highlighted in this chapter, I developed themes about Tira’s knowledge for and in practice, her dialogue with peers in the learning community, and her enactment of critical literacy through inquiry. These themes led me to the following assertions: (1) Tira’s ability to make sense of critical literacy evolved as she built knowledge for practice and knowledge in practice, (2) Inquiry became a tool to support Tira’s development of knowledge in practice through critical literacy enactment, (3) Tira’s ability to enact critical literacy was facilitated by the support of her collaborating teacher, her teacher education program, and our learning community, and (4) Tira was inhibited to enact critical literacy due to time constraints and resistance to discussing topics with kindergarteners.

Tira’s Story

Tira is a white woman of nontraditional college age. She began her career in the military and just recently returned to college to become a teacher. Tira has two boys of her own and her
husband is stationed in Germany for his job with the military (PLC 2). After Tira graduates, she will be moving to Germany to rejoin her family and teach on the military base (Interview 2).

**Tira’s Literacy Beliefs**

In our first interview, Tira explained how she viewed literacy instruction in her classroom. She stated, “Well one thing that I really loved is the daily five” (Interview 1). Tira expressed the importance of using centers as a place to differentiate her literacy instruction with her students. She also stressed a desire to not simply instruct the whole class of students through a lecture. She said, “I wanted it to be in there not just like the teacher in the front of the classroom but differentiating for every student by the centers” (Interview 1).

**Tira’s Field Experiences**

Tira completed her first two field experiences in a third grade classroom at the same suburban elementary school. (Interview 1). This school was an A rated school according to Florida’s school grading system (http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/). Forty-one percent of its school population was on free or reduced lunch and the school had a fifty-nine percent minority rate. Tira described the literacy instruction in this third grade classroom as:

> It was really more of perfecting your skill or increasing your ability to read longer periods of time and learn different strategies like close reading and how to take notes with your reading and how to do different things to enhance your knowledge from gaining information from the text. Like text-to-text and using different texts to gain information instead of just reading and not knowing what you read. So just giving your tools so you can remember those things. (Interview 1)

This intermediate experience differed from her experiences in her current classroom with literacy.
For her next field experience, Tira moved to a new school, Colts Elementary. This suburban elementary school was new to the county. Colts reported 46% of its student population was Black, 31% Hispanic, 11% White, 7% Multiracial, 3% Asian, and less than 1% Native American. Tira interned in a kindergarten classroom at Colts during the time of this study (Interview 1). Tira noted, “we read a lot in Kindergarten” (Interview 1). In this classroom, Tira experienced literacy centers and the Daily Five (Boushey & Moser, 2006). In our first interview, Tira expressed enthusiasm with the Daily Five as part of literacy instruction in Kindergarten. Tira enjoyed this set up since she felt it promoted differentiated instruction and child-centered learning (Interview 1). During literacy instruction, Tira and her CT focused on read-alouds and building stamina in independent reading (Interview 1). In this classroom, Tira reported her collaborating teachers was “…okay with anything” (Interview 2). Tira was able to jump right into teaching and was encouraged to bring new ideas to her CT.

Critical Incidents for Tira

In this section, I will detail three critical incidents in which Tira enhanced her sensemaking of critical literacy and began to enact critical literacy in her Kindergarten classroom. In the first critical incident, Tira developed the idea for her inquiry to enact critical literacy with kindergarten students through literature circles after we read Fain’s (2008) article on critical literacy instruction using literature circles with first and second graders. In critical incident two, Tira explained how she established literature circles with her small group of kindergarteners to get started with her inquiry. Then, in critical incident three, Tira reflects on a critical literacy lesson she conducted within this literature circle.

As I will highlight in these critical incidents, Tira developed knowledge in and for practice and used this growth to help her make meaning of and enact critical literacy.
Additionally, Tira worked to push her peers to knowledge of practice. The critical incidents and corresponding themes are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11

Summary of Tira’s Critical Incidents and Corresponding Themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Incident</th>
<th>Themes for Each Critical Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Critical Incident One | • Tira built knowledge for practice to make sense of critical literacy.  
  • Tira used knowledge for practice to develop her inquiry and begin to enact critical literacy. |
| Critical Incident Two | • Tira used her inquiry as a place to build knowledge in practice about critical literacy.  
  • Tira fostered knowledge of practice in her peers. |
| Critical Incident Three | • Tira was able to enact critical literacy through her inquiry as she developed knowledge in practice. |

Critical Incident One: Sparking the Idea

In this first critical incident, we met as a learning community for the second time. At this point in the semester, the PSTs began to develop ideas for their inquiry wonderings within their field experience. In preparation for this learning community meeting, I asked the PSTs to do a literacy audit of their current classrooms using questions outlined by Comber and Nixon (2004). We started off this learning community meeting with a discussion of literacy instruction in each classroom. Tira reflected:

It's kinda the same books, Scooby-do, Berenstain Bears, Disney, mainly informational texts that the teacher reads a lot that gives them ideas about taste and different things that she reads to help them with that. It's basically the teacher that reads everything cuz they can't read yet. The students are viewing the book. Mainly the books are about the main character, which are young children, so it's the view of the child. The views that are
missing are everyone else. They really have a hard time connecting what she reads when they do writing, so mainly it's they copy their picture on the board or they just draw a picture and they really don't know to write about it because they can't write. We're having a hard time with that. (PLC 2)

Next each person explained his or her initial ideas for their inquiry wonderings. Tira stated:

Mine is gonna be how can I either help or challenge my high achievers in reading. Some of them are just so fast. I only have 13 kids in my class, so there's five kids so almost half of them that are really high achievers. They finish fast. I wanna help them. Today I had them—they finished their sorting of their words and then I had them write a sentence on the back of their sheet. (PLC 2)

Tira had already decided she wanted to focus on this small group of high achieving students to enrich their reading instruction.

Then, we continued our discussion of literacy and read Fain’s (2008) article in which researchers enacted critical literacy through literature circles with first and second grade students. In this article, Fain described how first and second grade students were able to express their thoughts about oppression and racism in literature circles. Tira instantly gravitated towards this idea of using literature circles to enhance literacy instruction with her students. She toyed with the idea of doing literature circles with her high achieving group of students in her kindergarten class. She even began to craft her inquiry wondering and asked her peers for help. Tira confessed, “I think I'm stuck on my question now. I'm like, ‘How am I gonna incorporate that?’” (PLC 2). She tried to explore how she could word her wondering, “With my
kindergarteners when I read this I'm thinking, maybe I can change my wondering to how can I challenge them with literary circles” (PLC 2).

Tira did express resistance to some aspects of the way literature circles were utilized in Fain’s (2008) article and her intentions with her kindergarteners. She expressed, “I thought do they always talk about race or do we have to go to something so mean?” (PLC 2).

In thinking about these conversations from a parent’s perspective, Tira said, “I agree that you have to have a sense of respect for their parent's opinion as well as—” (PLC 2). As Tira reflected on her own inquiry and possible ways to start literature circles with her kindergarteners she indicated, “I’m thinking maybe instead of going straight into a real big problem, I can start with something maybe they’re interested in and start with that” (PLC 2). In this learning community meeting, Tira began to plan her inquiry around the idea she discovered in Fain’s (2008) article, conducting literature circles with her students.

**Critical Incident One Themes**

In this critical incident, Tira’s idea for her inquiry emerged after we read Fain’s (2008) article on using literature circles with first and second grades to foster critical conversation with students about oppression and racism. Tira made better sense of critical literacy in this critical incident as she read and discussed this article.

**Tira built knowledge for practice to make sense of critical literacy.** O’Brien (2001) asserted that a critical stance provides a place to question typical literacy practices in the classroom. As seen in this critical incident, Tira does start to question the ways in which her collaborating teacher does literacy and goes in search for a way to enhance literacy instruction for her high achieving students. In this critical incident, Fain’s (2008) article on critical literacy with first and second graders through literature circles prompted Tira to consider this idea as an
alternative to the literacy instruction happening in her classroom. With guidance from this article, Tira was able to see how literature circles can be possible with young students.

As this learning community meeting continued, Tira used our discussion of critical literacy from Fain’s (2008) article to better vocalize her understanding of critical literacy even though she was still not confident in her thoughts. She questioned, “Is it just their thinking through, helping guide them through their thinking? You read a book with them or talk about an issue and then guide their thinking to actually have their thinking come out?” (PLC 2). When she explained her concept map for the day (see Figure 19), she stated “I've put deeper understanding, seeing different viewpoints and having a common respect, knowing all voices” (PLC 2). Another point she gleaned from Fain’s (2008) article was, “Understanding their thinking. This one I really thought was awesome, having thoughts and opinions and feeling safe to share” (PLC 2).

![Concept Map](image)

*Figure 19. Tira’s first conceptual map of critical literacy*

Tira used knowledge for practice to develop her inquiry and begin to enact critical literacy. As demonstrated in this critical incident, Tira tied her inquiry directly to our work in the
learning community. Even before we met as a group, Tira knew she wanted to focus her inquiry on reading instruction with her small group of high achieving students. Then after we read Fain’s (2008) article, Tira had a clearer direction of where she wanted to go with her inquiry. As seen in this critical incident, she even asked her peers for help with how to develop her inquiry wondering now that she decided to use literature circles. This learning community served as a context in which Tira could reflect upon her literacy instruction while conducting this inquiry.

Tira gained knowledge for practice from Fain’s (2008) article. This knowledge for practice led her to plan her first steps to enactment of critical literacy. She began this enactment by implementing literature circles as part of her inquiry.

**Critical Incident Two: Setting the Stage for Change**

In learning community three, Tira shared how she established literature circles with her small group of students in her field experience classroom. Tira noticed, “…with kindergarteners you have to actually explain to them what it [literature circles] is” (PLC 3). Tira began to establish her literature circles with a word web. She invited her students to share their thoughts about what they believed a literature circle was and recorded these ideas in a word web. Afterwards, Tira gave each student a folder to keep for their work with their literature circle. “On the front here I had them write or draw a picture of their favorite book” (PLC 3). The next day, Tira assigned different jobs to each member in the literature circle. “Each one got a different job. They picked their job and then I had them paste it in here [folder]” (PLC 3). Once every student understood their job they read from a book “…we all chose in the group” (PLC 3). The students picked a guided reading book, *When I was Little*, about families. Tira chose a guided reading book so that each student could read the text on their own. Tira reflected, “They were pretty excited and they had their job and then next week when we see them we’ll start discussing it [the
book)” (PLC 3). Tira noted that she would need to guide the students through the discussion this first time through together.

As the learning community continued, the other group members asked Tira more about how she was able to change the literacy instruction in her classroom. Tira did not experience difficulty with her collaborating teacher as she tried these literature circles with her students. When a peer asked her about the book they chose to read, Tira noted she wanted to bring in more books in the future rather than simply using the guided reading books available in her class. She stated:

Well I just used the ones that she had because she had multiple of them and I wanted to get started. I plan on bringing in my own, but kind of like a little bit on their level. Like smaller books. (PLC 3)

As the learning community meeting continued and other peers shared their progress in their inquiries, Tira offered encouragement and suggestions. As Jodi expressed frustration in her ability to create literacy lessons that moved beyond the curriculum guides and textbooks used in the county, Tira gave her ideas on how to improve this instruction. Tira tried to push Jodi to consider how to enhance the curriculum and planned lessons by bringing in additional items to make the lessons more engaging. For example, Tira suggested Jodi have her students act out parts of her literacy lesson with props (PLC 3). Jodi still expressed reluctance because her collaborating teacher closely followed the curriculum mandated by the county (PLC 3). Tira continued to push Jodi to change her teaching practice:

I feel like we’re that—the extra help for them so we have to. I was afraid at the beginning to try new things. My teacher was like please try whatever you want. I’ve been slowing
getting in there. Okay let me try this with them instead of just sitting in the background doing what she wants me to do. Maybe just try it and see. (PLC 3)

As Jodi continued to express hesitation Tira finally said, “Try and then she can go, ‘no don’t do that’” (PLC 3). Since Tira was given the freedom and space in literacy instruction to make changes, she wanted to encourage her peers to take these risks as well. Tira worked to engage Jodi in knowledge of practice to create more meaningful literacy instruction in her classroom.

**Critical Incident Two Themes**

In critical incident two, Tira explained her initial steps in her inquiry to the PLC. She established literature circles with her students so that she could use these literature circles as a place to enact in critical literacy. Also in this critical incident, she pushed Jodi to think more deeply about the changes she could make to her own literacy instruction.

Tira used her inquiry as a place to build knowledge in practice about critical literacy. As portrayed in critical incident two, Tira took her first steps to enact critical literacy. She laid the foundation for literature circles with her students and began her instruction. Tira first needed to establish literature circles as a literacy practice with her students before she could truly enact critical literacy. Even in this first step, Tira was able to allow her students to choose a book they wanted to read, even if their options were limited to guided reading texts. She specifically noted, “I gave them choices” (Interview 2). Tira pulled two book options that would build on students’ personal experiences. As Tira established literature circles with her kindergarteners, she noticed she needed to take a few steps back before she could engage in discussions on books the way she had envisioned. She first established a role for each student in the literature circle. As Tira learned in her practice, she tried to look for research to help her conduct literature circles
with her kindergarteners. When she was not successful, she continued to experiment and learn for herself through this inquiry. In our final interview, Tira reflected:

I was surprised that I was able to do that [what] because I wasn’t able to find any research for the younger grades. It’s pretty amazing. I mean you have to break it down and like teach them how to do different parts of the book club. Like the roles, like being a discussion navigator or be connecting the book to yourself or to the world, you have to break that down. After you get that, passed that far, you’re able to like say, “Okay, so how are you connecting to each of this book?” They’ll open up. They’ll say all kinds of things. (Interview 2)

As I will portray in the next critical incident, Tira was able to move past simply relying on these roles and have the students engage in more discussion about the text.

**Tira fostered knowledge of practice in her peers.** In critical incident two, Tira explained how she created change in her own literacy instruction with this small group of high achieving readers. As her peers reflected on their classrooms and possible constraints, Tira pushed Jodi in particular to take risks. Tira felt their place in the classroom as interns was to help the students even further and used this explanation to help Jodi feel compelled to make changes to her own practice. Tira even offered suggestions on possible changes to instruction that could still be used with the mandated curriculum. This dialogue probed Jodi’s knowledge of practice.

In critical incident two, Tira took her first steps to enact critical literacy as she implemented the literature circles. As she engaged in her inquiry, she realized she needed to lay a foundation for literature circles and built knowledge in practice. Tira used her own ability to change literacy practices in her classroom to question Jodi to knowledge of practice.
Critical Incident Three: Changing Literacy Instruction in Kindergarten

In learning community five, we read a vignette by Lake (1990) about his son’s experiences as a Native American boy in the American public school system. After we read this vignette, each learning community member reflected on how the reading made them feel and possible implications for the classroom. Tira reflected:

When I read that part it just makes me think like when I'm in the classroom as a teacher I never want to not forget that they [children] have culture at home, like that's who they are. Why would you wanna forget that because that speaks so much volume into how they perform in my classroom. I just can't see it because I have different things. I have these different languages. Sometimes I can't say different words because how I was raised. I'm like this is their background. It's who they are. This is how they learn. This is how we're going to get past these barriers that we have to go past.

After everyone shared their thoughts about this vignette, each member gave a status update of their inquiries. Tira reported on her progress with the literature circles. She told us she met with her literature circles again, this time focused on a trade book by Jaqueline Woodson, Coming on Home Soon, about a little girl whose father is war and mother must leave home to make money for the family. Tira recalled she read the story aloud to the students and completed a story map together (PLC 3). She noticed the students had trouble connecting to the text at first, so she asked herself, “…how can I get them to understand how to make a connection to this book so we can start talking about it?” (PLC 3). She decided to model this process of making connections for her students. Tira used her own personal example of how she is in Florida completing school while her children are in Germany with their father. Tira thought aloud for her students, “They're [her children] in Germany, so I feel like they're waiting for their mom to come home. That's what I
think about when I read this book, my kids, and I'm not there with them” (PLC 3). Then she allowed her students an opportunity to make their own connections. The students made text-to-text and text-to-self connections. Tira noticed she needed to break down the connections piece for her students and model her own thinking. Tira then used questions to scaffold her students: “Can you think about your family and who's in your family and what would you think about if anybody left?” (PLC 3). This process of thinking aloud and questioning prompted one of her students to share their own connection. Tira shared an example of student work with the group. She explained:

She did text-to-world, and she basically talked about her grandpa. He was in and out of war and moving in the Vietnam War. I guess he talks to her about it because she immediately was like, oh yeah, he went over to save the world in Vietnam. I was like, oh my God, that’s so awesome. That’s a great text-to-world.

In this critical incident, Tira was able to reflect upon this lesson and highlight her students’ progress with text connections. Tira then explained her plan for their next literature circle based on this reflection. She wanted to continue the discussion of this text with her students and help them to create even more text connections (PLC 3).

**Critical Incident Three Themes**

In critical incident three, Tira shared how she engaged in critical literacy instruction with her literature circles by relating the text to the students’ lives. Through this inquiry, Tira built knowledge in practice as she learned from her instruction with her students and reflected with her PLC members.

**Tira was able to enact critical literacy through her inquiry as she developed knowledge in practice.** In this literature circle session with her students, Tira was able to enact
critical literacy. As her students made connections to the world and themselves, Tira brought in the students’ lived experiences. Soares and Wood (2010) proposed one aspect of critical literacy is having students bring their own lived experiences into discussions. In this critical incident, Tira explained how one of her students shared her prior knowledge of war and made this connection to the text. Tira used this student’s personal experience to build empathy for the character in the book. As demonstrated in this critical incident, Tira used this picture book and discussion in the literature circle to learn more about her students as people and learners. When reflecting upon this lesson in our final interview Tira expressed:

Coming Home Soon. It was talking about war and how their parents had to go to war and the mom had to leave…I learned a lot about my students because a lot of their parents, they’re in the military. I was like, “Oh wow.” They had a lot of information about it.

(Interview 2)

Tira made changes from her first enactment of the literature circles with her students described in critical incident two. For example, in critical incident two Tira allowed students to choose from guided reading books. In this critical incident, Tira brought in several picture books for the students to choose from, and they decided upon this text together. Tira built upon the lesson in critical incident two and still used the literature circle roles to help her students engage in a discussion about the text. Additionally, Tira made plans for her future literature circles based on her reflections regarding her students’ text connections in this critical incident. As Tira built knowledge in practice through her inquiry she made changes to her instruction.

In critical incident three, Tira enacted critical literacy and developed knowledge in practice through her inquiry. Tira used her previous experience with the literature circles to make
changes to her instruction. As she reflected on this critical literacy lesson in this critical incident she made further plans for her critical literacy instruction through literature circles.

**Assertions Across Critical Incidents**

As I analyzed the themes I found in these critical incidents, I made assertions about Tira’s sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy in her kindergarten classroom (see Table 12). I determined the following assertions: (1) Tira’s ability to make sense of critical literacy evolved as she built knowledge for practice and knowledge in practice, (2) Inquiry became a tool for praxis as Tira developed knowledge in practice through critical literacy enactment, (3) Tira’s ability to enact critical literacy was facilitated by the support of her collaborating teacher, her teacher education program, and our learning community, and (4) Tira was inhibited to enact critical literacy due to time constraints and resistance to discussing topics with kindergarteners.

Table 12

*Summary of Tira’s Critical Incidents with Corresponding Themes and Assertions.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Incident</th>
<th>Themes for Each Critical Incident</th>
<th>Assertions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Incident One</td>
<td>• Tira built knowledge for practice to make sense of critical literacy. &lt;br&gt;• Tira used knowledge for practice to develop her inquiry and begin to enact critical literacy.</td>
<td>• Tira’s ability to make sense of critical literacy evolved as she built knowledge for practice and knowledge in practice. &lt;br&gt;• Inquiry became a tool for praxis as Tira developed knowledge in practice through critical literacy enactment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Critical Incident Two | • Tira used her inquiry as a place to build knowledge in practice about critical literacy.  
• Tira fostered knowledge of practice in her peers. | • Tira’s ability to enact critical literacy was facilitated by the support of her collaborating teacher, her teacher education program, and our learning community. <br>• Tira was inhibited to enact critical literacy due to time constraints and resistance to discussing topics with kindergarteners. |
| Critical Incident Three | • Tira was able to enact critical literacy through her inquiry as she developed knowledge in practice. |                                                                                                                                                   |
Assertion One: Tira’s Ability to Make Sense of Critical Literacy Evolved as she Built Knowledge for Practice and Knowledge in Practice

When I first asked Tira what she believed critical literacy was, she responded:

Critical literacy I feel that it is important to have the skills you have to teach the skills from the beginning. Like not just go ahead and read the book but teach the skills. And the daily 5—you have to learn how to sit quietly and then you have to build that stamina. So you have to learn skills to get to the point where you actually begin to read full-length novels, so it is a process. So you have to start at the beginning in kindergarten and then work your way up and be consistent throughout your learning. (Interview 1).

In this first interview, Tira really viewed critical literacy as the foundation of literacy skills. For example, Tira believed critical literacy focused on the basic skills children need to read such as phonemic awareness and phonics.

Then after we met for learning community two, as shown in critical incident one, and we read Fain’s (2008) article about critical literacy, her ideas began to evolve. Tira was able to vocalize her understanding of critical literacy with greater depth. As portrayed in critical incident two, Tira began to understand critical literacy as “…deeper understanding, seeing different viewpoints and having a common respect, knowing all voices” (PLC 2). Through the development of her knowledge for practice in reading Fain’s (2008) article, Tira gained a deeper conceptual understanding of critical literacy. Even before we met as a learning community, Tira placed a greater emphasis on development of her knowledge for practice. In our first interview together, Tira told me, “now everything I see let me go see if I can find an article on how she [a researcher] does that” (Interview 1). Tira relied on the knowledge she could gain from research and practitioner articles to better her teaching practice.
As time went by, Tira built knowledge in practice by incorporating literature circles into her literacy instruction through her inquiry work. In critical incidents two and three, Tira established literature circles with her students and experimented with this implementation to enrich her students’ literacy skills. In critical incident two, Tira reported to the learning community she needed to establish roles within the literature circle to help her students. As Tira engaged in the inquiry process and reflected on the data (student work) she collected from the literature circles, she was able to refine her literacy instruction. After her students gained more practice in the literature circle with these roles, Tira brought in more complex texts, as seen in critical incident two. The students evolved from using guided reading books on their reading levels to a trade book Tira read to the group. Again, Tira collected data in the form of student work to analyze how her students responded to her instruction.

By our final interview together, Tira was able to use the knowledge for and in practice she gained to make sense of critical literacy. In this interview, Tira described critical literacy as:

A deeper understanding, looking at different viewpoints and different sides, just really overall just having an understanding of everything that’s happening around you instead of just your thoughts of how you were raised. Like oh no, just because I do it this way everything has to be my way, but everybody has different ways. (Interview 2)

In this interview, instead of expressing hesitation and fear in talking about race like she did in critical incident one, Tira embraced these conversations. Tira already planned her next steps with critical literacy. She asserted:

I want to start with a new book obviously and maybe bring in maybe Martin Luther King since we’re going to start with Black History Month. Bring in the aspects of the different
cultures that we have in the classroom. I actually want to do a whole book on it.

(Interview 2)

Tira continued to reflect on how to bring current events into the classroom and engage in dialogue with her students. Tira stated:

Like the shootings that are happening with the young black men and the police, the war between them right now. It’s like I know that it’s not all police are bad and I know that not all black people are bad. It’s like why do we keep hitting our heads. What is it that we have to change about ourselves in order to start thinking in a different way so that we’re not thinking, “This happened so all police officers are bad. Can we trust the police? Can we trust these people?” It’s making it a scary world for us but how do we ease them into the world without giving them one perception. (Interview 2)

Tira still questioned how to explain these difficult topics to her students:

Now when I look at those things that are happening—I’m like how do we explain this to our children in our classroom now? How do we talk about that with them? I’m figuring out because it’s a really hard subject. It’s intense, but I’m like how do I do that? It’s something that’s real. (Interview 2)

However, she also tried to think of ways to have these conversations with her students:

I think just bringing it to light and just give them—I mean I guess it starts in your classroom with the community. Going into the community and telling them that we are all different and sharing who we are and that just because you’re different doesn’t make you a bad person or a good person. (Interview 2)

Knowledge for and knowledge in practice played a part in Tira’s sensemaking of critical literacy. Tira’s evolution in her sensemaking is displayed in Figure 20.
Figure 20. Tira’s journey to make meaning of critical literacy through knowledge for and in practice.

**Assertion Two: Inquiry Became a Tool for Praxis as Tira Developed Knowledge in Practice Through Critical Literacy Enactment**

Tira placed a great value on inquiry in her growth as a teacher. In the first interview, Tira expressed the importance of inquiry to her own personal learning and had already begun to develop some characteristics of an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). She reflected:

> It really gets you to think about just even a normal actions that you have every day like how it is affecting your students and how it is affecting you as a teacher and how you can better yourself by just reflecting from that inquiry is amazing the knowledge you gain from it and the information you can go research to become better. (Interview 1)

Inquiry became a place for Tira to develop her knowledge in practice. When trying to learn and grow as a teacher, Tira used inquiry as a place to try new teaching strategies and research the effects on her students. The semester of this study, Tira focused her inquiry on using literature circles with a small group of high achieving readers. Tira shared her progress with the learning community and used this space to reflect on her inquiry. As Tira continued to implement the
literature circles she made relevant changes to her practice to keep working towards critical literacy with her students.

By engaging in dialogue about her inquiry within this learning community, Tira was able to reflect on her implementation of the literature circles and then change her instruction, thus engaging in praxis. As demonstrated in critical incident one, Tira reflected on her ideas for her inquiry and then developed her inquiry as this learning community meeting progressed. Then in critical incident two, Tira reflected on the action of establishing the literature circles in her classroom. After reflecting, Tira noticed her students needed predetermined roles to help them engage in the literature circle. Tira also noted that she wanted to offer a wider range of texts for her students. Therefore, in critical incident three Tira brought in trade books for her students to choose from in this literature circle session. As Tira reflected in our final interview, she determined her plans for how to extend her students’ learning through future enactment of critical literacy. Tira planned to use the literature circle to foster discussions about Martin Luther King Jr. and current race issues in the United States. These opportunities will be future places for Tira to engage in praxis. Tira’s inquiry and dialogue in this learning community supported praxis (see Figure 21).

**Figure 21.** Tira’s process of enactment of critical literacy.
Assertion Three: Tira’s Ability to Enact Critical Literacy was Facilitated by the Support of her Collaborating Teacher, her Teacher Education Program, and our Learning Community

One of the main contributing factors to Tira’s ability to enact critical literacy in her classroom was her collaborating teacher’s willingness to give her autonomy in planning for this small group of readers. Tira told the learning community, “She’s okay with anything” (Interview 2). Since Tira’s CT allowed her to plan and execute lessons of her choice, Tira was able to enact critical literacy through literature circles. This autonomy gave Tira the confidence to encourage her peers to take risks and make changes in their own classrooms. In critical incident two, Tira told Jodi to make changes to her literacy instruction. When Jodi expressed hesitation, Tira pushed Jodi to take risks with her instruction until her CT specifically tells her to stop.

In our final interview when I asked Tira what supported her ability to make changes to her literacy instruction, she credited the teacher education program, the knowledge she gained from coursework, and myself as her teacher. She specifically stated, “Just the program and you” (Interview 2). Tira continued to credit, “Definitely children’s literature” and other “reading courses” (Interview 2). In regards to the children’s literature course I previously taught, Tira stated, “Your children’s literacy class…When I took that class I’m like, ‘Wow. I really like these children’s book.’ It makes me want to be creative with it and have then show them different ways you can—“ (Interview 2). Tira told me previously in the first interview she did not like to read personally. However, after she experienced a variety of children’s books in this course she developed a love for children’s literature (Interview 1). Tira specifically recognized the teacher education program’s emphasis on inquiry as a support to her growth as a teacher.
Additionally, Tira found the learning community to be helpful in her development. She stated, “Our meetings have really helped, like seeing everyone’s inquiry, like what they were thinking in their minds” (Interview 2). Tira benefited from learning more about her peers’ experiences in their classrooms with inquiry. She especially gained from Kiarra’s inquiry as Kiarra was in a kindergarten classroom as well. Kiarra worked with her students to improve their writing through dialogue journals. Tira reflected on what she learned from Kiarra’s inquiry: “I didn’t see why our teachers do what they do with writing. I did not see why she [Kiarra] would look at it in that way. It makes you think to look at the different sides” (Interview 2).

Additionally, Tira was able to share her own inquiry and engage in dialogue with her peers about her inquiry. She gave encouragement and suggestions to her peers about their teaching in this learning community, especially Jodi’s literacy instruction. Tira’s facilitators to enactment of critical literacy are summarized in Figure 22.

**Figure 22.** Tira’s facilitators to enactment of critical literacy.

**Assertion Four: Tira was Inhibited to Enact Critical Literacy due to Time Constraints and Resistance to Discussing Topics with Kindergarteners**

When I inquired about possible inhibitors to her enactment of critical literacy in our final interview, Tira did note time constraints were a factor. She found, “Well, literature circle was a little hard, just because I had to read the book. It was more of the time constraint. I have to read the book to them” (Interview 2). In critical incident two, Tira used guided reading texts so that
the students could read the books on their own in the literature circles. However, Tira changed in practice in critical incident three to focus on a text with more depth. In this critical incident, Tira read aloud a tradebook to the students. Since Tira was conducting literature circles with kindergarteners and using texts above their reading levels, she had to devote extra time to reading the text aloud.

Another constraint Tira expressed in critical incident one was hesitation to discuss race with her students. Tira worried kindergarten might be too young for this conversation and that she wanted to remain respectful of parents’ opinions. Tira even referred to the conversations about race the researchers in Fain (2008) had were “mean”. However, by the time we spoke again in our final interview Tira planned how to discuss race with Black History Month approaching. Tira even wanted to bring current social issues to light with a critical conversation about policemen and black males. Tira had moved beyond her initial resistance as she realized the potential for critical literacy instruction in kindergarten. These inhibitors are portrayed in Figure 23 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Only 2 days a week in internship</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Parental Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussion of race with Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 23. Tira’s inhibitors to enactment of critical literacy.*

**Chapter Summary**

Throughout Tira’s work this semester in the learning community and her inquiry in her field experience classroom she was able to make better sense of critical literacy and even take steps to enact critical literacy in her classroom. Tira utilized inquiry as a means to develop
knowledge in practice. Tira engaged in praxis as she reflected in the learning community about her literacy instruction and then changed her practice in her field experience. Tira’s willingness to engage in critical literacy evolved throughout this inquiry. In the next chapter, I will look across these three cases to discuss findings across this study.
Chapter Seven: Cross Case Analysis

In this chapter, I provide a cross-case analysis of the three previous cases discussed in chapters four, five, and six. This qualitative multiple case study explored the following research questions: (1) How do elementary PSTs engaged in practitioner inquiry make meaning of critical literacy instruction within a facilitated learning community? (2) How do PSTs enact critical literacy instruction in the field experience elementary classroom while engaged in practitioner inquiry in a facilitated learning community? (a) What facilitates PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom? (b) What inhibits PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom? Each assertion across the cases attends to both research questions. The assertions include: (1) The three preservice teachers’ sensemaking and/or enactment of critical literacy was impacted as they “saw” examples of critical literacy, (2) Making meaning of critical literacy and critical literacy enactment are an interwoven process that inform each other, (3) As these PSTs engaged in the PLC, their sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy evolved, (4) All PSTs faced similar inhibitors to critical literacy enactment, however, Jodi and Tira were able to negotiate many of these inhibitors to enact critical literacy.

Assertion One: The Three Preservice Teachers’ Sensemaking and/or Enactment of Critical Literacy was Impacted as they “Saw” Examples of Critical Literacy

In all three of the cases, each preservice teacher benefitted from “seeing” critical literacy through examples within practitioner and empirical articles or in knowledge in practice built
through critical literacy enactment.

**Seeing through practitioner and empirical articles.** Each preservice teacher developed knowledge for practice as a part of the meaning making process. Through our work together in the PLC, we read practitioner and empirical articles to “see” how critical literacy was enacted in elementary school classrooms. These articles offered practical examples of how to enact critical literacy. Jodi previously enacted critical literacy in the Constitution lesson before we started our work in the learning community. When we read Ciardiello’s (2004) article in learning community meeting one, Jodi made connections back to her teaching. Ciardiello (2004) explored how to use historical examples of democracy to promote critical literacy practices. This practitioner article built upon Ciardiello’s work with seventh graders in a K-8 elementary school in the northeastern United States. In this article, Ciardiello summarized various aspects of critical literacy and then explained corresponding classroom applications. Ciardiello broke critical literacy into the following categories: examining multiple perspectives, finding an authentic voice, recognizing social barriers and crossing borders of separation, regaining one’s identity, and the call of service. In each example, Ciardiello provided texts to use with students in these classroom applications. In chapter four, Jodi credited this article with helping her to see the purpose of critical literacy. She explained this article gave an in-depth description of critical literacy and practical examples of how to enact critical literacy. Then when Jodi needed assistance with her upcoming lesson on Malala, she searched and found Meller, Richardson, and Hatch’s (2009) article on critical literacy read alouds to use as a guide for how to develop questions for her lesson. Meller, Richardson, and Hatch (2009) described how to establish critical literacy read-alouds in the K-3 classroom. In this article, the authors provided a step-by-step process on how to conduct these read-alouds in the classroom. In order to clearly explain
this process, the authors gave examples using particular trade books. Meller, Richardson, and Hatch (2009) detailed the following aspects of establishing critical literacy read-alouds: book selection, preview of book, development of critical questions, mini-lesson to activate students’ prior knowledge, picture walk, and discussion during reading. Jodi used the questioning techniques she read about in this article to enact critical literacy in the Malala lesson. In both of these critical incidents in chapter four, “seeing” critical literacy in articles helped Jodi enact critical literacy.

Seeing critical literacy through literature also influenced Tira in enacting critical literacy in the classroom. In learning community meeting two, we read Fain’s (2008) article on literature circles as a context for critical literacy in the primary grades. Fain (2008) conducted a yearlong qualitative study in which 1st and 2nd grade students examined issues of language and diversity in literature circles. In these literature circles, the class addressed racism and oppression. More specifically, “Children considered oppression from multiple perspectives, and they examined oppression in terms of racism that was experienced by others” (Fain, 2008, p. 207). As seen in chapter six, Tira developed the idea to utilize literature circles with her small group of high achieving readers as her inquiry directly came from this article. From this article, Tira developed her sensemaking of critical literacy, as shown in her conceptual map in chapter six. Tira was able to conceptualize critical literacy as “seeing different viewpoints” and “knowing all voice” (Tira’s Concept Map 1). Then Tira used her new knowledge of critical literacy to establish literature circles and engage in critical literacy instruction. In Tira’s case, “seeing” critical literacy helped her to make meaning of and enact critical literacy.

Zoe also gained understanding of critical literacy from seeing critical literacy in the practitioner and empirical articles. As described in chapter five, Zoe’s sensemaking of critical
literacy began with Ciardiello’s (2004) article. Zoe used this article to build her knowledge of critical literacy as shown in her first conceptual map of critical literacy. She used a definition of critical literacy in Ciardiello’s (2004) article to start her concept map. Additionally, she started to make sense of critical literacy as a way to “raise questions about dominant and oppressive ideas in text,” another concept of this article (Zoe’s Concept Map 1). In the next critical incident portrayed in chapter five, we read Meller, Richardson, and Hatch’s (2009) article on critical literacy read-alouds in which the authors provided examples of how to enact critical literacy. From this reading, Zoe was able to make better sense of critical literacy. She added several more ideas to her concept map such as “critical points” and “beyond happily ever after” (Zoe’s Concept Map 2).

**Learning from peer’s knowledge in practice.** Throughout the PSTs’ time in the PLC, they were able to learn from each other’s knowledge in practice. For example, Zoe benefitted from seeing Jodi’s modeling of critical literacy in her video-recorded lesson and subsequent discussion. As Jodi built knowledge in practice and reflected on her teaching experiences in the PLC, Zoe saw how critical literacy could be enacted in the classroom. Since Zoe was not able to move to enactment and build her own knowledge in practice, her sensemaking of critical literacy was greatly impacted by Jodi’s knowledge in practice. Jodi’s critical reflection on her teaching experiences greatly influenced Zoe’s growth and enabled Zoe to question Jodi’s teaching decisions and actions in the classroom. This dialogue impacted Zoe’s sensemaking of critical literacy and helped her to see how enactment of critical literacy was possible within the field experience.

During the first learning community meeting, Zoe noticed how Jodi enacted critical literacy in her Constitution lesson and named this practice. As described in chapter five, Zoe
equated the white men writing the Constitution as the dominant voice. In this instance, Zoe used the knowledge for practice she gained from Ciardiello’s (2004) article in conjunction with Jodi’s knowledge in practice in her lesson on the Constitution to make better sense of critical literacy.

Another pivotal meaning making moment for Zoe occurred in the critical incident when Jodi modeled critical literacy enactment in her video-recorded lesson on Malala. Zoe “saw” critical literacy in action as Jodi shared her video and reflected on her teaching experience. As Jodi shared this video and reflected on the knowledge in practice she gained, Zoe built her own understanding of critical literacy. One key aspect of Jodi’s lesson Zoe used to help her make sense of critical literacy was Jodi’s use of higher-order thinking questions. Zoe even added this idea to her concept map of critical literacy. Zoe admitted in our third learning community meeting, “I want to see her [Jodi’s] example before I do it” (PLC 3). Zoe’s sensemaking of critical literacy grew as she saw Jodi enact critical literacy. Even in critical incident three of chapter 5, Zoe still needed to hear ideas from her peers of how they would incorporate critical literacy into their future instruction. In this learning community, Zoe used her peers’ ideas to formulate her own list of future critical literacy enactment targeted at Science instruction. For example, Zoe liked Brandie’s idea of purposefully discussing women Scientist with her students.

Jodi, Tira, and Zoe all gained understanding of critical literacy as they “saw” critical literacy enactment, just in different ways as seen in Figure 24.
All three PSTs were able to read about examples of critical literacy enactment in these practitioner and empirical articles. Each preservice teacher made meaning of critical literacy from these readings. In addition, Zoe saw how Jodi enacted critical literacy through Social Studies instruction in her specific classroom and used this modeling to help her make meaning of critical literacy even further.

**Assertion Two: Making Meaning of Critical Literacy and Critical Literacy Enactment are Interwoven Processes that Inform Each Other**

It became clear when looking across the cases that the journey to critical literacy enactment included sensemaking consistently throughout the process. As Jodi and Tira enacted
critical literacy they continually made sense of critical literacy. Knowledge for, in, and of practice became central to this process. As Jodi and Tira developed knowledge for practice and made better sense of critical literacy instruction, they were able to enact critical literacy. As they enacted critical literacy, they developed knowledge in practice and once again made meaning of critical literacy. When the PLC engaged in dialogue, they moved towards knowledge of practice. By gaining knowledge of practice that included beginning to question the status quo and conceptualizing ways to face roadblocks, this influenced their enactment. Therefore, making meaning of critical literacy informed the enactment of critical literacy (Figure 25).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 25.** Jodi’s interwoven process to making meaning and enacting critical literacy.

These interwoven processes were clearly illuminated in Jodi’s journey. Jodi constantly moved back and forth among knowledge for, in, and of practice. Jodi built knowledge in practice as she conducted her lesson on the Constitution. When she reflected on this lesson in the PLC she received feedback from her peers. She also gained knowledge for practice as we read Ciardiello’s (2004) article. However, Jodi still did not feel prepared to conduct another critical literacy lesson so she found Meller, Richardson, and Hatch’s (2009) article. As she gained more knowledge for practice, she felt prepared to enact a critical literacy read aloud about Malala. Therefore, Jodi needed to make more sense of critical literacy through knowledge for practice
before she engaged in critical literacy instruction. Then Jodi once again built her knowledge in practice as she enacted critical literacy in her lesson on Malala and reflected in the PLC. Jodi highlighted the silenced voice of women in Pakistan in this lesson; however, she did not tell her students Malala was shot. As she engaged in dialogue in the PLC, she questioned her enactment in this lesson. As she questioned this lesson and her peers gave her feedback she engaged in knowledge of practice. This dialogue helped her to reflect on her teaching and refine ideas for future enactment. In our next learning community meeting, Jodi again built knowledge for practice through Lake’s (1990) vignette about his son’s experience in public school. Jodi furthered her knowledge of practice as she started to plan upcoming Native American unit. Jodi questioned the status quo of how Native Americans are represented in schools when teaching about English settlement and Thanksgiving. Jodi’s interwoven journey to make meaning of and enact critical literacy is displayed in Figure 26.

![Figure 26. Jodi’s interwoven process to making meaning and enacting critical literacy.](image-url)
As portrayed in the diagram, each time Jodi needed help to enact critical literacy she needed to make better sense of critical literacy by developing knowledge for practice. By enacting critical literacy, Jodi developed knowledge in practice and then reflected on this knowledge in practice within the learning community. The PLC became a context where Jodi could reflect on her knowledge developed in practice. This knowledge in practice better informed her sensemaking and the sensemaking of her peers, especially Zoe. As Jodi engaged in critical literacy instruction and continued to make meaning of critical literacy, she began to question the status quo even more. Once Jodi conducted her lesson on Malala, she was able to question her decisions as a teacher and her collaborating teacher’s motive for her teaching decisions in PLC 4. This questioning helped Jodi make better sense of her enactment of critical literacy.

Zoe played a pivotal role in Jodi’s sensemaking and enactment. As Jodi reflected on the knowledge in practice she gained from critical literacy enactment, Zoe questioned her teaching decisions and pushed Jodi to knowledge of practice. Specifically, when Jodi shared her teaching in PLC 4 Zoe questioned Jodi’s decision not to tell her students Malala was shot. Then in PLC 6, Zoe encouraged Jodi to keep searching for literature that portrayed Native Americans authentically. In both of these instances, Zoe prompted Jodi’s knowledge of practice and she questioned Jodi’s teaching. Zoe questioned Jodi’s enactment of critical literacy and moved towards knowledge of practice. Zoe started to question the status quo as she pushed Jodi to think about how teachers handle historical events such as 9/11 with students. This questioning led deeper to Jodi’s sensemaking of critical literacy.

Tira also used knowledge for practice to make meaning of critical literacy that led to enactment. Tira first developed her idea for her inquiry after she gained knowledge for practice in Fain’s (2008) article. With this new meaning making, Tira enacted critical literacy with
literature circles. As Tira conducted literature circles with her students, she developed knowledge in practice. This knowledge in practice helped her make meaning of critical literacy. From this knowledge in practice, Tira changed her literature circles. Tira learned what worked and did not work with her kindergarteners in critical incident two in chapter six. Tira shared this new knowledge with the learning community. Since Tira was able to enact critical literacy, she pushed her peers to take risks in their classrooms too. Through this dialogue in the PLC, Tira built knowledge of practice as she questioned her peers to create change in their teaching. Tira’s process is portrayed in Figure 27.

Figure 27. Tira’s interwoven process to making meaning and enacting critical literacy.

As seen in this diagram, Tira consistently made meaning of critical literacy through knowledge for practice and the knowledge in practice gained from her enactment of critical literacy. Tira used the PLC as a place to reflect on the knowledge in practice she developed from her enactment of critical literacy. Through this dialogue, Tira made better sense of critical literacy.

As Jodi and Tira gained knowledge for practice, they built their sensemaking of critical literacy. They used this sensemaking of critical literacy to enact critical literacy in their field
experiences. In the field, they gained knowledge in practice, which further aided in their sensemaking. Zoe engaged in a similar process in terms of sensemaking.

**Assertion Three: As the PSTs Engaged in the PLC, Their Sensemaking and Enactment of Critical Literacy Evolved**

As detailed in chapter two, critical literacy does not have a set definition. There are many aspects that make up critical literacy. Critical literacy builds upon students’ prior experiences (Soares & Wood, 2010). The literature in elementary school settings focuses on examining multiple perspectives (i.e. Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Lewison, Flint, & Sluys, 2002; May et al., 2014; O’Neil, 2009), scrutinizing power structures and global issues in society (i.e. Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Jones et al., 2008; Lewison, Flint, Sluys, 2002; Wood & Jocius, 2013), and social action (i.e. Assaf & Delaney, 2013; Dozier et al., 2006; Powell et al., 2001). Critical literacy provides a place for students to challenges the status quo, question messages inherent in texts, challenge inequities, and become a means for change (Shor, 2009). Jodi, Zoe, and Tira all made meaning of critical literacy in this PLC, even though Jodi and Tira were the only PSTs to move towards enactment. Their journey through this process in the PLC is displayed in Figure 28.

*Figure 28. Evolution of sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy across cases.*
As portrayed in chapters four and six, Jodi and Zoe’s process of enactment of critical literacy and sensemaking evolved over time. Both preservice teachers enacted critical literacy with more refinement as they continued to change their teaching practices. As seen in chapter four, Jodi came into this project already enacting critical literacy in her field experience classroom. In critical incident one, Jodi enacted critical literacy in a lesson on the Constitution. She tried to get her students to consider multiple perspectives as she posed specific questions to foster discussion about which group of people wrote the Constitution. In her reflection about this lesson during learning community one, Jodi told the group she hoped her students would realize the voice of women were missing. In this first enactment of critical literacy, Jodi focused on this generalized notion of multiple perspectives with some attention to gender. In the next critical incident detailed in chapter four, Jodi again enacted critical literacy with more focused attention on gender in the Malala lesson. As Jodi learned more about critical literacy from Meller, Richardson, and Hatch (2009), she focused her use of questioning in this lesson to help her students understand the role of women in Pakistan. As Jodi enacted critical literacy over time, her teaching practice became more refined. Jodi led her students into deeper discussion about power during this lesson on Malala. Jodi wanted to move to social action in a writing lesson but time constraints of the classroom inhibited her. In the third critical incident in chapter four, Jodi again focused on multiple perspectives and power as she developed a unit of Native Americans. Jodi questioned the status quo and challenge the power structure evident among Native Americans and English settlers. As Jodi enacted critical literacy she helped her students examine multiple perspectives based on gender and race. Jodi used these lessons to investigate power structures and planned to move to social action.

In Tira’s case, she started her journey to critical literacy enactment by first changing the
literacy practices in her classroom. Tira needed to establish the foundation of the literature circles before she could use this space to foster critical conversations with her students. In Tira’s second critical incident in chapter six, she started the literature circles by drawing upon the personal experiences of her students. In her next critical incident, Tira enacted critical literacy as she again drew upon the personal experiences of her students. However, in this lesson Tira also selected a text that focused on family life during wartime. In this text, a child’s father is at war while the mother had to leave home to work and support the family. Tira found her students were able to make connections to this text from personal family experiences with war. Additionally, Tira started to explore multiple perspectives through conversations about this text. In our final interview together, Tira explained her plans to enact critical literacy with her students during Black History Month with a focus on Martin Luther King, Jr. Tira also wanted to foster a conversation about current events, particularly the race struggle between police officers and black men. Tira evolved from an emphasis on the personal experiences of her students to more political issues such as family life during war. Tira planned to go even deeper into political and social issues in her future instruction.

Zoe’s ability to make meaning of critical literacy evolved as she participated in the PLC and saw examples of critical literacy instruction. In our first interview Zoe viewed critical literacy as relating content to students’ lives and multiple perspectives. The group engaged in dialogue about Jodi’s lesson on the Constitution in PLC 1. Through this dialogue and Ciardiello’s (2004) article, Zoe made meaning of critical literacy as examining multiple perspectives and questioning dominant and oppressive ideas in text (Concept Map 1). As Zoe continued to learn about critical literacy and saw practical examples of critical literacy instruction, she began to conceptualize critical literacy to include power structures in learning
community meeting four as the group discussed topics such as the myth of meritocracy. Zoe also began to realize the goal of critical literacy to be social change as portrayed in her concept map after learning community four.

Jodi and Tira both evolved in their level of critical literacy enactment throughout our time in the learning community. Both preservice teachers enacted critical literacy, but in different ways. Jodi incorporated her critical literacy lessons into the Social Studies content of her classroom. Tira used small group literacy instruction with her high achievers to enact critical literacy. Both preservice teachers were able to push their critical literacy instruction as they gained comfort and confidence in their teaching. As they continued to engage in critical literacy instruction, their sensemaking of critical literacy evolved. While Zoe did not enact critical literacy, she also gained a deeper understanding of critical literacy while engaged in this PLC.

**Assertion Four: All PSTs Faced Similar Inhibitors to Critical Literacy Enactment, however, Jodi and Tira were Able to Negotiate Many of these Inhibitors to Enact Critical Literacy.**

Jodi, Zoe, and Tira all experienced inhibitors to enactment, but ultimately, Jodi and Tira were able to successfully negotiate these inhibitors to enact critical literacy in their field experience classrooms. The PSTs were not able to completely overcome inhibitors as seen in chapter four, five, and six; however, Jodi and Tira were able to work through these inhibitors to successfully enact critical literacy. Jodi, Zoe, and Tira all played an integral role in enactment of critical literacy by participating in dialogue during the PLC. In some instances, the PLC helped these PSTs negotiate the inhibitors they faced to enact critical literacy. However, not all of these inhibitors were so easy to face for these PSTs. These PSTs faced challenges associated with curriculum mandates, fear of risk-taking, and relationships with collaborating teachers.
Curriculum. Stringent curriculum demands posed a problem for both Zoe and Jodi in the classroom. Jodi’s collaborating teacher adhered closely to the county guidelines, especially in literacy. Even though Jodi was hindered by the curriculum mandates, she negotiated this inhibitor and found a context for critical literacy in her classroom. Jodi was able to navigate this inhibitor by incorporating her critical literacy instruction into Social Studies. Tira did not experience difficulty navigating curriculum guidelines, however, she experimented with her instruction in a small group setting rather than the whole class. Zoe was limited to Science instruction since her collaborating teacher followed the county guidelines for reading very closely. Zoe was able to see critical literacy instruction through Jodi’s reflections on her teaching within the PLC. She also started to see how critical literacy could be enacted through Science instruction from her peer’s ideas within the PLC.

Fear of risk-taking. Jodi, Zoe, and Tira were all impacted by fear in different ways. Jodi expressed hesitation to talk about race with her young second grade students for fear they were too young. Her PLC members, specifically Zoe and Angel, pushed Jodi to negotiate this inhibitor she faced to enact critical literacy. As shown in chapter 5, Zoe consistently questioned Jodi’s teaching decisions. In learning community meeting one, Zoe insisted young children could talk about race. Angel echoed this sentiment in learning community meeting one and stressed the importance of Jodi facilitating the conversation. Additionally Tira pushed Jodi to take risks with her instruction in learning community meeting three. With extra support from her peers in the PLC, Jodi started to overcome her fears. She prepared her lesson on Malala and selected a text which portrayed Malala’s story authentically. However, Jodi was again inhibited by fear of parental conflict from her CT. Jodi’s CT asked her to skip the page in the text where Malala was shot. While this decision to modify the text was not prompted by Jodi, she did feel compelled to
uphold her CT’s wishes. In learning community four, Zoe questioned Jodi’s decision to skip this page in the text. Zoe drew upon her previous knowledge of discussing 9/11 with children to push Jodi to have critical conversations with her students. Jodi’s inhibitor, fear, turned into a facilitator as her PLC members supported her to take risks in her field experience classroom. This dialogue within the PLC, particularly from Tira and Zoe, was crucial to Jodi’s enactment of critical literacy.

Despite Tira’s role in Jodi’s risk-taking, Tira also experienced fear in her teaching. As demonstrated in chapter six, Tira feared parental conflict when discussing race with her kindergarten students. In our second learning community meeting, Tira hesitated to implement literature circles as Fain (2008) did to facilitate discussions of oppression and racism. While Tira did not overcome her fear to a point where she was able to enact critical conversations about race, Tira did plan to discuss Martin Luther King Jr. and the current social issues facing black men in her future instruction.

Zoe also faced fear as an inhibitor to critical literacy enactment. Zoe’s fear stemmed more from developmental readiness to take risks in her teaching as discussed in chapter five. Zoe needed to “see” critical literacy before she would make changes to her own instruction. Although Zoe did not conquer this fear, she took steps to work towards enactment. As discussed above, Zoe needed to “see” critical literacy in order to understand how to enact critical literacy. The PLC became a context for Zoe to make better sense of critical literacy through observing actual examples of critical literacy instruction. In our final interview, Zoe expressed a desire to enact critical literacy in her future classroom.

Relationships with collaborating teachers. The collaborating teachers in these three cases played pivotal roles in each PTS’s ability to enact critical literacy. Zoe and Jodi both faced
some constraints due to their collaborating teachers; however, Tira did not. In Tira’s situation, her collaborating teacher gave her “…free reigns to whatever I wanna do with them” (PLC 3). Therefore, Tira did not face an inhibitor with her relationship with her collaborating teacher.

Zoe felt the relationship with her collaborating teacher inhibited her ability to enact critical literacy in the classroom as her teacher limited her experience to Science instruction. Unfortunately, the PLC was not able to help Zoe negotiate this relationship in such a way that Zoe could take risks in her literacy instruction.

In Jodi’s case, her teacher was both a facilitator and inhibitor to her enactment of critical literacy. Jodi felt constrained by her collaborating teacher’s adherence to county curriculum mandates. Initially, Jodi expressed hesitation to change literacy in her field experience classroom since it was not “her” classroom and her collaborating teacher typically followed the county curriculum rather closely. In learning community three, Jodi shared this trepidation with the PLC. As shown in chapter six, Tira pushed Jodi to take risks and be assertive with her collaborating teacher. Tira posited their role as interns was to be “the extra help for them [collaborating teachers]” (PLC 3). With the support of the PLC, Jodi overcame this inhibitor and enacted critical literacy instruction in Social Studies. However, Jodi did encounter another roadblock with her CT when her collaborating teacher restricted the way in which she taught her lesson on Malala. Jodi’s collaborating teacher insisted she put a sticky note over the page in the trade book in which Malala was shot due to fear of parental conflict. Jodi questioned this decision as she reflected on this lesson in learning community meeting four. In this instance, Zoe promoted Jodi’s knowledge of practice through dialogue within the PLC. As discussed previously, Zoe questioned Jodi’s teaching decisions. Therefore, even though Jodi faced inhibitors with how she taught critical literacy, she found a place to question these inhibitors in
the PLC.

**Chapter Summary**

These PSTs faced several commonalities in this study but all took their own, unique journey to make meaning of and enact critical literacy in the field experience. From this cross-case analysis I found: (1) The three preservice teachers’ sensemaking and/or enactment of critical literacy was impacted as they “saw” examples of critical literacy, (2) Making meaning of critical literacy and critical literacy enactment are an interwoven process that inform each other, (3) As these PSTs engaged in the PLC, their sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy evolved, (4) All PSTs faced similar inhibitors to critical literacy enactment, however, Jodi and Tira were able to negotiate many of these inhibitors to enact critical literacy.
Chapter Eight: Implications

Introduction

In this multiple case study, I facilitated a learning community with PSTs in a late field experience as they learned more about critical literacy. The research questions that guided this study include: (1) How do elementary PSTs engaged in practitioner inquiry make meaning of critical literacy instruction within a facilitated learning community? (2) How do PSTs enact critical literacy instruction in the field experience elementary classroom while engaged in practitioner inquiry in a facilitated learning community? (a) What facilitates PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom? (b) What inhibits PSTs as they enact critical literacy instruction in the elementary field experience classroom? Six PSTs participated in this study. We met bi-monthly in this learning community to learn more about critical literacy, discuss lessons, and share inquiries. Data collection included transcripts of the audio-recorded learning community meetings, transcripts two of audio-recorded interviews with each PST, PST reflections after each meeting, critical literacy concept maps, and video-recorded literacy lesson and lesson plan. I purposefully selected three participants as cases to analyze for this study. I analyzed the data for each individual case and made assertions for each participant.

In chapter four, I discussed Jodi’s case and corresponding themes. I chose Jodi as a case because she exhibited more an ideal situation in this study since Jodi consistently enacted critical literacy instruction. Jodi’s cyclical process in and out of knowledge for, in, and of practice aided in her sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy. Jodi engaged in praxis through her
reflection in the PLC and subsequent action in the field experience critical literacy lessons based in Social Studies. She consistently reflected on her critical literacy lessons and developed her teaching practice each time she enacted critical literacy in her classroom.

The case of Zoe’s journey, portrayed in chapter five, offered a contrast to Jodi’s case as she was not able to enact critical literacy in her classroom but did evolve in her sensemaking. Through Zoe’s journey in this PLC, she developed a better sense of critical literacy through knowledge for practice. Zoe played a pivotal role in the PLC through dialogue. She helped Jodi develop knowledge of practice as she questioned her teaching decisions. By the final interview, Zoe began to plan how to enact critical literacy in the future: “I don’t necessarily think I’d be able to do [critical literacy] every single day especially my first couple of years, but I would try to get into it. I want to—once I become an established teacher—really start playing around with what I can do” (Interview 2).

In chapter six, I illustrated Tira’s case to portray another instance in which a PST enacted critical literacy. In contrast to Jodi’s case, Tira was not able to enact critical literacy to the same extent as Jodi. For example, Tira first had to establish literature circles as a literacy practice before she could move towards critical literacy instruction. Tira’s path to critical literacy enactment developed through practitioner inquiry. Tira established literature circles with a small group of high achieving kindergarteners. She found a place for critical literacy in her field experience classroom with these literature circles. In this study, Tira’s sensemaking developed as she enacted critical literacy in these literature circles.

After I analyzed each case, I conducted a cross-case analysis to determine findings. I developed the following assertions: (1) The three preservice teachers’ sensemaking and/or enactment of critical literacy was impacted as they “saw” examples of critical literacy, (2)
Making meaning of critical literacy and critical literacy enactment are an interwoven process that inform each other, (3) As these PSTs engaged in the PLC, their sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy evolved, (4) All PSTs faced similar inhibitors to critical literacy enactment, however, Jodi and Tira were able to negotiate many of these inhibitors to enact critical literacy.

**Discussion**

The NCATE Blue Ribbon Panel Report (2010) called for a stronger connection between clinically rich field experiences and coursework. In order to create a clinically rich teacher education program, theory to practice connections need to be consistently thread into methods coursework and fieldwork needs to become the center of the program. As PSTs learn theories in their coursework, they need a place—the field experience—to apply their new learning and learn even further about the practical aspects of teaching. In my first interview with these PSTs, I realized the limited work I did with them in the Children’s Literature course on critical literacy instruction did not make a significant impact on their teaching. The findings in this study showed the interwoven process of PSTs’ sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy within the field experience. Jodi and Tira took their understanding of critical literacy into their own practice as teachers and then refined this practice as they continued to learn more about critical literacy within the PLC. These PSTs directly implemented what they were learning about critical literacy in the PLC. This learning and work towards enactment took shape as a fluid process between sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy.

Teacher education programs need to join the task to transform public schools instead of perpetuating existing ideologies (Giroux, 2009). Teachers, both in-service and preservice, can fight against inequities in schools by working for social justice (e.g., Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Grant & Agosto, 2008; Howard & Aleman, 2008; McDonald, 2005). In order to create a
significant change in public schools, teacher education programs need to develop coherent and connected instruction with a focus on social justice. The findings in this study support the importance of a coherent thread of social justice woven into all coursework and fieldwork at the university.

Critical Literacy

Grossman et al. (2008) called for equity to be interwoven in all methods coursework at the university. Critical literacy can be a means to instruction about issues of equity in literacy methods courses. Critical literacy focuses on students’ prior experiences (Soares & Wood, 2010), examining multiple perspectives (i.e. Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Lewison, Flint, & Sluys, 2002; May et al., 2014; O’Neil, 2009), scrutinizing power structures and global issues in society (i.e. Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Fain, 2008; Jones et al., 2008; Lewison, Flint, Sluys, 2002; Wood & Jocius, 2013), challenging the status quo, (Shor, 2009), and taking social action (i.e. Assaf & Delaney, 2013; Dozier et al., 2006; Powell et al., 2001). The findings of this study support the integration of critical literacy into all literacy courses. In our first interview together, these PSTs struggled to vocalize the meaning of critical literacy. Teaching critical literacy in this one course, Children’s Literature, was not sufficient to make a lasting impact on these PSTs with all of the other coursework they were required to learn throughout the program. Therefore, critical literacy should be incorporated into all of the literacy courses taught in teacher education programs. As presented in chapter seven, these PSTs needed to “see” examples of critical literacy instruction in order to make better sense of and enact critical literacy.

Inquiry

As seen in Tira’s case and in the literature detailed in chapter two (i.e. Grossman, 2005; Price, 2001; Price & Valli, 2005; Valli, 2000; Yendol-Hoppey, Gregory, Jacobs, League, 2008),
inquiry can provide a context for PST teacher learning. Tira used a formal inquiry as a conduit to explore critical literacy instruction with her kindergarteners through literature circles. Tira was the only PST to engage in an inquiry on critical literacy despite the focus of our PLC on critical literacy instruction. One reason could be Tira’s initial interest in the inquiry process. In our first interview, Tira expressed the importance of using research to guide her practice. Tira stated, “inquiry is amazing—the knowledge you gain from it and the information you can go research to become better” (Interview 1). After engaging in inquiry in previous field experiences, Tira said, “It [inquiry] is amazing so my mindset is different now. I go in there [the classroom] like, I think oh that is something I can research and this is why she [collaborating teacher] does that and this is why she [collaborating teacher] doesn't do that” (Interview 1). Tira utilized inquiry as a means to explore critical literacy instruction.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) asserted inquiry could merge both formal knowledge and practical knowledge of teaching. Through the inquiry process, Tira took the formal knowledge she learned about literature circles in Fain’s (2008) article and critical literacy in the PLC and merged this learning with the practical knowledge of utilizing literature circles with her students. Tira was able to enact literature circles, collect data and analyze her students’ understanding, and use this data to change her instruction. As illustrated in chapter six, Tira gained practical knowledge in practice when she noticed she needed to take a step back and establish literature circles roles for each student to guide them through this new literacy practice. Tira began her literature circle discussions by having the students make personal connections to the text. Then Tira noticed her students were struggling to make connections, so she modeled, through a think aloud, how to make a text-to-self connection. Tira used her own example of working in Florida while her children are in Germany with their father. After Tira analyzed her
student’s work through the inquiry cycle, she realized she needed to adjust her instruction. Tira made changes to her instruction and the students were better able to make these text connections themselves.

Even though Tira was the only PST to engage in a formal inquiry into her practice, each PST involved in this PLC did participate in inquiry. This PLC acted as an inquiry community. During the PLC, each PST engaged in the inquiry process, informally, as we learned about critical literacy, read research, investigated literacy practices in these field experience classrooms, and reflected on literacy instruction. As discussed in chapter two, inquiry can be employed as a tool for PSTs to try new pedagogical practices in the field based on theories they learned from formal knowledge such as research literature. Inquiry requires action and reflection on this action (Rock & Levin, 2002), and this PLC provided a place for this action and reflection. As Jodi reflected on her Social Studies lessons, changed her practice, and engaged in reflection again, she was engaged in inquiry. Additionally, as Zoe investigated her own beliefs about literacy instruction as she questioned her peers, read scholarly literature, and reflected on her beliefs about teaching. As Zoe began to change her beliefs about literacy instruction, she developed her own practice and identity as a teacher. This study illustrates the possibilities for critical literacy enactment and PST’s learning through inquiry. Additionally, this study supports the use of inquiry as a place for change in PSTs’ learning and growth as future teachers. This study has direct implications for how teacher education programs teach inquiry. As seen in the PLC, PSTs can engage in inquiry in this group setting and connect their work back to the classrooms. This study offered a more practical implication of inquiry.
**Professional Learning Community**

The PLC became a place for the PST’s learning to grow. As seen in the findings, these PSTs built upon their knowledge of teaching through knowledge for, in, and of practice. The PLC was integral in this learning process as it provided a place for PSTs to engage in dialogue. Through the reflection and subsequent action supported within this learning community, Jodi and Tira engaged in praxis. As discussed in chapter two, Castro (2010) asserted the need for more research on specific teaching practices that could change PSTs’ attitudes and perceptions of cultural diversity. This study examined the impact of a specific pedagogical practice, a professional learning community, to support PSTs’ sensemaking of critical literacy. Specifically, I utilized journal reflections and critical conversations (Addleman, Brazo, Dixon, Cevallos, and Worton, 2014; Taylor & Sobel, 2003) within the PLC to promote social justice. As seen in the findings, this PLC became a place for the PSTs to have critical conversations about critical literacy enactment. Through this dialogue Jodi, specifically, moved to knowledge of practice and engaged in praxis. The dialogue also pushed Zoe further in her sensemaking of critical literacy as she engaged in conversations about Jodi’s teaching practices. Tira reflected more deeply on her teaching and changed how she implemented the literature circles.

The professional learning community can also support the development of conceptual and practical applications of critical literacy. Grossman, Hammerness, McDonald (2009) posited to redefine teacher education, teacher educators have the arduous job of helping preservice teachers understand the conceptual and practical tools needed for any specific pedagogical practice. The authors suggested a re-imagining of the teacher education curriculum in which teacher educators helped novice teachers pull out a specific practice to focus on conceptually and practically. In this study, I attempted this work with my PSTs in regards to critical literacy.
However, I do believe Zoe in particular needed more time to develop her conceptual and practical understanding of critical literacy before she could enact critical literacy in the classroom. We started this process together in the PLC; however, each PST had different needs when it came to enactment. Zoe faced several inhibitors in her field experience that may have been overcome with more time in the field. Additionally, Tira could have pushed her practice even further if we had more time together. Both of these PSTs developed plans for how to further enact critical literacy in their classrooms and shared these ideas in their final interviews.

**Implications**

As I conducted this study and developed findings, implications for teacher education emerged clearly. Clinically rich teacher education programs are essential to theory to practice connections. Literacy coursework needs to be centered in the field so that PSTs can enact the theories they learn about in coursework. This conceptual learning and practical application took on a fluid process as each PST developed upon their own readiness. One way to assist PSTs is to have literacy instructors also work as field supervisors so that they can coach PSTs more effectively to make changes to their literacy instruction. In addition, professional development for field supervisors as well as collaborating teachers is essential.

**A Model for Restructuring PST Teacher Learning**

Through the findings in this study, it is clear each PST engaged in teacher learning in a different manner. Jodi’s case displayed more of an ideal case of PST learning in this study, while Tira and Zoe illuminated other aspects of teacher learning. Jodi both made meaning of and enacted critical literacy in this study. In Jodi’s case, she realized the ultimate goal for critical literacy was social action, even if she was unable to enact social action in her field experience. Tira and Zoe both developed in their sensemaking of critical literacy, however, their conceptual
understanding of critical literacy did not develop as deeply as they did not move past relating content to students’ lives and multiple perspectives. Therefore, these PSTs represent a continuum of learning in terms of critical literacy. As shown in chapter four, five, and six, each PST’s meaning making of critical literacy did evolve as they participated in this study.

Based on this study, I propose a new model for PST learning. While all three PSTs built knowledge for practice, Zoe did not gain knowledge in practice in the traditional manner suggested by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999). Therefore I propose (Figure 29) the components of PST learning merge Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) conceptions of knowledge and Grossman et al.’s (2008) conceptual and practical tools. Furthermore, I suggest an addition to Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) knowledge in practice.

Figure 29. Components of PST learning.

In this study, I found PSTs learned through Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) knowledge for, in, and of practice and Grossman et al.’s (2008) assertion that teachers need both conceptual and practical tools. As seen in the upper right portion in the diagram above, knowledge for practice is
actualized as the formal knowledge of critical literacy that PSTs learned from scholarly literature and methods coursework. This formal knowledge of critical literacy provided a conceptual tool, or subject matter knowledge, Grossman et al. (2008) asserted is need. Grossman et al. (2008) emphasized conceptual and practical tools are needed to support diverse students. Therefore, I added practical tools to the knowledge in practice in the bottom portion of the diagram. These practical tools provide teachers with specific strategies and teaching practices to enact in the classroom. Therefore, knowledge in practice develops in the field as PSTs learn in practice. As proposed in the model, PSTs must have both subject matter knowledge (sensemaking of critical literacy) and practical tools (knowledge gained through enactment of critical literacy) to offer students equitable access to the curriculum. These practical tools coincide with Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) knowledge in practice. As seen in the diagram, I also propose we further re-conceptualize knowledge in practice. As suggested in chapter seven, PSTs need to “see” practical examples of critical literacy. PSTs benefitted from an opportunity to observe and learn from other PLC member’s enactment of critical literacy and the practical examples of critical literacy instruction described in scholarly literature. As PSTs enact critical literacy and share their own knowledge in practice, this experience becomes the knowledge for practice other PSTs may “learn” as they make meaning of critical literacy. Additionally, I not only propose PSTs can learn from other PSTs’ knowledge in practice, but also that practical examples of critical literacy instruction marries Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) knowledge for practice and knowledge in practice and starts to blur the lines dividing these two types of knowledge. The knowledge for practice gained from the scholarly literature builds PSTs’ knowledge in practice. In the upper left portion of the diagram, knowledge of practice is also a part of PST’s learning. Through dialogue, PSTs can question the status quo and preexisting ideologies apparent in schools. When PSTs
question the status quo of each other’s teaching practice, dialogue can lead to deeper critical reflection.

This study only serves to reinforce the importance of truly making theory to practice and practice to theory connections within a teacher education program for meaningful growth in PST learning. Teacher education programs need to be clinically rich environments so that these connections can be actualized. In order for PSTs to progress as teachers, they need an opportunity to practice their pedagogical skills. This practice needs to happen in the field experience. Therefore, the need for a clinically rich teacher education program is imperative. As seen in Figure 28, PSTs learn from knowledge for practice in their coursework and knowledge in practice within the field experience. As discussed above, knowledge for and in practice should no longer be distinct learning opportunities. In order to truly center PST learning in the field, knowledges for and in practice should be developed in an intertwined context of learning in both methods courses and fieldwork. This context would provide the opportunity for PSTs’ learning to take place back and forth between coursework and fieldwork. In order for PSTs to learn how to enact critical literacy, learning needs to be centered in the field. Therefore, methods courses for PSTs should also be centered in fieldwork. In order for PST learning to be enhanced, literacy methods courses and field experiences should be the context of this learning.
Figure 30. Context for PST learning.

If the teacher education curriculum is centered on fieldwork, we can break down the barriers between knowledge for practice and knowledge in practice. The PLC in this study was the context for these lines to be blurred and PST learning to progress in a space that merged both conceptual theory of critical literacy with practical knowledge in the field. I propose that if the coursework is centered in the field experience, this context could provide a place for PST learning. In essence, the methods course would become the PLC—a place for knowledge for and of practice.

In the figure below, I further explain this context of learning as the intertwined methods course and field experience.
Figure 31. Intertwined nature of PST learning through course and fieldwork.

Literacy methods courses can be transformed to support the changes needed to enhance PSTs’ learning. Literacy coursework can be a place for PSTs to build knowledge for practice and see critical literacy instruction through practitioner and empirical literature. If critical literacy is incorporated into all literacy coursework, teacher educators can provide a deeper look into critical literacy. In order to help PSTs make better sense of critical literacy, coursework can provide a context for deeper learning about all aspects of critical literacy. Within this coursework, methods instructors and peers can model examples of critical literacy lessons so that PSTs can “see” critical literacy as discussed is needed in chapter seven.

As PSTs learn in the coursework, they can implement ideas within the classroom—again a clinically rich teacher education program can provide this opportunity. PSTs develop knowledge in practice within the field. The field experience can provide examples of critical
literacy instruction as collaborating teachers act as models. PSTs can also start to implement
critical literacy within their field experience classrooms.

Field supervisors could also help to navigate any inhibitors PSTs face so they can enact
critical literacy in the field experience. For instance, a field supervisor could help PSTs negotiate
curriculum mandates by sitting down with PSTs to examine the standards for their grade level.
The field supervisor should possess greater knowledge of the standards and can help PSTs find
places to incorporate critical literacy within this mandated curriculum.

Additionally, as PSTs are met with any inhibitors or need guidance on how to enact
critical literacy, the methods instructor and classmates in literacy courses can provide support.
PSTs and methods instructors can engage in dialogue and develop knowledge of practice as they
begin to question how literacy instruction is enacted in the classroom. As PSTs continue to learn
and implement ideas, inquiry can provide a vehicle for learning and change. Through inquiry,
PSTs can critically reflect on their actions and make changes to their practice based on this
reflection. As PSTs engage in this inquiry process with critical literacy instruction and change
their teaching practice, praxis occurs. This praxis is pivotal if PSTs are to use their new learning
to transform curriculum and work for social justice.

As indicated in the diagram (figure 31), PST learning takes place as a continually cycle
between the methods courses and fieldwork. If the methods instructor and field supervisor were
the same individual, they would be able to navigate this back and forth of theory to practice
connections more smoothly. Otherwise, the methods instructor, field supervisor, and
collaborating teacher could work towards the common goal of enacting critical literacy.
Implications for Teacher Education

This study has further implications for teacher education in regard to literacy coursework and instructors, field supervisors, professional learning communities, collaborating teachers, and professional development.

**Literacy coursework.** One way to integrate coursework and fieldwork can be purposefully designing assignments in literacy methods courses. PSTs can learn to implement new teaching ideas in the classroom if there are greater connections among the methods courses. For example, if the students are taking a literacy course and Social Studies methods course, they can integrate these subjects together and plan a lesson to implement in the field experience. This experience would provide the PSTs with a more realistic way to plan lessons as teachers often integrate content areas in classroom instruction. Furthermore, critical literacy instruction may seem more feasible through content areas such as Social Studies as Jodi exhibited in her case. Another addition to literacy coursework could be the literacy audit the PSTs in this study conducted of their field experience classrooms based from Comber and Nixon (2004). This literacy audit started dialogue about the types of text available and utilized in the classroom, whose voice is heard in the texts, the child’s role in text production, etc. If utilized in coursework, this literacy audit could facilitate dialogue in class about literacy in the elementary school classroom. Furthermore, as stated previously, literacy instructors also need to be field supervisors to further help PSTs make theory to practice connections in the field experience. In order to provide PSTs with the greatest learning experience, literacy methods instructors need to also be field supervisors to gain a great understanding of the classroom context. It is pivotal that instructors have a clearer picture of the classroom context so that they can help PSTs navigate their individual classrooms, needs of their unique learners, and relationships with collaborating
teachers. Literacy methods instructors cannot simply rely on theoretical knowledge of content to assist PSTs in learning and enacting change to their literacy instruction. The role of the field supervisor is discussed in great detail in the next section.

**Field supervisors.** In order to properly help PSTs grow in their knowledge of literacy, professional development for field supervisors is crucial if these field supervisors are not literacy instructors as suggested previously. The university can provide a professional development opportunity so that field supervisors are better equipped to coach PSTs with literacy instruction in the field. Another role of the field supervisor should be to foster a close working relationship between the PST and CT. The field supervisor can help the CT gain comfort in allowing PSTs some autonomy in their lessons. The field supervisor can offer suggestions on how to balance this co-teach environment in a way that allows the PST to take risks with their instruction in an effort to grow as a teacher. Lastly, field supervisors can coach each PST individually, which is a time-consuming job. If supervisors are responsible for fewer PSTs, they will be better able to give the individual attention needed to each PST.

**Professional learning community.** The findings in this study showed PSTs learn while engaged in a professional learning community. As discussed in chapter seven, PSTs gained knowledge for, in, and of practice within the learning community. Therefore, PLCs can be incorporated into teacher education programs if a clinically rich program is not feasible. The PLC provided a place for PSTs to engage in dialogue and learn more about content and pedagogy. As seen in this study, Jodi engaged in praxis as a result of the PLC and Zoe, specifically, benefitted from seeing critical literacy through reflections and conversations within the PLC. This opportunity for reflection and action can be provided to all PSTs if PLCs are integrated throughout fieldwork and coursework at the university level. Field supervisors,
collaborating teachers, and/or university instructors could meet with a PLC bi-weekly in lieu of
the seminar component of the field experience during these weeks. These PLCs could be tailored
to the specific learning needs or interests of the PSTs and strengths of the facilitators.
Professional development could be provided to field supervisors, collaborating teachers, and
university instructors to facilitate these PLCs.

**Collaborating teachers.** As seen in chapters four, five, six, and seven, the collaborating
teachers were integral in the facilitation of critical literacy enactment. The findings in this study
clearly support the need for collaborating teachers whom express a willingness to allow their
PSTs autonomy when planning and executing lessons. The collaborating teachers are ultimately
responsible for the children in the classroom. Therefore, the PST and CT relationship should be
strong enough to allow a CT to feel comfortable giving the PST autonomy. In Tira and Jodi’s
cases, their CTs trusted their teaching abilities so these PSTs were able to take risks to their
practice.

Professional development should be available for collaborating teachers on critical
literacy, inquiry, and the teacher education curriculum. Each semester, collaborating teachers can
be offered a professional development opportunity centered on the theories PSTs learn within the
coursework. The field supervisors and select collaborating teachers can even plan this
professional development together to highlight each other’s strengths and build on these assets.
For example, as field supervisors and collaborating teachers design a professional development
workshop on critical literacy, the field supervisor can focus on the conceptual understanding of
critical literacy and a collaborating teacher could offer more of the practical ideas for
implementation. Not only will this professional development help both the field supervisors and
collaborating teachers unite in terms of the curriculum, but could also strengthen and bridge the
relationship between the university and elementary school. As CTs learn more about inquiry through professional development, the PST and CT can develop and engage in inquiry together in the field experience. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) suggested beginning and expert teachers work together on inquiry to pose questions, examine varying viewpoints, and make changes to teaching practices. Another way to bridge this gap is to have collaborating teachers and field supervisors plan the field experience syllabus together. During this planning, the field supervisor and collaborating teacher can plan specific times throughout the semester to meet as a triad with the PST. The collaborating teacher could also play a part in planning the syllabi for literacy methods courses. By working together, the instructor can integrate coursework directly into the field experience and the collaborating teacher can help the instructor incorporate mandated literacy curriculum into the coursework. Therefore, the collaborating teachers, literacy methods instructors, and field supervisors are working together to strengthen the PSTs’ experiences. In order to make these collaborations happen, collaborating teachers need more of an incentive from the university, possibly in the form of a stipend.

**Implications for Future Research**

Future research could be conducted on the role of myself as the facilitator of the learning community. During the study, I took on the dual role of facilitator and researcher. In essence, I was a teacher educator for these participants during the PLC and when planning for the PLC, but then the researcher as I analyzed the data. I had to carefully straddle the line between teacher educator and researcher. This division of attention was not always equal. As I reflect on this experience, I went into each PLC as a teacher educator. I focused more on the needs of my participants as students rather than simple participants in my study. For example, in one such PLC I did not start our recording until 45 minutes into our time together because I wanted to
respect one of the participant’s needs to share openly about her struggle with her field supervisor. In this instance, I gave priority to my role as a teacher educator rather than a researcher. However, when I transcribed and began to analyze the data, I slipped back into the role of a researcher. I tried to look at the data as objectively as possible. When I struggled to be objective, my critical friend helped to redirect my thoughts. Since I was constantly switching between the role of facilitator and researcher, I think more research on this role of a facilitator would be beneficial to the field.

Future research to examine whether a supervisor focused on critical literacy could help facilitate critical literacy enactment within the field experience could benefit the field. For example, the supervisor can aid PSTs in overcoming inhibitors to critical literacy enactment. Research focused on these possibilities for the supervisor’s role in critical literacy enactment could be conducted. Since I was only a facilitator in the PLC in this study and not a field supervisor, I did not have an opportunity to coach PSTs in the field, only within our PLC. More research can be conducted on the opportunity to have the facilitator of the PLC also be the field supervisor of the PSTs. Additionally, research can be conducted on the role of literacy methods instructors and field supervisors. Both of these people play a crucial role in critical literacy enactment and can be utilized to further support PSTs. As teacher education programs are redesigned to be more clinically rich, more research on the literacy courses and a focus on critical literacy need to be conducted. Since curriculum mandates were another inhibitor for PSTs, a study in a literacy methods course and corresponding field experience focused on using the connections between the Common Core and critical literacy to enact critical literacy could beneficial. Future research could also take place during the final field experience when PSTs are in the classroom full time. This research could eliminate the inhibitor time since PSTs would be
in the classroom full time. While this study was a start, even more researched can be done with PSTs using critical literacy in the field experience. For example, a study in which all PSTs utilized inquiry as a tool for critical literacy enactment would be advantageous. It is also imperative to further study the facilitator’s role in this study. Furthermore, a longitudinal study that follows participants into their first year teaching, could offer more guidance on the implications for critical literacy instruction. An ethnography into a first year teacher’s literacy instruction after they were successful in enacting critical literacy in the field experience could offer more information on the possibilities and hindrances teachers may face after leaving the university. As suggested in the implications, PSTs and CTs could work together within a PLC to improve any number of pedagogical skills, including critical literacy instruction. More research could be conducted on the use of PLCs as a pedagogical skill at the university level with PSTs and CTs working together towards a common goal. Lastly, more research on the aspects of critical literacy instruction PSTs are able to enact in the field experience needs to be conducted, but over a longer period of time. It would be beneficial to see what aspects of critical literacy PSTs could enact when focused on critical literacy instruction over more than one semester.

**Significance**

As discussed in chapters one and two, the field of critical literacy research is mainly focused on in-service teachers rather than PSTs. Therefore, this study filled a gap in the extant literature. Additionally, critical literacy is oftentimes relegated to secondary classrooms. This study took place with elementary PSTs. In fact, Jodi and Tira enacted critical literacy in primary grades in elementary school. Therefore, critical literacy no longer needs to be seen as only appropriate for older students. The findings in this study suggest young children are capable of engaging in critical literacy.
As discussed in chapter two, supervision for social justice has been loosely connected through concepts such as moral action (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007; Starratt, 2005; Starratt & Howells, 1998), critical inquiry (Smyth, 1985; 1988; 2005), and cultural responsiveness (Bowers & Flinders, 1991; Gay, 1998, 2005). There has been little literature on supervision for social justice specifically; however, this study examined supervision for social justice through the use of PLCs with PSTs. This study addressed how critical literacy could provide a context for social justice work in the elementary school classrooms. Critical literacy instruction is one manner in which PSTs can start to develop culturally responsive teaching skills. Both critical literacy and culturally responsive teacher center on relating content to students’ lives; therefore, critical literacy instruction is one way to approach culturally responsive teaching in the classroom. As PSTs participated in the PLC in this study, they started to question the status quo of their own teaching and teaching in general. From this dialogue, PSTs reflected on their teaching and made changes to their practice, thus engaging in praxis. As these PSTs worked against the norm in their own classrooms, they not only made changes to their own practice but also shared these transformations with the PLC. The PLC became a community in which change was encouraged and praised.

**Final Reflections**

From my time as a Master’s in Reading Education student at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, I developed an interest in how children’s literature could be a medium for social justice work in the elementary school classroom. I took this interest with me to the University of South Florida as I started my journey to a doctoral degree. As I engaged in coursework and grew as a teacher educator, my interest remained but now I was able to name it—critical literacy. From there, I set out to learn as much as possible about critical literacy and
how I could incorporate critical literacy into my own teaching as a teacher educator. I found a place for my passion in my Children’s Literature course. Thankfully, I was able to refine my practice several times as I taught different sections of Children’s Literature. From this experience teaching Children’s Literature emerged the idea for this research. I wanted to purposefully study how PSTs could enact critical literacy in the classroom. I found PSTs were able to make better sense of critical literacy through our PLC. As these PSTs made sense of critical literacy, Jodi and Tira enacted critical literacy successfully in their primary grade classrooms. I eagerly look forward to bringing my new learning back into the elementary school classroom through my own teaching.

**Summary of Chapter**

This study has implications for both teacher education and research on teacher education. The findings support a need for teacher education programs to provide a context in which PSTs can engage in dialogue about their teaching, such as a professional learning community. As seen in this study, dialogue was central to sensemaking and enactment of critical literacy. Social justice should be incorporated throughout a teacher education. Additionally, critical literacy instruction should be developed in all literacy coursework in hopes of making a more lasting impact on PSTs. Furthermore, the inhibitors PSTs faced in this study could potentially be overcome with better assistance from teacher educators, specifically the field supervisor. Future research on the field supervisor’s role needs to be conducted.
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discussion can be used to develop informed and critical literacy teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*, 1635-1644.


Appendix A: Flyer and Email

Looking for participants to engage in a research study about inquiry and critical literacy

I (Vanessa Casciola) am a doctoral candidate here at USF looking for voluntary research participants for a research study (eIRB #23309) in the elementary cohort teacher education program in the College of Education. The purpose of this study is to understand how preservice teachers make meaning of critical literacy through the process of inquiry in a facilitated learning community.

Cohort 2

“Bi-monthly learning community meeting at school site”

You are invited to join a professional learning community committed to inquiry and exploring critical literacy in the elementary school classroom. We will meet bi-monthly for two hours to learn more about critical literacy and how to navigate the inquiry process in more depth. We will read scholarly literature together, develop strategies to try, and unpack the inquiry process. If you are interested in critical literacy, this is the place for you!

Please contact me (Vanessa Casciola) directly if you are interested at vascioli@mail.usf.edu
Email Content:

Hello Cohort 2! Welcome back! I am a doctoral candidate here at USF looking for voluntary research participants for a research study in the elementary cohort teacher education program. The purpose of this study is to understand how preservice teachers make meaning of critical literacy through the process of inquiry in a facilitated learning community. You are invited to join on a professional learning community facilitated by myself. We will meet bi-monthly for two hours after your internship day to learn more about critical literacy and how to navigate the inquiry process. Please see the attached flyer for more information. Please contact me directly with any questions if you are interested in participating in this voluntary research study.
Appendix B: IRB Approval

August 19, 2015

Vanessa Casciola
Teaching and Learning
4202 E Fowler Ave EDU 105
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review
IRB#: Pro00023309
Title: Preservice Teachers Engaged in Inquiry to Explore Critical Literacy

Study Approval Period: 8/19/2015 to 8/19/2016

Dear Ms. Casciola:

On 8/19/2015, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and APPROVED the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
IRB dissertation.docx

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
Version1 informed consent.docx.pdf

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review...
category.

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board
Appendix C: Inquiry Assignment Description

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Standards Met</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Inquiry into Student Learning in the Content Areas (FEAPS: 4a, 4c, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5e, 5f)</td>
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</table>

The purpose of this assignment is for interns to systematically study their practice and work with students in a particular content area. The beginning of the semester will focus on collecting data to better understand the needs of your students. Interns will use this data to narrow down a wondering focused on a particular content area. Then additional data will be collected by reading both research and practitioner literature. The second cycle of inquiry will include teaching two connected lessons in relation to the inquiry topic. These connected lessons will allow interns to make data-based decisions in planning and instruction.

*You will continue this inquiry in the spring. Parts of this inquiry will be used within the final teacher inquiry paper in the spring.*

Inquiry Checkpoints:

20 points

1a. Inquiry Data Notebook:

Throughout the semester you will be collecting data for your inquiry in your data notebook. For the first few weeks of the semester you will collect data to gain insight into your students as learners and the classroom learning environment. This data will help you begin to narrow down your inquiry focus form the semester. You will then continue adding to this notebook throughout the semester. Some of this data you will be also collecting for your EDE 4504 Learning
Environments course. You will be asked to bring this data to seminar to discuss and reflect on within your blog.

First 4 Weeks: Collect Data to Answer the Questions:

Who are the learners in my classroom?
What are the strengths and needs of my learners across content areas?
What does the learning environment look like? What are the needs of the learning environment?

Types of Data Collected May Include: Observations, field notes, student work, student surveys, interviews, reflections, test scores, grades, etc.

1. You will be expected to bring your data notebook to each seminar as your field supervisor will be asking you to work on analyzing data.

2. You will be expected to bring your data notebook to your internship classroom every week, it should be somewhere in the classroom so your supervisor can peek at it, leave you notes, etc.

3. There should be evidence you are collecting data in your blog entries.

1b. Inquiry Blog Entries—During each seminar you will be spending time analyzing your inquiry data, readings, etc. and discussing this data with your peers. You will then write a blog post to be uploaded during seminar (or after if no internet). This blog entry should include references to the data you have collected and/or pictures of this data. Your supervisor will check in 4 times during the semester to make sure you are up-to-date with these reflections. In order to be successful with these blog entries you will need to bring your data notebook to each seminar. These blogs will be helpful as you build upon your inquiry next semester.

4 Checkpoints (5 points each)
20 points

**Developing Your Wondering after Initial Data Analysis Blog**

This blog entry will be completed outside of class time. This will be a time to stop and analyze your data to develop an initial inquiry focus. You will write a thoughtful blog entry about what you are starting to learn from the data collected. We encourage you to use build off and hyperlink to the previous blog entries you have completed as ways to discuss your claims. This blog entry should include:

- Paragraph about the types of data you collected in data notebook (several sentences describing each kind)**Pics as examples
- Make several claims based on the data you have collected. Include data to support claims.
- Where do you see the claims intersecting with where you would like to grow as a teacher?
- End with an initial topic focus/wondering (select areas from inquiry menu)

**Due: Week 6**

20 points

1c. **Literature Summaries**

After selecting an inquiry focus topic you will search for literature to help you better understand your focus area as well as learn about ideas and background knowledge for teaching lessons related to your focus area. There should be a connection to a specific content area.

- Read 5 articles (2 research; 2 practitioner; 1 inquiry) about your topic area.
- Create a summary for each article.
- Write a paragraph that talks about the themes across your articles.
Due: Week 10

20 points

1d. Revisit Wondering

In seminar, you will reflect on what ways did your wondering change as a result of your literature search. How did the literature make you feel differently/enlighten you about your wondering? You will use this wondering to help guide your connected lessons.

2. Connected Inquiry Lessons ***Chalk and Wire FEAPS (1a, 1b, 1d, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5f)

Interns will work with their CT to plan and teach two connected lessons in relation to their inquiry content/ focus area. The data collected from the first cycle of your inquiry (literature, classroom data, etc.) will help to inform your teaching. This will be chalk and wire task.

2a. Pre-Assessment: What do my students know about my lesson topic?

- Create pre-assessment tool(s) to collect data focused on your lesson objectives.
- Collect pre-assessment data using your tool(s).
- Think about data collected previously on your topic area from above. Gather any of this previous data that may support your planning (previous tests, observations, etc.)
- Write 1-2 paragraphs making claims about student learning in connection to your objectives based on pre-assessment data collected. How will you use this in your planning?

2b. Planning: How can I plan lessons within my inquiry content area based on data?

- Create two lesson plans that occur on back-to-back days or subsequent weeks that build on each other. Use the data collected regarding your class and the literature in relation to the specific content area.
2c. Teaching: What are students learning within my two lessons? How do I differentiate instruction to meet their needs?

- Teach lesson one and collect data during this lesson.
- Analyze data collected during and after lesson. Make sure to disaggregate the data to see if there are any trends in learning outcomes.
- Make claims about student learning based on data in lesson reflection.
- Adapt lesson plan 2 as needed. (highlight changes in lesson plan)
- Teach and collect data during lesson two.
- Analyze data collected during and after lesson.
- Make graphic display of data collected across lessons to illustrate impact on student learning.

2d. Reflection/Findings: What have I learned about my students’ learning in my content area? What have I learned about myself as a teacher?

Looking across all the data you have collected make several claims about the impact of your lessons on student learning. Reference the graph you have made and attach specific examples of student work Make sure you are specific and use the data you have collected to back up these claims. What would you do differently in the future in order to increase student learning? What have you learned about yourself as a teacher? Where do you see your inquiry heading next semester? What might your wondering be?

Portfolio: Pre-assessment tool and reflection; 2 lesson plans (second one highlighted); graph of data; and reflection

Due: Week 15 50 points
Appendix D: Children’s Literature Syllabus

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

UNDERGRADUATE DEPARTMENTAL COURSE SYLLABUS

The College of Education is dedicated to the ideals of Collaboration, Academic Excellence, Research, and Ethics/Diversity (CARE). These are key tenets in the Conceptual Framework of the College of Education. Competence in these ideals will provide candidates in educator preparation programs with skills, knowledge, and dispositions to be successful in the schools of today and tomorrow.

1. **Course Prefix and Number:** LAE 4424  
   **Credit Hours:** 3

2. **Course Title:** Teaching Children's Literature: Developing Literary Appreciation, Global Perspectives, and Knowledge of Text Structures

3. **Regular Instructor(s):** Vanessa Casciola  
   Email: vcasci@mailer.usf.edu  
   Office: EDU 202

4. **Course Prerequisites (if any):** None

5. **Course Description:**

Building on an appreciation for children’s literature, the purpose of this class is for undergraduate teacher candidates to learn how to select quality literature for children and to demonstrate instructional strategies for developing children’s engagement with literary texts,
children’s understanding of diverse and global perspectives, and children’s knowledge of text structures.

(3 credits)

6. **Course Goals and Objectives:**

List major goals and related objective (student learning outcomes) that will be taught and assessed in the course. They should reflect the knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions students will have learned at the conclusion of the course. After each objective, in parentheses, list the standards that are addressed. Include Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAP), Conceptual Framework (CF), Professional Standards (International Reading Association- IRA), Competencies and Skills Required for Teacher Certification in Florida (CS), English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Reading Endorsement Competencies (FRC).

Undergraduate teacher candidates will:

1. Identify and analyze text structures of children’s literature (e.g. narrative, information, fables, folktales, poetry, drama, media, etc.)
   - (CF 2: CS 2.1, 2.2, 6.1: IRA 2.2, 2.3: FRC, 1A3, 1A6)

2. Identify and analyze literary elements across genres of children’s literature (e.g. narrative, information, fables, folktales, poetry, drama, media, etc.)
   - (CF 2: CS 2.1, 2.2: FRC 1A6)

3. Identify and describe the elements of design that contribute to the art of the picture book.
   - (CF 2: CS 2.1, 2.2, 6.1: IRA 2.3: FRC 1A6)

4. Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).
   - (CF 2: CS 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 6.1: IRA 2.3: FRC 1A4, 1A6)
5. Identify and evaluate language use and vocabulary in children’s literature.
   - (CF 2: CS 2.2 IRA 2.2: FRC 2F4)

6. Identify and evaluate literature that represents diverse cultural, racial, social, religious, economic, and sexual identities and facilitate a learning environment in which differences and commonalities are valued.
   - (FEAP 2d: CS 2.3: CF 5: IRA 2.3, 4.1: FRC 1A4, 4.8)

7. Compare and contrast the contributions and the compositional techniques of various authors, illustrators, poets, and playwrights.
   - (IRA 2.3 CS 2.1, 2.2, 2.3)

8. Compare and contrast key details, content, and literary elements presented in history/social studies, science, and technical texts that vary in text complexity.
   - (FEAP 3b: CS 2.1, 2.2, 2.3: CF 2: IRA 2.3)

9. Demonstrate effective read-aloud techniques (e.g., using words and phrases to supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song, speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud, highlighting illustrations as part of the meaning-making process).
   - (FEAP 2e: CS 2.4: IRA 2.2: ACEI 1: FRC 1E1, 1E2)

10. Demonstrate effective read-aloud techniques for reading various text structures (e.g., picture books, chapter books, information texts, big books, and multimedia texts).
    - (FEAP 2e: IRA 2.2: CS 2.4, 6.1; ACEI 1: FRC 1E1)

11. Demonstrate various practices to differentiate literature instruction (e.g., book talks, literature circles, partner work, and research/investigation groups).
    - (FEAP 1f: IRA 2.2: CS 2.4: ACEI 1)
12. Demonstrate the ability to engage children in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners to explore literary content, elements, and personal responses.

- (FEAP 3f: IRA 5.1, 5.4: CS 2.4: FRC 2A4, 2B2: ACEI 1, 2.1)

13. Demonstrate differentiated literature instruction that reveals an understanding of the relationship between first- and second-language acquisition and literacy development.

- (FEAP 2d: CF 5, 6: IRA 1.1, 2.2, 4.1: CS 2.4: FRC 1B5, 4.8: ACEI 1, 2.1, 3.2)

14. Guided by evidence-based rationale, select and use quality traditional print, digital, and online resources to build an accessible, multilevel, and diverse classroom library that contains traditional print, digital, and online classroom materials.

- (FEAP 2a: CF 2: IRA 2.2, 2.3, 4.1: CS 2.1, 2.4, 6.1, 6.3: FRC 1A6, 2G3: ACEI 2.1)

7. **Content Outline:**

This is a tentative weekly schedule of topics and/or outline should be included. Instructor has the right to change any topics or dates.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/25/14</td>
<td>Introduction/Review Syllabus</td>
<td>Bring Syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overview of Genre’s of Children’s Literature</td>
<td>Bring in one of your favorite books (any book)</td>
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<td>9/1/14</td>
<td>No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/8/14</td>
<td>Selecting and Evaluating Children’s Literature</td>
<td>Kiefer and Tyson chapter 1 and 8</td>
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<td>Historical Fiction Response: Animoto Video</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topics</td>
<td>Assignments Due</td>
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<td>9/15/14</td>
<td>Finish Historical Fiction if needed&lt;br&gt;Emergent Literacy (Picture Books)&lt;br&gt;Response: Class ABC book Book Talks&lt;br&gt;Start Whole class Book Club</td>
<td>Kiefer and Tyson chapter 2&lt;br&gt;Read Number the Stars chapters 1-3</td>
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<td>9/22/14</td>
<td>Picture books (fictional and “classic”)&lt;br&gt;Response: Caldecott Award Ceremony&lt;br&gt;Book Talks&lt;br&gt;Whole class Book Club</td>
<td>Kiefer and Tyson chapter 3&lt;br&gt;Read Number the Stars chapters 4-6</td>
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<td>9/29/14</td>
<td>Multicultural Literature&lt;br&gt;Response: Tableaux&lt;br&gt;Book Talks&lt;br&gt;Whole class book club</td>
<td>Readings on Canvas&lt;br&gt;Read Number the Stars chapters 7-10</td>
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<td>10/6/14</td>
<td>Picture Books (Information/Non-fiction/Increasing complexity)&lt;br&gt;Response: Written Response about practical applications&lt;br&gt;Whole Class Book Club Book Talks</td>
<td>Kiefer and Tyson chapter 9&lt;br&gt;Read Number the Stars chapters 11-14</td>
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<td>10/13/14</td>
<td>Traditional Literature “Classic” Literature&lt;br&gt;Response: Retell the story from a different point of view&lt;br&gt;Group Book Club Book Talks</td>
<td>Kiefer and Tyson chapter 4&lt;br&gt;Read for group book club</td>
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<td>10/20/14</td>
<td>Fantasy&lt;br&gt;Response: Write a poem&lt;br&gt;Group book club Book Talks</td>
<td>Kiefer and Tyson chapter 5&lt;br&gt;Read for group book club</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Topics</td>
<td>Assignments Due</td>
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<td>10/27/14</td>
<td>How to do a read aloud</td>
<td>Read for group book club</td>
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<td>Group Book Club</td>
<td>Bring book for read aloud lesson</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Book talks</td>
<td>Bring start of your read aloud lesson plan</td>
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<td><strong>In-class read aloud</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>11/3/14</td>
<td>Diverse Portrayals Presentations</td>
<td><strong>Diverse Portrayals Presentations Due</strong></td>
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<td>11/10/14</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>Kiefer and Tyson chapter 6</td>
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<td>Response: Graphic Representation</td>
<td>Read for group book club</td>
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<td>Group Book Club</td>
<td><strong>Diverse Portrayals Paper due</strong></td>
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<td>Book Talks</td>
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<td>11/17/14</td>
<td>Contemporary Realistic Fiction</td>
<td>Kiefer and Tyson chapter 7</td>
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<td>Response: Character Trait Train</td>
<td>Read for group book club</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group book club</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Book Talks</td>
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<td>11/24/14</td>
<td>Biography/Autobiography</td>
<td>Kiefer and Tyson chapter 10</td>
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<td>Response: Make Music</td>
<td>Read for group book club</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group book club</td>
<td><strong>Read aloud lesson due</strong></td>
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<td>Book Talks</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/1/14</td>
<td>Share Book Wish List</td>
<td>Read for group book club</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Classroom Ideas</td>
<td><strong>Book Wish List Due</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Final Book Club</td>
<td><strong>Response repository due</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Book Talks</td>
<td><strong>Literary Analysis due to</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Chalk and Wire</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12/8/14</td>
<td>No class</td>
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8. Evaluation of Student Outcomes:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Standards Met</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>a) Literary Analysis</strong></td>
<td>(Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6: FEAP 2d: CF 2, 5: IRA 2.2, 2.3, 4.1: CS 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 6.1: FRC 1A3, 1A4,1A6, 2F4, 4.8)</td>
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<td><strong>b) Classroom Library</strong></td>
<td>(Objectives 6, 7, 8, 14: FEAP 2a, 2d, 2e, 3b: CF 2, 5: IRA 2.2, 2.3, 4.1: CS 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 6.1, 6.3: FRC 2F4, 2G3: ACEI 1)</td>
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<td><strong>c) Response Repository</strong></td>
<td>(Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12: FEAP 3f: CF 2: IRA 2.2, 2.3, 5.1, 5.4: CS 2.4: ACEI 1, 2.1, 3.5: ESOL 11.1, 11.2, 17.1: FRC)</td>
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<td><strong>d) Author/Illustrator/Poet Project (Optional)</strong></td>
<td>(Objectives 7, 11: FEAP 1f: IRA 2.2, 2.3: CS: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4: ACEI 1, 2.1)</td>
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<td><strong>e) Diverse Portrayals in Children’s Literature</strong></td>
<td>(Objectives 1, 2, 6, 7, 11: FEAP 1f, 2d: CF 2, 5: IRA 2.2, 2.3, 3.3, 4.1: ACEI 1: CS 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4: FRC 1A3, 1A6, 2B2)</td>
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<td><strong>f) Read Alouds</strong></td>
<td><em>(Objectives 9, 10, 13: FEAP 2e: IRA 2.2: CS: 2.1, 2.4, 6.1: ACEI 1: FRC 1E1, 1E2)</em></td>
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<td><strong>g) Book Talks</strong></td>
<td><em>(Objectives 11, 13: FEAP 1f, 2d: CF 5, 6: IRA 1.1, 2.2, 4.1: CS 2.4: ACEI 1, 2.1, 3.2: FRC 1B5, 2B3, 4.8)</em></td>
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<td><strong>h) Literature Discussion Groups</strong></td>
<td><em>(Objectives 11, 12: FEAP 1f, 3f: IRA 2.2, 5.1, 5.4: CS 2.4: ACEI 1, 2.1: FRC 1A6, 2G3)</em></td>
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*Literacy Portfolio: Two components of this Portfolio include Critical Tasks [Component 1 (Literary Analysis) and Component 4 (Read Aloud Step 3)] — These tasks must be uploaded to Chalk & Wire.

Component 1—Knowledge of Text Structures
a) Literary Analysis (Critical Task)

You will read the following books that represent genres of children’s literature. You will analyze each book and identify genre elements and literary devices. For each genre, you will create or write a response to the book(s) to demonstrate your ability to identify the genre elements and literary devices. Specific guidelines for each genre will be provided in class. You will bring the books to class on the assigned day.

You will select and read children’s books according to the following breakdown:

- Emergent Picture Books (4)
  - Select and read two pattern books, one ABC book, one counting book. To ensure quality text selection, choose books that are listed in the course textbook.

- Multicultural Picture Books (4)
  - Select any texts listed in the textbook

- “Classic” Picture Books (4)
  - Read Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak and The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle. Then select and read one favorite book from Dr. Seuss and select and read two favorite picture books from your childhood.

- Fictional Picture Books (4)
  - Select and read 4 books that tell a realistic story. To ensure quality text selection, choose books that are listed in the course textbook.

- Contemporary Realistic Fiction Books (2)
  - Read a recent Newbery Winner or Newbery Honor book of realistic fiction.

(Instructor will provide the title.)
• Select and read one of the most recent Sunshine State Young Reader Books (Instructor will provide the specific list).

• **Information Books (8)**

  • Select and read one book about the human or animal body, one book about the earth, one book about space, one book about a historical event in the U.S., one book about a historical event outside of the U.S., two books that teach math concepts, and one book of your choice (e.g. your hobbies, interests, travel, etc.). To ensure quality text selection, choose books that are listed in the course textbook or books that have won the Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) or the Orbis Pictus Award ([www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)).

• **Historical Fiction books (2)**

  • Read Number the Stars by Lois Lowry.

  • Also choose another historical fiction book. Possible books: Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor, Crispin: The Cross of Lead by Avi, Kira-Kira by Cynthia Kadohata

• **Biographies (5)**

  • Select and read one book about a historical figure of the United States, one book about a musician, one book about a contemporary female scientist, one book about a person who is from a different culture, ethnicity, or race, one about a person of interest to you. To ensure quality text selection, choose books that are listed in the course textbook.

• **Traditional Literature books (3)**
• Choose one traditional folk tale (Possible books: Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, Jack and the Bean Stalk, The Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood, etc.). Find and read 3 or more versions or variations of the same story.

• **Fantasy books (2)**
  • Read a classic book of fantasy
  • Select and read a recent Newbery Winner or Newbery Honor book of fantasy.

• **Poetry Anthologies (2)**
  • Select and read one anthology that includes poetry from many poets.
  • Select and read one anthology that includes poetry from a single poet.
  • To ensure quality text selection, choose poets who are listed in the course textbook.

• **“Classic” Pieces of Literature (2)**
  • Read two pieces of “classic” literature.

b) **Classroom Library Wish List**

Using an electronic network (www.pinterest.com), you will design a comprehensive classroom library for your future classroom. This library will include literature from each
genre, literature of increasing complexity, and multimedia resources to encourage reading for personal and academic purposes.

You will categorize the literature into themes that are relevant to you. Then you will provide a rationale for your selections and themes. Your classroom library will be evaluated through a rubric that will be discussed and distributed during class.

**Component 2 – Literary Appreciation**

c) **Response Repository**

The class textbook includes many examples of the ways in which readers can respond to literature. A range of response activities will be discussed and modeled in class. You will respond to the children’s literature texts you read using various multi-modalities in order to develop your understanding of the connection between reading and response. You will provide reflections on your learning through these activities. A template for these reflections is provided on Canvas.

**Component 3 – Global Perspectives and Teaching Literature**

**Diverse Portrayals**

d) **Diverse Portrayals in Children’s Literature**

Part 1: As a group, survey children’s literature and select a set of books that include representations of people who are grouped together for various racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, economic, social, physical, political, historical reasons, etc. (e.g., African Americans, Latino/Latina Americans, people with disabilities, LGBT families, people who identify as Jewish/Christian/Muslim/Atheist/etc., Holocaust survivors, military veterans, etc. Select contemporary realistic fiction or picture books published within the
last 10 years with a priority on finding the most recent books. (Do not select folktales for this project.) Locate and read 12-15 books.

Part 2: On your own, write a paper (1000 words minimum) in which you describe how individuals and groups are portrayed through the text and illustrations. Are the portrayals accurate and authentic? Do the authors and illustrators identify themselves as part of the group? Is “difference” a focus of each book or are the books about something else? If any of the books have been banned or censored, what were the concerns? What do you notice about this set of books? What have you learned about issues of portrayal and character?

Part 3: As a group, develop a 20-minute presentation in which you demonstrate effective strategies for teaching with literature that represents diverse cultural, racial, social, religious, economic, and sexual identities and demonstrate strategies that facilitate a learning environment in which differences and commonalities are valued. 1. Provide an oral retelling of the most powerful and personally meaningful book in your collection. 2. Display all of the books you analyzed and provide a book talk and picture walk through the collection. Highlight cultural, linguistic, and stylistic variations along with illustrations. 3. Demonstrate a strategy for teaching children based on this collection. 4. Provide the class with an annotated bibliography and a brief description of teaching ideas that support global understanding and diverse perspectives.

Component 4– Teaching Children’s Literature

e) Read Aloud (Modeling Reading Strategies)

Select an appropriate Picture Story book for reading aloud (use your textbook for ideas).

Step 1: Pick a book for a read aloud and develop a lesson plan using this book.
Step 2 (In-class Practice): In class, you will read this book to a small group of your peers. Your peers will record your reading and anonymously evaluate you using criteria from the textbook. You will receive the feedback on your text selection and your read-aloud strategies. You will use the comments for constructive, reflective purposes.

Step 3 (In field experience): You will read a story to a group of children and film your performance (do not film children’s faces). You will post your video in the class site. You will also extend your read aloud by leading the students in a response to the text. You will design and execute a lesson based on the children’s needs and interests. You will collect evidence of student learning and reflect on your effectiveness. (These activities may occur over several days.) (Step 3: Critical Task)

f) Books Talks (Modeling Text Selection Criteria and Multimodal Responses to Texts)

You will present one book talk to the class. After selecting a piece of literature, develop a book talk to introduce the book to the class. Your book talk will be presented to a small the whole class. I will evaluate your talk using criteria from your textbook. Each student will sign up for a specific date for the book talk.

g) Literature Discussion Groups/Book Clubs (Demonstrating Shared or Guided Reading Strategies)

This assignment is connected to Component 1a Literary Analysis. Each week, you will join other people who have read the same books and create a book club. You will facilitate two book club sessions and demonstrate your ability to lead one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led discussions with diverse partners to explore literary content, elements, and personal responses. You will document the discussion strategies you use to guide the group. You will also collect documentation of student success.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literary Analysis (C&amp;W)</td>
<td>50 points each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>600 total points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Book Wish List</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Portrayals in Children’s Literature</td>
<td>Individual paper 100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation 100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Talks</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Club facilitation and participation</td>
<td>facilitation, 50 points each, total 100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participation, 50 points total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Repository</td>
<td>5 points for each reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70 points total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td>In-class 50 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In field experience 50 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1240 total points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. **Grading Criteria:**

Indicate what system will be used (i.e. straight letter grade, a plus and minus, or an S/U); grading scale, circumstances under which an “I” will be awarded. If this is a course for major’s, indicate what assignment(s) is a critical assignments and the consequence if it is not completed.

Also indicate that a minimum grade of “C-“ or “S” must be achieved in courses in their major.

9. **Grading Criteria:**

Plus/Minus Grading: A minimum grade of C- is required.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98-100</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>90-91</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>80-81</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>70-71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95-97</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>65-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92-94</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82-84</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>72-74</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>62-64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment of Weekly Participation/Attendance:**

**ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY. PROMPTNESS IS EXPECTED AND REQUIRED.**

**ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND PREPARATION FOR CLASS ARE ESSENTIAL.**

**ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TURNED IN ON TIME.** There are many legitimate reasons for absences, tardies, and late work (e.g., family emergencies, illness, car trouble, etc.). If you miss class, arrive late, or leave early, I will assume that your reasons are legitimate. Therefore, I **do not “excuse” or accept doctor’s notes for absences, tardies, or late work for any reason.** Please advise me if you will be absent or late.

Consistent and complete attendance is necessary to learn all of the information covered in the course and to observe modeled instructional strategies. More than one absence or two tardies (for any reason) will lower your grade according to the following breakdown.

- **EACH ABSENCE** (for any reason) will lower your course grade by 1 letter grade.
- **EACH TARDY/LEAVE EARLY** (for any reason) will lower your course grade by 5% because you will miss demonstrations, class activities, or reading strategies. Any tardy or early departure over 30 minutes is considered an absence.
- **Any assignment that is not turned in at the designated time is considered late.**

Assignments submitted within 7 days after the due date will receive no more than half credit. Any assignment that is turned in after 7 days will **NOT** be accepted and will receive no credit.
• EACH TIME YOU DEMONSTRATE A LACK OF PARTICIPATION IN CLASS OR LACK OF PREPARATION FOR CLASS (for any reason) you will be asked to leave.

This includes, but is not limited to, checking email, texting, searching the Internet, taking phone calls, etc. If you are asked to leave, this will result in an “absence”.

Critical Tasks

Students in the Elementary Education Program are required to successfully complete Critical Tasks in program courses to document meeting State of Florida teacher preparation standards. Critical tasks must be posted in the electronic portfolio (Chalk and Wire). Students must score a 3 or higher on the Chalk and Wire rubric in order to pass the course. You are responsible for submitting the assignment to Chalk and Wire at the time you submit the assignment for the instructor’s evaluation. The homepage of the College of Education website has a link to Chalk and Wire for information about training and their help desk.

10. Textbook(s) and Readings:

List required and/or recommended texts and readings. If text is older than five years, provide a statement as to why it is being used.

Required Textbook


Optional Readings

doi: 10.1598/RT.62.3.3
Block, C. C. and Israel, S. E. (2004), The ABCs of Performing Highly Effective Think-Alouds. The Reading Teacher, 58: 154–167. doi: 10.1598/RT.58.2.4

Mills, H. and Jennings, L. (2011), Talking About Talk: Recaiming the Value and Power of Literature Circles. The Reading Teacher, 64: 590–598. doi: 10.1598/RT.64.8.4


11. **Academic Dishonesty:** (Use the statement below)

“Plagiarism is defined as "literary theft" and consists of the unattributed quotation of the exact words of a published text or the unattributed borrowing of original ideas by paraphrase from a published text. On written papers for which the student employs information gathered from books, articles, or oral sources, each direct quotation, as well as ideas and facts that are not generally known to the public-at-large, must be attributed to its author by means of the appropriate citation procedure. Citations may be made in footnotes or within the body of the text. Plagiarism also consists of passing off as one's own, segments or the total of another person's work.”

“Punishment for academic dishonesty will depend on the seriousness of the offense and may include receipt of an "F" with a numerical value of zero on the item submitted, and the "F" shall
be used to determine the final course grade. It is the option of the instructor to assign the student a grade of "F" of "FF" (the latter indicating dishonesty) in the course.”

12. **Detection of Plagiarism:** It is very important to state in your syllabus that you plan to submit student assignments to [SafeAssignment.com](http://www.safassign.com) in order to detect plagiarism. This will give you the legal right to submit student assignments to SafeAssignment.com. If you plan to submit assignments to Safe Assignment, use the statement below:

The University of South Florida has an account with an automated plagiarism detection service which allows instructors to submit student assignments to be checked for plagiarism. I reserve the right to 1) request that assignments be submitted to me as electronic files and 2) electronically submit to SafeAssignment.com, or 3) ask students to submit their assignments to SafeAssignment.com through myUSF. Assignments are compared automatically with a database of journal articles, web articles, and previously submitted papers. The instructor receives a report showing exactly how a student's paper was plagiarized.

13. **Web Portal Information:** (Use the statement below)

Every newly enrolled USF student receives an official USF e-mail account that ends with "mail.acomp.usf.edu." Every official USF correspondence to students will be sent to that account. Go to the Academic Computing website and select the link "Activating a Student E-mail Account" for detailed information. Information about the USF Web Portal can be found at: [http://www.acomp.usf.edu/portal.htm](http://www.acomp.usf.edu/portal.htm).

14. **ADA Statement:** (Use the statement below)

Students in need of academic accommodations for a disability may consult with the office of Services for Students with Disabilities to arrange appropriate accommodations. Students are
required to give reasonable notice (typically 5 working days) prior to requesting an accommodation

15. **USF Policy on Religious Observances**: (Use the statement below)

“Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class due to the observation of a major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor, in writing, by the second class meeting.”
Appendix E: Preservice Teacher Reflections

a. What was your greatest learning today overall?

b. What did you add to or change on your concept map about critical literacy and why?

c. What do you plan to do this week to take action in regard to critical literacy? How will you prepare for this?

d. What have you done in your classroom over the last two weeks in terms of literacy instruction?

e. What questions do you still have?
Appendix F: Interview Questions

How do you imagine literacy instruction happening in your ideal classroom?

Can you tell me about a time when you really felt like your students were engaged in a literacy lesson?

What do you believe critical literacy is?

What has been your experience with literacy instruction in the classroom?

Where do you see a place for critical literacy in the classroom?

How do you think inquiry can aid in your learning process?

What has been your experience with inquiry in the classroom?
Appendix G: Sample Researcher’s Journal

Researcher's Journal after meeting 1

I was pleased with our first meeting. At first I was worried since only 5 people showed up but I found that we had plenty of opportunities to talk with just these 5 people. I am hoping Brandie will speak up more. I know she is usually an observer—I was happy when she did add her own opinions and thoughts when prompted by Zoe.

Angel still confuses me. Sometimes I hear him say things that are very open-minded and accepting and other times I feel like he uses stereotypes. When he was talking about his bf I was grateful to hear about his experiences with prejudice. However, when he said black skin stuck out in the mall with all of the white people, I was taken aback. I tried to reframe his thoughts here.

I noticed that my group got off on a discussion about classroom management. I didn’t reign them back in too much because I was hoping to see if they would bring up cultural values in relation to management. I think they were on the verge of this conversation.

I was interested that Jodi reflected on her own teaching of the constitution lesson! I think this provided a great discussion starter. Some thought students were too young and still colorblind while others said you need to talk about race early so that they don’t hear the negative things.

I was also interested in their comments about valuing individuals. I noticed they found it important that students feel like their cultures are valued. Zoe even said we need to have literature in the classroom to reflect our students!
### Appendix H: Sample Codebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sub</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sub codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense making</td>
<td>Multiple Perspectives</td>
<td>Using text to show multiple perspectives of topics in the classroom</td>
<td>Multiple perspectives sense making</td>
<td>Describing the importance of providing multiple perspectives on topics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple perspectives Enacting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bringing in resources (texts, conversations, videos, etc.) from multiple perspectives to use with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning texts</td>
<td>Starting to question the messages in texts presented to students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power structures</td>
<td>Questioning the power structures apparent and perpetuated in schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social action/change</td>
<td>Move to create a change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: Sample of Codebook with Specific Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Developing knowledge of teaching</th>
<th>Knowledge for practice</th>
<th>Formal knowledge— references to scholarly articles or coursework</th>
<th>Readings—show how literature read in the PLC or even resources read on their own</th>
<th>Practical examples— articles provided practical examples of critical literacy they could use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job: &quot;Feel like it's something that's talked about vaguely and it's ambiguous, but that article went in depth and gave examples and really talked a lot about it. (Interview 2)&quot;</td>
<td>Reflection articles prompted them to reflect more critically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>