THE INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL OF CRITICAL LITERACY:
A FRAMEWORK FOR HIGH SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION

by

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study:
Critical literacy provides a valuable pedagogy for school reform, but implementation falters due to the variety of definitions and methodological options available for implementation. Frameworks for implementation have been provided; however, most have an elementary focus, thus providing little guidance for novice critical theorists at the secondary level.

The purpose of this investigative project is to determine if the Instructional Model of Critical Literacy designed by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) provides a valid framework for the high school level.

Procedure:
To determine if the framework is reproducible, this study will examine research and pedagogical suggestions of high school critical theorists. The studies and lesson plans will be examined for evidence of the three components of the Instructional Model of Critical Literacy.

Findings:
Lewison, Leland, and Harste’s (2008) Instructional Model of Critical Literacy can easily be implemented in high school English-Language Arts classroom and provides a worthwhile framework for novice critical theorists. The use of the model may also help to eliminate or decrease resistance on the part of some students.

Conclusions:
Only seven practitioners demonstrated all three components of the Instructional Model of Critical Literacy in their studies/lesson plans. More studies are recommended to examine the benefits of the Instructional Model, especially in relation to the notion of resistance. Collaboration between teachers also appears to be valuable in the implementation of Critical Literacy.

Chair: __________________________
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Most importantly, I want to thank my two beautiful children. Grace and Garrett, I have a vision of a better education for you and other students. It is an education where all voices are honored and students engage in social justice. It is the education I want you to receive so that you are able to honor your generous, gentle hearts while fully realizing your potential. You were patient when I needed time away to work. You encouraged me in getting my work done. You were my inspiration through this process. I love you.
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Chapter I: Introduction
A Critical Educator Is Born

This is the beginning.
Almost anything can happen.
This is where you find
the creation of light, a fish wriggling onto land,
the first word of *Paradise Lost* on an empty page.
Think of an egg, the letter A,
a woman ironing on a bare stage
as the heavy curtain rises.
This is the very beginning.
The first-person narrator introduces himself,
tells us about his lineage.
The mezzo-soprano stands in the wings.
Here the climbers are studying a map
or pulling on their long woolen socks.
This is early on, years before the Ark, dawn.
The profile of an animal is being smeared
on the wall of a cave,
and you have not yet learned to crawl.

I have not always loved literacy. As a child, I preferred to climb trees, play tether
ball with my friends, or go to dance class. Any books that my parents purchased for me
sat unopened on my bookshelf. Any school assignments that involved writing were
chores to complete.

Then, at the age of 13, I moved across the country, away from my childhood
friends and ways of being. Suddenly, books became my solace as I struggled with
adolescence, making new friends, and finding my place in a new environment. I
devoured teenage romance novels for a short while, and then moved on to tales of
struggle and overcoming adversity that spoke to my adolescent soul. In the world of
Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* and Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* I finally learned
the meaning of getting lost in a book. Based on these experiences with literature, I
understand Rosenblatt’s (1995) discussion of efferent versus aesthetic reading. I read the novels and poems that were required in my classes with an efferent perspective – what did I need to know to write an essay or pass a test. But the reading that evoked emotion and connection to the literature was always done on my own for an aesthetic purpose.

When I decided to earn my secondary teaching credential, it was with the goal of tapping into more of the aesthetic perspectives that can be a part of the English-Language Arts curriculum. I taught for six years as a middle and high school English teacher. We had tea parties where we discussed the literature. We acted out Shakespeare. The students worked in groups to make newspapers that demonstrated their understanding of the plot, themes, and characters of the district required novels we read. It was curriculum that was supposed to be engaging, and while the majority of my students did participate and complete the assignments, there was always a handful who chose not to. I didn’t understand this.

I tried to gain an understanding of the situation. One student’s point of view left a powerful impression. Alex was enrolled in my seventh grade CORE class. We were reading Steinbeck’s *The Pearl* in class, and Alex was frequently stopping the story to ask questions about the characters. He was interested in the story, but he wasn’t doing any of the work that went along with it. When I asked why, Alex explained that finding time to do his homework was challenging because after school he either babysat his siblings or worked in his uncle’s restaurant.

Alex then shared the story of how he came to the United States four years earlier. He had been living in Mexico with his grandparents; his parents were already in California. At the age of eight, he rode with strangers in a truck to the border that
separates Mexico and the United States. He crossed the border in the middle of the night, hoping that someone on the other side would get him safely to his family. I didn’t ask Alex for his story, because prior to this place in my journey, I would not have wanted to impose. I realized from this experience, however, that there are many stories in our students’ lives that we do not know. Their histories are vivid and painful and joyful and real, and they have an impact on who the students are and how they learn. No wonder Alex did not want to complete the comprehension questions or prepare for a tea party, these activities reflected little of the important daily issues he faced.

The coursework for my Master’s program introduced ideas that further challenged me to question my philosophy of education and the pedagogy I employed in the classroom. The readings, research, and classroom observations and fieldwork exposed me to ideas that shed a different perspective on American classrooms. This new understanding highlighted the disproportionate education that many subordinated students receive. I became aware of the impact that societal factors and a dominant, white, upper-class ideology can have on our classrooms and our students, like Alex.

I am beginning to understand the disengagement. As a white, middle-class teacher, I too easily assumed the prescribed role of teacher – that of one who imparts knowledge. As a newly aware educator who cares about the students that come into my classroom, I cannot continue to ignore the instances of inequity and the quiet assumptions present in our school system. As a lover of learning, I am enthusiastic about the new opportunity I have to learn from and with my students. As an English teacher, I believe that engaging in critical literacy in my classroom is a way to ensure the voices of all my students are heard, not only in our classroom but in the larger community as well.
This investigative project is the beginning of my journey to become a critical theorist and educator. It is my chance to examine what critical practitioners are doing in high school English classes so that I am better able to present a critical perspective in my own classroom.

**Description of Investigative Project**

Behrman (2006) reviewed 36 articles examining the classroom practice of teachers who engage in critical literacy. Based on his review, he states that “the aims of critical literacy are to have students examine power relationships inherent in language use, recognize that language is not neutral, and confront their own values in the production and reception of language” (Behrman, 2006, p. 490). While it is nice to have aims defined, varied approaches to critical pedagogy presented in research provide little guidance for teachers wanting to implement critical literacy in their own classrooms.

With this in mind, I began searching for a framework that could be used to implement critical literacy. Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) present one of the most comprehensive and theoretically grounded Instructional Models of Critical Literacy from which an educator can work to begin implementing critical literacy in the classroom. Their research, however, only provides pedagogical scenarios from the K-8 level. There appear to be no such frameworks specifically identified for the high school.

I would argue, however, that this framework can and should be extended to the 9-12 grade level. The four dimensions of critical literacy identified in the framework presented by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) are grounded in theory and practice. They were previously introduced in an article by Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002). For this preliminary article, the authors reviewed over 30 years of professional literature
describing critical literacy. Their research resulted in a definition of critical literacy, as identified in the four dimensions, which provides a lens to "aid other teachers and researchers in documenting tensions, understandings, and growth in critical pedagogy" (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002, p. 391). These four dimensions, defined by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) as critical social practices, have implications in all levels of education, Kindergarten to Post-Secondary, as evidenced by researchers who have identified their implementation at these various levels (Kalbach & Forester, 2006; Kara-Soteriou, 2007; Wallowitz, 2007).

This project is an analytical synthesis of research that examines the critical literacy pedagogy teachers have implemented in high school English classrooms. The intent of this synthesis is to answer the following questions: How do critical practitioners implement English-Language Arts curriculum at the secondary level? Do their practices align with the instructional model established by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008)? Would the Instructional Model of Critical Literacy presented by Lewison, Leland, and Harste provide a workable model for high school teachers?
Chapter II: Review of Related Literature

This is the opening, the gambit, 
a pawn moving forward an inch. 
This is your first night with her, 
your first night without her. 
This is the first part 
where the wheels begin to turn, 
where the elevator begins its ascent, 
before the doors lurch apart. 
- Billy Collins (1998), "Aristotle"

Literacy Education in High School: 
What is the reality of schooling and what should be its future?

It's Thursday. Your archetypal American high school student rises early to be on time to her first period class. During the course of the day, she will travel across campus to six different classrooms, six different teachers, and six different curricular subjects. Third period, she heads to her English classroom. On the board is a reminder that there will be a vocabulary test tomorrow covering words that incorporate the prefix anti- or the suffix -ist. She turns in her essay on symbolism in Lord of the Flies, carefully stapling her drafts and prewriting behind the final copy. Then she prepares to read the short story being handed out by her teacher and answer the sample multiple choice questions in preparation for the upcoming high school exit exam.

This is not an unusual description of the English classroom of the past or the present. This description falls into what Freire (1970) calls the "banking" approach to education. The notion is that teachers are experts in their curricular fields and that their job is to impart the knowledge necessary for the students to become educated. In return, the students memorize the information and demonstrate their understanding of the content in a manner deemed appropriate by the teacher, district, or state. According to
Freire (1970), "Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositaries and the teacher is the depositor" (p. 58).

This pedagogical approach is replicated in schools across the country and represents traditional education in America (Goodlad, 1984). Further support for this idea can be found in Aldridge and Goldman's (2007) discussion of curricular modes. They identify "teaching as transmission" as the most prominent curricular mode, "especially in light of No Child Left Behind and standardized testing" (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007, p. 107). A classroom emphasizing transmission can often be identified by its use of straight rows, worksheets and textbooks, curriculum deemed appropriate for a particular grade level and subject by experts not in the classroom, and students working to achieve a predetermined correct answer.

The stated goal of the No Child Left Behind legislation is to close the achievement gap of students in our schools. Yet, teaching as transmission practices in education can result in negative implications for students, particularly those from subordinate groups.

Traditional Education and the Dominant Ideology

Under the traditionalist view (embodied in a transmission approach to teaching), education is neutral. Its purpose is to provide the necessary knowledge that every American should know (e.g., in the English classroom these would be the norms of reading, writing, speaking and listening) to be successful in life (Jones, 2006). It is in this representation of norms, that the lack of neutrality is actually grounded. When only a portion of all available knowledge is used to represent the totality of it, other historical, cultural voices are silenced (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Nieto, 2000). Nieto (2000) further
explains that due to the invisibility of some viewpoints in the curriculum, "students begin to think of the one reality that is taught as the 'general' reality, whereas the experiences of others become little more than ethnic add-ons to 'real' knowledge" (p. 80).

In our education system, the "uncontested truth" that most students are presented with represents the dominant ideology of our country which is "European American, upper-middle class, English speaking and male" (Nieto, 2000, p. 35). Those items currently assessed on state and federal mandated tests, thus influencing the curriculum that teachers teach, reflect the dominant culture.

Specifically in relation to the English-Language Arts classroom, this dominant perspective is perpetuated in the curricular mode of transmission used in many classrooms (Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 2006), the sole acknowledgement of standard English (Nieto, 2000), the reliance on "great books" (McLaren, 2006), the designation of ethnic literature to certain academic years instead of equally integrated throughout the curriculum (Athanases, 1998), the exclusion of students' cultural capital (hooks, 1994; McLaren, 2006; Nieto, 2005), and the absence of talk about differences (Athanases, 1998; Nieto, 2000).

**Impact of the Dominant Ideology on Subordinate Students**

The results of the hegemony that occurs in our classrooms can be quite pervasive. Nieto (2005) argues that in a school climate with an overemphasis on "European and European American history, arts and values," (p. 182), students from subordinate cultures find a mismatch between their lives and the content of the curriculum. With the prescribed curriculum rejecting these students' identities, many feel that they have to
choose between either adopting the dominant ideology as their own or finding ways to resist (Dressman, Wilder & Connor, 2005; Nieto, 2000, 2005).

For those students who adopt the dominant ideology as their own, forgoing their cultural capital or going along with the norms of the school, a sense of "self-depreciation" can occur (Freire, 1970). Richard Rodriguez’s (1988) *Hunger of Memory* speaks poignantly to this issue. In his autobiography, Rodriguez examines the need he felt to separate from his family and his culture as he proceeded through the education system.

A second option for students in response to the dominant ideology in our schools is one of resistance. Resistance has the potential to be affirmative but most often manifests itself in negative ways including "inattention in class, failure to do homework, negative attitudes toward schoolwork, poor relationships with teachers, misbehavior, vandalism, and violence" (Nieto, 2000, p. 243). Finlay and Faith (1987) found in their study with 27 college students who struggled with issues of literacy that depression and silent passive resistance were the reasons behind their apathy toward academic work.

Giroux (1983) argues that opposition on a student’s part may be an attempt at an expression of power that actually reproduces domination. Unfortunately, these are not unusual behaviors to observe in a classroom on the part of some students. In the past, the assumption has been that it is the student who is lacking motivation. Perhaps it should be seen as a problem with the educational system.

When examining dropout rates for high school students, it becomes clear that those students most negatively impacted in our current education system are those not considered part of the dominant culture. In October 2001, 15.7 percent of 16-through
24-year-olds in the United States were dropouts, and dropout patterns have remained fairly consistent since the late 1980s (Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, 2004). These patterns are telling. In 2001, Kaufman, Alt, and Chapman’s (2004) statistics identified the following:

- Students with families in the lowest 20 percent of all family incomes were six times more likely than students from families in the top 20 percent of the income distribution to drop out of high school
- The status dropout rate for Whites is lower than for African Americans
- 44.2 percent of Hispanic young adults born outside the USA were high school dropouts
- For young adults born within the USA, Hispanic youths were still more likely to be dropouts than other ethnicities.

When statistics like these are taken into consideration, it becomes easier to understand Freire’s (1987) contention that the dropouts are not to blame once the political dimension of education and the negation of student identities in our schools are acknowledged.

Subordinated cultures in our schools, however, can be defined more broadly than the statistics on dropouts identify. Students can be segregated from the dominant group because of ethnicity, language, social class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. Students from subordinated groups are not incorporated as openly and equally into the curriculum as those members of the student body who represent the dominant culture.

The issue of alienation is a key one that can lead to learning problems, depressed academic performance, and resistance (Shor, 1987). This argument is supported by
educational researchers who discuss the disconnect many subordinated students experience between their lives outside of school and the curriculum taught in our classrooms (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006; Jimenez, 2001; Jones, 2006; Nieto, 2000; Valdes, 2001).

It becomes clear that with a reliance on traditional approaches to education and teaching as transmission, students' histories, cultures, and daily experiences are ignored (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006; Freire & Macedo, 1987). The structure of high schools and the transmission of curriculum promote students who learn to either follow directions, instead of thinking critically, or resist in ways that are harmful to themselves. Macedo argues that “Although the rigidity of the competency-based approach may benefit the white- and upper-class students, I doubt that it will remedy the illiteracy problem that plagues the majority of subordinate groups in the United States” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 123). This is an important point for all teachers to consider, but especially English-Language Arts teachers who examine literacy issues as the focal point of their instruction.

Attempts at Educational Reform

If we want to ensure the highest quality education for all students, educational reform alternatives need to be examined. Aldridge and Goldman (2007) describe three alternative curricular modes beyond the transmission model: teaching as transaction, teaching as inquiry, and teaching as transformation. Teaching as transaction promotes more open-ended, higher level thinking than transmission, but curricular decisions and meaning are still guided by the teacher. Students examine curricular issues together, constructing their understanding of the curricular focus as a group. Their final products
are representative of their new understanding but still modeled after the teacher’s specifications.

The benefits of a curricular mode relying on transaction are the increased presence of the student voice and the intended student ownership over their presentation of the curricular material learned. Students are presented with more varied perspectives through their group work, allowing for the potential exposure to multiple viewpoints. In the end, however, students are still required to demonstrate their understanding of the material in a way that is deemed appropriate by the teacher and given little leeway to examine the varied perspectives they may be presented with through their group work. They are, in effect, still required to conform to the dominant standards without any discussion of where these standards come from or why they exist.

Teaching as inquiry, on the other hand, draws from the cultural capital of the students in the classroom. Students are encouraged to examine topics of their own interest and take an active role in what they and the class will study (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007). Sizer (1996), one of the originators of Essential schools, expounds on the value of inquiry for schools in reaction to the back-to-basics movements of the 1980s. He focused much of his research on the American high school – how education is defined at this grade level, as well as how it can be made better. He outlines some of the key components necessary for educational reform at the secondary level, including choice, authentic assessments, and a curriculum of questions.

For Sizer (1996), good schools revolve around asking questions and developing “respectful skeptics” (p. 76). The role of the student in such an environment is active. They need to engage in dialogue with others in their school community, questioning and
encouraging each other to consider different perspectives on the issue they are studying (Nowell, 1992).

While there are some very worthwhile insights to take from his study, Sizer (1996), in his argument in favor of school choice and competition, identifies a capitalist drive behind his theory. I would argue that this reliance on capitalism in promoting school choice and variety may counter the benefits of any educational reform, especially for those students in subordinated groups. The dominant ideology that pervades the schools is broader than the curriculum or mode of transmission. How, for instance, can a family choose a school across town if both parents work multiple jobs to get by? It is not as easy a choice as Sizer would propose. This capitalist driven theory, coupled with the absence of questioning the dominant ideologies present in schools, causes one to wonder if serious reform for the student and society can occur with his proposals.

Additionally, implementation of Sizer’s approach to educational reform would require a complete overhaul of the school’s infrastructure including teacher loads of no more than 80 students and the elimination of curricular departments, resulting in a more narrowed curriculum. While these are intriguing ideas, the majority of schools and districts are not at a point where they will commit the resources, financially and otherwise, to implement such wide-reaching reform. This is especially true in light of current educational demands where districts are cutting school days, reducing school support staff, and limiting extra curricular activities (Benefield, 2010). Educators are left hoping to promote a change for their students without a way to proceed.

Reform in the English Classroom. Specifically in relation to the English-Language Arts classroom, there have been reforms that veer from traditional instruction,
such as choosing to incorporate student’s voice, emphasizing the social nature of learning, and providing students with authentic learning opportunities in the areas of reading, writing, and language exploration. Most of these reforms, however, would fall within the transaction or inquiry curricular modes and fall short of the notion of transformation.

A groundbreaking change in pedagogy occurred when teachers began to focus on writing as a process, as defined by Atwell (1987) and Fletcher and Portalupi (2001), in contrast to traditional English classroom approaches to writing that involve grammar worksheets, spelling tests, and formulaic essays. These theorists discuss the importance of going public with the writing, so that students understand the concept of audience and editing in real world contexts. Additionally, students are encouraged to write with authentic purposes in mind and choose topics of value to them. While student choice and voice are highlighted, the role of the teacher is integral in this approach to writing. Students are still given instruction on grammar, format, and genre but through student-teacher conferences or mini-lessons that the writers need instead of isolated worksheets or drill.

Reader response theories have brought about similar innovations in regards to the pedagogy of the English classroom. Serafini (2001) and Atwell (1987) are both proponents of reading workshops. The heart of the reading workshop is focused on the student and his or her relationship to the text, their world, and to a larger community of readers (Atwell, 1987). Athanases (1998) identifies the value of this approach in the way it “...eclipsed the notion of text as a container of facts or fixed themes by advancing views of how the reader makes meaning” (p. 274). Both approaches described by
Serafini (2001) and Atwell (1987) highlight student choice of texts, acknowledge the importance of personal connections to literature, and emphasize the social context of education where new understanding can be developed through whole class and smaller group literature discussions.

For the purposes of school reform, I would argue that these curricular models are valuable but in a limited manner when considered solely in the pedagogical contexts described. When writing workshops and reader response pedagogies overlook issues of power regarding what and how we write and read in our schools, the students and teacher are bound to continue the cycle of dominant ideology that is currently present. Additionally, those students not part of the dominant culture will continue to be viewed as deficient because of their inabilities instead of honored for the knowledge they bring with them. The potential for resistance to learning increases.

In relation to the writing process, Delpit (2005) expresses the concern that encouraging students to draw from their cultural capital and the guidance of their peers in the workshop process potentially denies access to the dominant forms needed for success. She explains, “...in some instances adherents of process approaches to writing create situations in which students ultimately find themselves held accountable for knowing a set of rules about which no one has ever directly informed them” (Delpit, 2005, p. 231). This perception applies to topic development and organization as well as issues of grammar. This is not meant as an attack on the writing process. The writing process and the theorists who demonstrate its worth have added groundbreaking methodology to the English classroom. Unless conversations about writing for a purpose, audience, and
grammar are viewed from a transformative perspective, however, this pedagogy will not necessarily bring about change for the students who need it the most.

The same can be argued in regards to reader response. Christensen (2000a) argues that every text presents a vision of what it means to be “men, women, poor, people of color, gay, or straight” (p. 54). For this reason, discussing how issues of power apply to the texts and our interpretations should be integral to reader response English classrooms. Serafini’s (2001) does include a brief discussion on how the literature we select can be used to make differences visible but does not identify ways to engage students in conversations about whose voice is heard and whose voice is missing. Reader response without analysis of issues of power has the potential to produce readers who are unaware of not only how and why they make meaning, but also how their or others’ readings may contribute to inequality (Mellor & Patterson, 2004).

Rosenblatt (1995), who first advanced reader response theory, laid the groundwork for a more critical approach with her belief that literacy instruction can contribute to democracy. Exposure to others’ ideas and attitudes through literature and discussion helps students gain a more critical perspective as they identify interpretations that are more defensible, evaluate and clarify their personal emphases, and develop a mental and emotional basis from which to engage with the world. She states, “Education in this era of social transformation must serve both critical and constructive ends” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 171). This aim, however, can be difficult for educators to achieve without guidance.

Some researchers who advocate an inquiry approach to English-Language Arts have taken more significant steps toward making issues of power more visible in the
English classroom. Goodman (2003) promotes an inquiry-oriented classroom which starts with the students’ questions or observations made from the writing and reading they do both inside and outside the classroom. This approach to language exploration allows students to bring their funds of knowledge into the classroom and engage in learning that is situated in their world and the world around them. Goodman (2003) promotes explicit discussion and analysis of “Language as Power”. This is a valuable inclusion, one that can help to make education transformative.

Critical Literacy: Transformative Education

Critical theory originated from members of the Frankfurt School of Critical Social Theory (Wood, Soares, & Watson, 2006). Critical analysis of the relationship between power and culture was emphasized as a way to promote self-emancipation and social change (Giroux, 1983). Theory generated from this group moved beyond a discussion of issues to awareness that discussion is needed for the purpose of transformative activity and emancipation.

More recent theorists expanded on and developed critical theory as defined by the Frankfurt School. Giroux’s (1983) theory of resistance acknowledges the domination inherent in our schools, especially in light of the traditionalist approach that pervades educational policy like No Child Left Behind. There are complex ways in which people respond to subjugation of their ideas and histories. Those in the dominant culture are not seen as the only ones who have power; through resistance by subordinated groups, power is also being exercised.

Giroux (1983) further argues that inherent in this resistance is an implied expression of hope. This contradicts theories of reproduction where little is assumed to
be capable of bringing about a change to ideological hegemony. His theory of dialectical critique examines the importance of praxis as a way to engage critical thought. It is through the notion of praxis that resistance is acknowledged and included in a manner that promotes social emancipation instead of merging with the dominant voice or engaging in opposition that harms the individual. 

Paulo Freire (1970) was actually one of the first theorists to assert this notion of praxis in his formation of critical literacy. At the heart of his theory lies the belief that literacy has the ability to promote the dominant ideology or to challenge the myths that bring about subordination (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1983). Thus, teaching people to read and write can be a political act.

For Freire, literacy became “a set of practices that functions to either empower or disempower people...analyzed according to whether it serves to reproduce existing social formations or serves as a set of cultural practices that promotes democratic and emancipatory change” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 141). If our nation is concerned about literacy rates and raising academic levels, critical literacy pedagogy presents a comprehensive approach to education reform in the way it underscores the connection between language competency, analytical skills, and promoting change to the status quo (McLaren, 2007).

The theory explained here has strong implications for the English-Language Arts classroom. If high school English teachers engage in critical literacy with their students, they will be promoting the type of Emancipatory Literacy (Freire & Macedo, 1987) that can bring about positive reform for students, the teachers, and the school and larger
community in which they exist. It has the potential to construct resistance in a positive manner.

With the goal of promoting transformative education, critical theorists have identified some foundational concepts that should be included in pedagogy for the purpose of promoting critical literacy. As these represent some of the basic aims of critical literacy, it seems necessary that any frameworks for critical literacy should also acknowledge and incorporate these fundamental ideas.

*Start with the Students*

In *Experience and Education*, Dewey (1938) states, “There is... no point in the philosophy of progressive education which is sounder than its emphasis upon the importance of the participation of the learner” (p. 67). The alternative curricular modes discussed previously all highlight this importance of acknowledging and incorporating student voice. It is a necessary and vital component to education reform.

Edelsky (1994) argues, however, that while educational alternatives have supported great changes in the view of literacy education they cannot be seen as promoting education for democracy unless the goal is societal. The progressive “theories-in-practice fail to take as their central focus the way language learning and language use are tied not only to people’s individual experiences but also to people’s societal positions, to their structured privilege” (Edelsky, 1994, p. 255).

Critical literacy is the pedagogical approach that takes the idea of student voice further. As identified previously, subordinated students have been largely ignored by the traditional school model in America. With that in mind, one of the first things that critical literacy does is value those voices that have been silenced. Shor (1987) explains
that to implement Freirean practice places the curriculum in the context of the students and society. Students are encouraged to develop a broader understanding of the different perspectives that exist in the classroom and the world. Freire explains, “Reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 29). In this way, Freire’s theory is aligned with Rosenblatt’s (1995) argument that a reader’s funds of knowledge provide the link to understanding any text from an aesthetic, efferent, and critical perspective.

In the process of incorporating these previously silenced perspectives, all students benefit. Nieto (2000) argues that in the traditional approach to curriculum, subordinate students are the primary victims. However, “those who figure prominently are victims as well. They receive only a partial education, which legitimates their cultural blinders” (Nieto, 2000, p. 311). Expanding the voices that are considered valid in the curriculum allows for growth and appreciation of new perspectives for all students in the classroom.

McLaren (2007) and Mellor and Patterson (2004), however, stress that it is not the teacher’s responsibility to openly endorse every perspective. Those that are racist or sexist in nature, for instance, are not accepted as true. Instead, they can be explored in regards to their contradictory nature and analyzed from a critical perspective. Mellor and Patterson (2004) suggest the following approach.

Rather than asking, for example, What does this text mean? or What does this text mean to you?, we now ask questions such as: What are possible readings of this text? Where could such different readings 'come from'? How might such different readings be constructed? What values might such reading support or affirm? or oppose? (p. 91)
Questions, such as these, provide space for student perspective but also encourage more global and societal analysis regarding how and why these perspectives are developed.

Some critique Freire for being too focused on the world of the student as the impetus for his curriculum development. In response to this comment he argues that respect for the student’s experiences is not an end in itself but should be used as a means to examine the larger cultural context (Freire, 1994). How can one consider bringing about transformation of a system of domination if that dominant system is not also to be examined? This takes us to a next concept in the development of critical literacy, “reading the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Examine the World

In light of multicultural education movements, more English departments have acknowledged the importance of examining the world and attempt do so by including multicultural literature in their required or suggested reading lists (Burke, 1999; Nieto, 2000; Serafini, 2001). This has been a valuable inclusion, allowing for more student and world voices to be represented beyond canonical literature. Some theorists argue, however, that “inclusivity by itself may not be enough to counteract the powerful negative societal representations of people of color or to challenge pervasive and negative dominant-culture depictions about identity” (Ricker-Wilson, 1998, p. 71). Nieto (2005) further argues that a critical perspective is required to promote more than superficial changes to the current education system. True reform for students of both the dominant and subordinate cultures will not occur unless larger examinations of issues of power are considered with the inclusion of multiple voices.
This happens by “taking what is taken for granted... by taking what is seen as business as usual... and examining it, figuring out where it came from, what it’s connected to, whose interest it serves” (Edelsky, 1994, p. 254). With a critical literacy focus, students examine the historical context in which schools and society are currently placed (McLaren, 2007). They study the ways that these social systems work to reproduce inequality in our society (Giroux, 1983).

Some express concern that by engaging in critical literacy with students, teachers will be neglecting the standards that are required at each individual grade level. The dominant ideals of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as outlined by the State of California English-Language Arts Content Standards (2009), do not come into conflict with a pedagogy inspired by critical literacy. The ninth and tenth grade reading comprehension standard, for instance, focuses on informational materials. Critical literacy is the perfect way to approach informational material as students work to analyze the messages conveyed in sources such as pamphlets, websites, and newspaper articles and then elaborate their own understanding of the material and how it relates to their lives as students or the world as a whole. For instance, Christensen (2000b) examines curricular issues such as “Standard” English, tracking, and messages in the media with her English students. During this process they talk about who determines what we read, write, and hear, both in school and out and how that message is conveyed in the texts around us.

Additionally, California State English-Language Arts Content Standards (2009) for the high school level expect students to develop vocabulary and follow written and oral language conventions. In a conversation with Freire, Macedo states,
The notion of emancipatory literacy suggests two dimensions of literacy. On the one hand, students have to become literate about their histories, experiences, and the culture of their immediate environments. On the other hand, they must also appropriate those codes and cultures of the dominant spheres so they can transcend their own environments. (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 47)

This is an important consideration in relation to the implementation of critical literacy. While student and world voices and experiences should be valued more fully in the curriculum, the dominant forms of writing and speaking must still be included in the curriculum. Without their inclusion, students will not have a chance to overcome the “culture of power” that exists both in our society and our schools (Delpit, 2005; see also Christensen, 2000b; Janks, 2000).

Finally, the California State English-Language Arts Content Standards (2009) require high school students to read and respond with analysis to works deemed to be “historically or culturally significant... that reflect and enhance their studies of history and social science” (p. 57). Freire encourages examining the “classics” in a given field in order to “make the texts our own” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 34). That does not mean accepting the author’s view of the world as presented in the text. Instead, it involves examining whose voice is heard? Whose voice is marginalized by the text? What are the historical conditions surrounding the writer and reader? How does the text relate to our world today?

Acknowledge the Reciprocity of Teacher and Student Roles

One of the benefits of critical literacy is that the teacher and the student learn together (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994). The teacher is responsible to present issues and background, cultural, or historical material for examination, but unlike the transmission
mode found in the traditional education system, teachers are not the sole purveyors of knowledge. They have experience and expertise that is to be relied upon in the classroom to engage topics of discussion. The teacher who teaches for transformation, however, acknowledges that students can provide valuable insight to the curriculum being studied from which all members of the classroom community can grow (Freire, 1970).

Some have argued that this approach allows the teacher to abdicate his or her responsibility in the classroom. Freire (1994) responds, that teachers are responsible for presenting their “reading of the world,” and by doing so acknowledge that there are other readings of the world that may support or be antagonistic to it. The focus of critical literacy is to examine, even challenge, other perspectives to come to a greater understanding. Additionally, he acknowledges the value of the expository lesson as long as it is used to present a subject to the students and then challenges the students to explore the issue more thoroughly (Freire, 1994).

**Engage in Dialogue**

Like theorists who advocate transaction or inquiry approaches to education, critical literacy theorists also believe that education is a social process. Real learning occurs in a dialogical environment (Freire, 1970). In part, this is why teacher-student reciprocity is so crucial. If teachers are the sole arbiter of what information will be included in the classroom and what students should understand these perspectives to mean, an exchange of ideas will not occur.

With the goal of “reading the world” students must engage in dialogue in order to examine multiple viewpoints. They reflect, act upon their new knowledge, and then
reflect again to determine if their views have altered based on their new found knowledge. This is the notion of praxis as outlined by Freire (1970).

An important point that differentiates teaching for transformation from other educational modes, however, is that dialogue must serve to promote social action and reflection. For instance, classroom discussions can center on issues that affect diverse communities and school populations such as poverty, discrimination, war, governmental spending and how students can participate in these issues (Nieto, 2000). Freire (1994) argues that "a noncommittal 'chewing the fat'" without analysis of how the issues relate to social justice does not align with the concept of praxis (p. 117).

**Promote Social Justice**

At this point, it is helpful to review Freire's definition of literacy with the stated goal of promoting "democratic and emancipatory change" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 141). To engage in all the other components of critical literacy will serve little purpose if these ideas are not integrated with the goal of promoting social justice.

hooks (1994) discusses the difficult path that many students face as they begin to acknowledge the hegemony in school and society.

I have not forgotten the day a student came to class and told me: 'We take your class. We learn to look at the world from a critical standpoint, one that considers race, sex, and class. And we can’t enjoy life anymore.' ... I respect that pain. And I include recognition of it now when I teach, that is to say, I teach about shifting paradigms and talk about the discomfort it can cause. (hooks, 1994, p. 43)

When social justice is incorporated, as Freire and other critical theorists intended, it gives students purpose that seemed to be lacking in hook's description. Freire argues that educators need to promote a "theory of cultural production" (Freire & Macedo,
Students, especially subordinate, must be given a chance to produce their own texts that promote change.

With regards to this topic, it seems important to revisit the issue of resistance. As explained earlier, within a traditional education system, resistance on the part of students can result in destructive behaviors that negatively impact their chances at success in the dominant culture of school and society. However, if social justice and action are goals of education, as they are with critical literacy, resistance becomes a means to disrupt and redefine the commonplace. Education becomes transformative when students are empowered to use the knowledge they receive in school to help others in the school or larger community (McLaren, 2007).

*An Instructional Model of Critical Literacy*

While the aims of critical literacy outlined are fairly straightforward, the ways in which they are implemented, as described in educational research, vary considerably (Behrman, 2006). The gamut of research discusses everything from broad topics such as promoting social action (Blackburn, 2002; Camangian, 2008; Cammarota, 2007; Christensen, 2000b; Morell, 2000; Pescatore, 2007; Young, 2007, 2009) to the more narrow analyzing word choice in text (Willis & Johnson, 2000; Young, 2000; Young, 2009). This diversity of ideas highlights the variety of contexts in which critical literacy may be implemented throughout the educational system: primary, secondary, for students of every ethnicity, social class, and gender.

At the same time, as Behrman (2006) notes, the lack of consistently applied strategies prevents critical literacy from being accepted as a “coherent curricular approach” in the United States (p. 490; see also Lalik & Oliver, 2007). In comparison,
other countries such as New Zealand and Australia openly encourage critical literacy practices in their English classrooms (Mellor & Patterson, 2000, 2004; Spires, 2000).

Why is there so much resistance to engaging in critical literacy pedagogy? The lack of transferable classroom practice is likely one reason. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) explain that methodology cannot simply be exported from one classroom to another when engaging in critical literacy without adapting it to the new context. Comber (2001) concurs and reminds us that critical literacy relies on local conditions, such as student, community, or current world issues, as the basis of the classroom agenda. I would argue, however, that while educators should not be searching solely for classroom practice to export, a framework would help teachers stay focused on the value of critical pedagogy and the aims of critical literacy.

There are many different frameworks that can be used as models for critical literacy implementation (e.g., Hines, 1997; Janks, 2000; Lewison, Flint & Van Sluys, 2002; Nieto, 2000), but Lewison, Leland and Harste (2008) argue that “none was sufficient in representing the complexity of what it means to implement critical literacy in elementary and middle school classrooms” (p. xxiii). With this as their focus, these educator-researchers elaborated on what they believe should be an Instructional Model of Critical Literacy.

Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) present a thorough approach to critical literacy implementation that is grounded in theory and examines the entire environment in which the curricular practice is placed. This instructional model was developed, analyzed, and revised by the authors to ensure that it can be applied across the board to different contexts and classrooms. They explain that it is their “best thinking at this time”
This comment identifies the authors' belief in the nature of praxis. They reflected on the needs of students and classrooms. Through their writing, they have taken action by proposing an instructional model for implementing critical literacy. Finally, they understand that a natural part of action implies further reflection.

The three components that create their Instructional Model of Critical Literacy (IMCL) also reflect the core beliefs of critical pedagogy. Personal and cultural resources, enacting critical social practices, and critical stance do not exist unto themselves. The components must be viewed as interrelated in order to promote a comprehensive model that achieves the aims of critical literacy.

Personal and Cultural Resources

This component of the IMCL addresses the resources teachers and students access for the content of the curriculum. "It can include personal experience; social issues books; popular culture and media; home literacies; textbooks; oral texts; competence in a language other than English; student desires and interests; and community, national, and international issues" (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008, p. 5 & 7).

One of the examples Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) use to represent this component is that of a writer's workshop for a multi-age, multilingual classroom. The writer's notebook gave students a place to incorporate those issues that were important to them, thus including their lives in the curriculum. The teachers were then able to draw on the comments made by students to pair readings or promote discussion of broader social issues. In this way, the authors acknowledge the importance of moving beyond the personal to examine how different ideologies affect daily life experiences. In these
discussions, texts that are required by the district lend themselves to being valuable as cultural resources for students to examine.

Also open for inclusion with this perspective are the multiple literacies students use which are not necessarily valued in the dominant driven traditional system as compared to canonical literature (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). With this perspective, popular culture, as represented by film, television, music, and internet, produces texts that should be incorporated into the classroom. Students who are presented with a consumer driven society should have the tools to analyze and critique the messages that they face.

*Critical Social Practices*

The next component of Lewison, Leland, and Harste’s (2008) IMCL identifies four ways teachers and students can engage with the resources brought to the classroom. These four components were originally described by Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002) after reviewing over 30 years of critical literacy research.

*Disrupting the Commonplace.* This dimension examines “how a text positions different people or what worldview a text is advocating” (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008, p. 78). With this dimension, teachers and students examine language and other sign systems used in texts. The purpose of disrupting is so readers understand that a text presents one version of reality as presented by an author, not an absolute truth (Behrman, 2006).

The use of questions and dialogue is a crucial component of critical literacy as teachers and students discern how a text is positioning them to believe or accept certain
ideas as neutral (Behrman, 2006; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). For instance, critical language study focuses on specific words used by an author of a text to determine how the words convey a particular message. Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) identify the importance of this dimension when working with classroom texts, discussing issues of language (e.g., standard vs. non-standard English), or examining the dominant ideology found in schooling itself.

Critical literacy can also be an important tool for deconstructing the popular and newer technologies mentioned in personal and cultural resources. These include the television, computer games, print media, Internet, chat rooms, and instant messaging (Alvermann, 2002; Kellner, 1998; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). When we consider the increasing relevance these literacies have in the lives of students, it seems haphazard to ignore the opportunity for discussions about the messages they contain.

Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints. Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys’ (2002) second dimension, interrogating multiple viewpoints, further encourages questioning the notion of one truth by seeking texts or stances on texts that represent varied perspectives. In juxtaposing alternate realities, readers are able to “contextualize, and complicate, their understanding” (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008, p. 96). This helps develop a broader vision of the world as students consider alternative perspectives that they might not have previously examined. This does not imply that the reader will accept the alternate viewpoints, only that they have been presented for consideration.

Further, Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) explain that an emphasis of multiple perspectives should be representing people and cultures not traditionally found in school texts. Two important issues evolve from this point. The first is that the texts used in the
classroom will be culturally diverse, examining not only the dominant ideology found most frequently in traditional education, but also those subordinated voices in our classrooms and society. Second, the reading is not limited to a single perspective, but would ideally include multiple perspectives.

This examination of multiple perspectives easily transitions to writing assignments where students are asked to write from a character’s point of view that may have been excluded from or marginalized in a text. In constructing these alternate perspectives, students are seen to produce counter-narratives that challenge dominant discourse.

An interesting argument arises from the development of counter-narratives. Some would state that we have no right to hypothesize what a person or character may be feeling or thinking unless we have lived that experience. The only truth we can bring to the discussion is that of our own existence. I would assume this argument is made in the interest of integrity and the desire to avoid stereotyping. But to not consider others ways of being seems more harmful. In order to address that concern, hooks (1994) challenges her students to identify credible ways of gaining information regarding the lived experiences of others. This discussion encourages all participants to question the assumptions we make about the worldviews we are advocating. In this way, students and teachers are simultaneously disrupting the commonplace and interrogating multiple viewpoints.

argue that this dimension focuses "literacy to engage in the politics of daily life" (p. 383).
It is not a matter of searching for the perfect example and creating curriculum to examine that issue. The issues are couched within the students' experiences. Issues of censorship, hunger, homelessness, immigration, gender, and sexuality are all sociopolitical and faced by students, and the community in which they live. This dimension gives students and teachers the opportunity to address the inequality faced in our schools and community as power differentials are examined and challenged (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008).

Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) understand that teachers may be uncomfortable bringing up sociopolitical issues, perhaps feeling that they don't know enough to examine them or they may be concerned about the charged conversations that could result because of the subject matter. Nieto (2000) addresses this issue and explains that feelings of guilt often drive this hesitation. Students and teachers who could be considered part of the dominant ideology may become immobilized if they stay focused on guilt over how they may have unknowingly or knowingly perpetuated inequality. Nieto (2000) argues that guilt is "only one step in the process of becoming multiculturally literate and empowered" (p. 308). Action that promotes equality is the way in which she proposes moving beyond such guilt.

Because this approach to education does not occur traditionally in the classroom, students will need support as they begin to critique and engage in discussion of these issues. They will need models and constructive activities to help situate their understanding of the sociopolitical issues which are so frequently ignored. Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) propose that through dialogue about sociopolitical issues, the
school communities gain a broader understanding of these issues and are able to imagine ways of bringing about change.

*Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice.* The fourth dimension of critical literacy should be considered of equal importance to the other three. How can we feel comfortable encouraging our students to develop an understanding of the system of domination in which we exist if we don't help them find ways to challenge it?

Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) remind us that "Education is never neutral: It either liberates, domesticates, or alienates" (p. 133). Previous examples have demonstrated how the traditional model can domesticate and alienate some students; I propose critical literacy as the way to liberate. Liberation, however, requires some form of action, otherwise it falls into the "chewing the fat" scenario Freire (1994) cautions against. With this view, students must be supported in attaining the goal of "using language and other sign systems to get things done in the world" (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008, p. 12).

Producing countertexts provides an effective way for teachers to fulfill the requirements of this dimension with students and help put the curriculum into action. Nieto (2000) offers suggestions for countertexts: debates, developing newspapers, working with local organizations. The methodology she suggests is already frequently a component of the English-Language Arts classroom; the only difference between English classrooms of today and the transformative ones envisioned by Nieto (2000) would be utilizing the assignments to help students consider the power they have to make a change in regards to the sociopolitical issues that resonate with them.
The key with social action is that students and teachers need to delve into tough topics, reflect on them, act on their findings, and then reflect again. This is praxis, as defined by Freire (1970). Through this process, students learn to develop thoughtful arguments and purposeful voices to speak against injustice.

**Critical Stance**

Critical stance is situated at the center of Lewison, Leland, and Harste’s (2008) Instructional Model of Critical Literacy. It “consists of the attitudes and dispositions we take on that enable us to become critically literate beings” (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008, p. 13). These ways of engaging help teachers and students attain the aims of critical literacy espoused by Freire and other prominent critical theorists.

According to Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008), critical stance is made up of four components. The first step is consciously engaging. With this mindset, we choose to examine and question the power structures around us and decide how to respond to them. An important component is the process of naming by which we develop an understanding about a particular event based on conversations with others. Through exposure to others’ interpretations, we can question our own assumptions and more fully develop an understanding of the situation. Entertaining alternate ways of being, the second aspect of critical stance, occurs when we consider those alternative discourses. The third step is taking responsibility to inquire. Through the process of asking questions, such as why certain things happen or how we play a role in them, we begin to expose different perspectives and examine their reasoning. The teachers and students become co-researchers in the process of learning. The final aspect of critical stance is being reflexive, examining our own responses and role in promoting justice.
Being thoughtful about the world around us and how we choose to respond can be quite a difficult task to undertake. It requires that students and teachers examine power relationships and how they might be implicated in them, critiquing them with an honest response, knowing that the final goal is enriching opportunities for equality. It is a circular process. You consciously engage to become more aware of your own and other’s views, leading you to try on different lenses about how to read the world. Inquiry helps in this process. But once new understandings are formed, they too need to be reexamined, reflected upon, leading once again to the practice of consciously engaging. It is Freire’s (1970) notion of praxis in action. In this way, the IMCL also fully represents the aims of critical literacy.

Taking a critical stance is the responsibility of both teachers and students in a critically literate classroom. As the teacher encourages students to be more engaged, inquiry-oriented, and reflexive, she or he will also engage in the same process. This approach to education is not one that you plan and then do the same year after year. It changes and evolves with different students and different situations that occur in the school, community, or world. This is an exciting prospect for teachers who are as interested in learning as they are in teaching.

The Impact of Specific Context: The High School

Lesley (2008) draws a parallel between the work of critical literacy to promote “human transformation and consciousness-raising” and the time of adolescence which is also driven by a transformation of its own (p. 178). She speaks to the unique experience of working with high school students who are naturally inquisitive, drawn to questioning, and at the same time fearful of what their lives will hold when they enter the larger world.
Education that appeals to these strengths and addresses these concerns will best help students prepare for the future. But the question remains, how does one implement critical pedagogy at this educational level?

I would argue that the Instructional Model of Critical Literacy presented by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) is valid for the upper grades. It is founded on an explanation of theory, examination of practice, and the desire to help other teachers implement critical literacy. Its essential components mirror the overarching aims of critical literacy. They offer a broad vision that acknowledges how certain restraints within the community, school, district, or state may alter the actual implementation of the instructional model. They couch their ideas in the notion of hope.

Hope for a better tomorrow. Hope that someday we will be able to reach all learners. Hope that over time we will continue to outgrow our current selves...hope is not a bad foundation on which to build a much-needed new set of instructional practices for this profession. (Harste, 2008, p. 37)

Theirs is a valid and important addition to the dialogue surrounding how teachers can engage in critical literacy in their classrooms.

Yes, Lewison, Leland, and Harste’s (2008) focus is the K-8 level. But if as Shor (1997) states, “human discourse in general, education in particular, and literacy classes specifically are forces for making self in society” (p. 12), then we must continue to discuss the relevance of an Instructional Model of Critical Literacy at the high school level, specifically in the English-Language Arts classroom which addresses literacy on a daily basis. Their IMCL fulfills this requirement and provides a common ground to examine what critical practitioners are doing in the English-Language Arts field.
Chapter III: Methodology

This is the middle.
Things have had time to get complicated, messy, really. Nothing is simple anymore. Cities have sprouted up along the rivers teeming with people at cross-purposes—a million schemes, a million wild looks. Disappointment unshoulders his knapsack here and pitches his ragged tent. This is the sticky part where the plot congeals, where the action suddenly reverses or swerves off in an outrageous direction. Here the narrator devotes a long paragraph to why Miriam does not want Edward’s child. Someone hides a letter under a pillow.

Critical literacy is a complex topic. In examining research it is discussed as both a theory and pedagogical approach. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons critical literacy is struggling for acceptance as a valid educational pedagogy in our schools. The absence of a uniformly accepted definition forces teachers to constantly reinterpret what “critical literacy” means. This situation causes confusion and delay, especially for teachers new to critical literacy.

Appleman (2000) argues, “Many educational critics, from Herb Kohl to Mike Rose to Theodore Sizer to John Goodlad, concur that the transformation of teachers is requisite for the transformation of schools” (p. 134). As educators, we read books, attend conferences, and collaborate with colleagues to improve and expand our understanding of teaching theory and pedagogy. We look for concrete ideas to take back to our classrooms and try with our students. We know teacher transformation needs a guide.

Many critical theorists turn to Freire (1970) as that guide. One of the problems with the explanations of critical literacy, however, hinges on Freire’s beliefs about
exportability, arguing that critical educators cannot take someone else’s lesson plan and apply it to a different classroom. He explains that he does not negate the validity of considering others’ practices. These practices, however, need to be reinvented to meet the particular needs and interests of the community in which a teacher is working (Freire & Macedo, 1987). I also do not deny the need to reinvent based on your individual student population, community issues, and mandated district and state educational requirements. However, because of the varying definitions and lack of a guide, the desire to promote education for transformation with critical literacy will falter if a framework grounded in theory and practice is not presented to help novice critical theorists deal with implementation questions and concerns.

With this in mind, I examined the literature in the field for a framework that can be applied to guide critical practitioners’ implementation of English curricula at the secondary level. The most comprehensive instructional model is the one presented by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) in their book *Creating Critical Classrooms: K-8 Reading and Writing with an Edge*. As explained previously, it examines the resources that should be used, suggests ways of engaging in curriculum with a critical stance, and includes the teacher and students in the process. It also aligns with the aims of critical literacy outlined by critical theorists. The only drawback to this model is that it does not specifically examine the high school context. By examining how critical practitioners at the high school level implement critical literacy, the ability to apply their instructional model to the secondary level will be analyzed.

This project presents a critical and analytical synthesis of both theory and practice. It is primarily a collective case analysis. Doing such research helps us “gain
greater insight into a research topic by concurrently studying multiple cases in an overall research study" (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 378). Some may argue that the analysis of numerous cases may lack depth compared to simply focusing on one. With the goal of examining the instrumental concept of “critical literacy,” however, breadth seems to be of greater importance. By examining more case studies, the ability to compare and contrast becomes highlighted. This is a crucial component of this investigative project which focuses on analyzing whether the framework described by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) would be valuable for critical practitioners in English-Language Arts for the 9-12th grades.

**Resources Used in Study**

Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) provide the framework for critical literacy by which all the case studies at the high school level were analyzed. Their framework is grounded in critical theory and examines the entire environment in which the curricular practice is placed. In regards to their theoretical understanding, they cite those members of the education field who are considered experts and innovators of critical theory. Some of these people include Freire, Shor, Luke and Freebody, Giroux, McLaren, Janks, and Nieto. While Nieto (2000, 2005) is more traditionally classified as a theorist of critical multiculturalism, she aligns her definition so closely to that of critical literacy that her inclusion appears valid and necessary.

By studying how specific teachers engage in critical literacy, this investigative project relies on qualitative research. Eisner (1998) argues that “If qualitative inquiry in education is about anything, it is about trying to understand what teachers and children do in the settings in which they work” (p. 11). This defines the heart of my investigative
project. The goal would be to identify a framework for novice critical theorists at the secondary level to draw upon as they engage in critical literacy. The resources examined should give the descriptions necessary to analyze whether or not the framework is valid.

Two features of qualitative studies identified by Eisner (1998), "...the use of expressive language and the presence of voice in text" (p. 36) and "attention to particulars" (p. 38), are especially important to the analysis being conducted. It is through the teacher's descriptions, rich in detail and explanation, that I am able to identify the components of the instructional model. Without their descriptions of the process, and in some cases the voices of their students, I would be limited to making observations in local schools where critical pedagogy is sadly lacking.

Procedures

The documents chosen for analysis in relation to Lewison, Leland, and Harste's (2008) Instructional Model of Critical Literacy represent what is happening in critical classrooms around the world. Edelsky (1994) argues that for educators to gain confidence in the implementation of critical literacy, we must seek "...out classroom teachers who do it well to guide us in developing our own ways to get critical in language curriculum...full of classroom detail" (p. 256).

Initial research was conducted through four electronic databases: Academic Search Premier, Education Research Complete (EBSCO), ERIC, and Social Index. The search for scholarly articles from 1998-2009 with terms critical literacy + high school (+ English + language arts + lesson plans + pedagogy) resulted in a total of 61 articles. Not all of the articles seemed to fit the parameters of my research, however. Some articles were duplicates from different databases. Other articles reported on
research that took place in other countries, such as South Africa, Iran, New Zealand, and Australia. I decided not to consider the research from South Africa and Iran because I was unsure of the correspondence between their educational programs and those in the United States. Articles from New Zealand and Australia remained in the analysis because I know from previous research that their secondary program is similar. These two countries have also been on the forefront of critical literacy implementation, so I felt it important to keep their perspectives in the analysis. Some articles discussed the use of critical literacy in adult ESL, foreign language, physical education, and science classes. These were removed from consideration because of my desire to focus on the English-Language Arts curriculum. I did, however, consider research related to social science, global studies, drama, media, and literacy after school programs because of their connection and application to my chosen field of emphasis. The reference pages of the scholarly articles also led to suggestions for other articles and books that did not appear in my initial searches.

There were four sources outside my initial parameters that I decided to include in my research. The first is an article by Foss (2002) which examines the teaching of Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* with eighth grade English-Language Arts students. Having taught this novel for three years to tenth grade students, I am very aware that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a prevalent piece of literature in the high school level. Additionally, Foss (2002) focused her research on critical literacy with students of privilege. Often times, critical literacy is seen as a way of meeting the needs of students who have been largely ignored by the current curriculum. I would argue that those students who live as part of
the dominant perspective have an equal responsibility to think critically about the world in which we live. I included the article in order to explore this concept.

I found three additional articles in a book published in 1997 that examined teaching literature across cultures. Beach (1997) presented his findings on resistance to multicultural literature. The notion of resistance is one of the initial reasons why I was drawn to critical literacy pedagogy. This article directly addresses the connection that I felt was valuable to examine. The second article, Hines (1997), provided a conceptual framework for "reader-centered cultural criticism" (p. 117) in her research. Due to the fact that one of the questions driving my research has to do with whether or not Lewison, Leland, and Harste’s (2008) Instructional Model of Critical Literacy is valid for use at the high school level, it seemed appropriate to compare their model with that proposed by Hines (1997). Finally, Rogers (1997) emphasizes the concept of community in her research. Once again, the issue of resistance came to mind, with the potential benefit in the fight against resistance of building "a community in which members listened to each other and honored what they heard" (Rogers, 1997, p. 98-99).

In the end, I examined 48 sources that discuss their approach to critical literacy in the classroom in relation to Lewison, Leland, and Harste’s (2008) Instructional Model of Critical Literacy. The articles examined appeared to fall into two categories. The first was research conducted by researchers working with critical practitioners who analyzed a specific critical literacy teaching moment with students. There were 22 of these articles. In essence, their work represents a report of their findings. The second group discusses pedagogical suggestions of teachers in the field, but without an emphasis on a report or analysis of research. The 26 articles in this group discuss such varied topics as resources
to use, reasons for implementing critical literacy, specific lesson plans, and suggested pedagogical practices based on theory without an analysis of what occurred in the classroom or with the students. All 48 critical practitioners were compared on an IMCL Findings chart I developed based on Lewison, Leland, and Harste’s (2008) Instructional Model of Critical Literacy. (See Appendix A for a modified representation of the critical literacy chart used for the purpose of this investigative project.) This chart takes into consideration the components of their instructional model: critical stance, personal and cultural resources, and critical social practices. These are the same components Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) used to analyze the elementary and middle school curriculum in their research.

Examining the critical literacy chart will provide answers to the following questions:

- Is Lewison, Leland, and Harste’s (2008) Instructional Model of Critical Literacy (IMCL) a valuable model for high school English-Language Arts teachers?
- Are all components of the IMCL in evidence in the case studies examined?
- Are any components of IMCL not examined at the high school level? If so, why is there a difference?
- Are there any additional components identified by high school critical practitioners that Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) did not include?
Chapter IV: Investigative Project Findings

Here the aria rises to a pitch,
a song of betrayal, salted with revenge.
And the climbing party is stuck on a ledge
halfway up the mountain.
This is the bridge, the painful modulation.
This is the thick of things.
So much is crowded into the middle—
the guitars of Spain, piles of ripe avocados,
Russian uniforms, noisy parties,
lakeside kisses, arguments heard through a wall—
too much to name, too much to think about.

The high school level has been largely ignored in the discussion of frameworks for implementing critical literacy. And yet, the quest that most adolescents are engaged in as they strive for independence and more adult responsibilities seems best suited for this pedagogical approach. Mellor and Patterson (2004) suggest that English represents a “morally formative” subject where students are presented with visions of the world and asked to interpret their meanings (p. 92). They propose that the most effective way to provide this opportunity is through teaching that highlights nondirective methods and the promotion of self-understanding, leading to students who can examine the dominant ideology present in texts and society and act upon that knowledge.

Through my examination of the action-research and curricular suggestions of other high school English-Language Arts teachers engaging in critical literacy, a clearer idea of what has been effective and why began to evolve. An important consideration, however, is that my analysis required moving beyond simply generating a list of critical literacy pedagogy, especially because not all educational researchers define critical literacy in the same way. Examining the curricular suggestions of experts in the field in
relation to the framework of Lewison, Leland, & Harste (2008) enabled me to judge if this is a valid framework for the high school level. Having such a framework appropriate for the secondary grade levels will be a valuable tool for all teachers who believe in the ability of critical theory to bring about reform for our students and schools.

Is Critical Literacy as Ambiguous as It Appears?

I examined 48 scholarly articles, lesson plans, and publications because they described promoting critical engagement with the subject matter. These references varied greatly in their definitions of critical engagement and critical literacy, mirroring the trend observed in my previous explorations of the subject. Because of the tool for examination that Lewison, Leland, and Harste's (2008) Instructional Model of Critical Literacy provided, it became easier to get away from the different definitions and focus more holistically on what components should be included for the successful implementation of critical literacy.

In the research examined, I was able to identify numerous examples of all three aspects of Lewison, Leland, and Harste's (2008) IMCL: critical stance, personal and cultural resources, and critical social practices. The inclusion of critical stance and personal and cultural resources in the articles seemed to be a natural assumption by the authors. These components are often integral to scholarly articles and pedagogical suggestions as the authors identify the research question and methodology of their research. Those sources where these two components were not included were all situated in the category of classroom practice and pedagogical suggestions. These same sources also presented fewer opportunities for identifying the critical social practices of
disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on
sociopolitical issues and taking action to promote social justice.

The following chart provides a brief summary of the results from my analysis of
the 48 sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Stance</th>
<th>Personal &amp; Cultural Resources</th>
<th>Disrupt the Commonplace</th>
<th>Interrogate Multiple Viewpoints</th>
<th>Focus on Sociopolitical Issues</th>
<th>Take Action to Promote Social Justice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
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For a complete chart representing results from this investigative project in regards to the
individual sources, please see Appendix.

Each component of the Instructional Model of Critical Literacy is outlined below
with more detailed explanations as to how these elements were described in the articles I
read. My examination is not intended to be presented as an all-inclusive list of what
constitutes instructional strategies to be used with the IMCL presented by Lewison,
Leland, and Harste (2008). Instead, it is an examination of what critical literacy
educators are doing in their classrooms, as a way to see if all the components of the
model are addressed and whether or not it is done sufficiently to fulfill the overall aims of
critical literacy.

Critical Stance

McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) propose that emancipatory literacy starts with
the teacher’s personal understanding of critical literacy. This understanding of the theory
and aims of critical literacy will necessarily influence the pedagogy used in the
classroom, from modeling reading to providing a variety of texts. This seems logical;
However, I do think it is important to acknowledge that the varied ways in which critical literacy is defined suggests that the concept of personal understanding is tenuous. A framework that supports teachers’ understanding and guides implementation would most likely address some of the disparity among critical literacy practitioners. With that in mind, I examined the 48 sources to determine if Lewison, Leland, and Harste’s (2008) explanation of critical stance was observable in the research and could therefore provide a guide for novice critical literacy educators.

Conscious engagement occurs when participants knowingly choose how to respond, putting deliberate thought into why we do what we do and say what we say (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). This can take the form of thinking about how we are reading a text and what personal or historical perspectives may be influencing our interpretation of the text (Mellor & Patterson, 2000). It can also involve emphasizing resistant reading practices that expose dominant perspectives inherent in texts that we have traditionally assumed are neutral (Moon, 2000). For instance, questioning the neutrality of a text was emphasized in relation to Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Foss, 2002; Ricker-Wilson, 1998; Spires, 2000). Who tells the story and how it is told can have a significant impact on the message it conveys.

As an educator, one way of consciously engaging is to choose to emphasize student voice in the classroom. Many of the sources examined for this project explained that teachers and students should be viewed as collaborators in learning, supporting the Freirean view of emancipatory literacy. Kalbach and Forester (2006) identify the power inherent in the inclusion of student voices to the classroom. They observed that this approach created an atmosphere of “intellectual curiosity as students prod each other to
explain comments more fully and to speak not only individual experience or opinion, but how that connects or contradicts the common text” (Kalbach & Forester, 2006, p. 77).

The teacher’s role, in this situation, becomes one of moderating conversations so that all voices and perspectives can be heard. This approach encourages an “intermingling of texts and voices” (Rogers, 1997, p. 113) that allows for including and then moving beyond the literary cannon as the focus of the English-Language Arts classroom.

The teacher’s next responsibility is to provide resources that help students consider entertaining alternate ways of being (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008). Some educators chose to begin critical conversations with students based on a text geared toward social justice that had an impact on them (Childs, 2007; Nicolini, 2008). Others argue any text can be used as long as the focus of instruction includes real world issues the text challenges or problematizes (Mellor & Patterson, 2004; Pace & Browning, 2008; Wallowitz, 2007). Students entering Young’s (2007) classes knew that they were part of an atmosphere of inclusion because of the way she “integrated attention to sexual orientation, along with race, class, and gender” (p. 110). Students in her classes were presented with a safe space in which to examine experiences other than their own that are a part of the larger world. Similarly, Beach (1997) and Bigelow (2007) both emphasize the value of role plays and writing from another person’s perspective to help students examine different ways of being.

According to some critical educators examined in this investigative project, it is important to provide opportunities for students to take action after learning about the disparity of equality present in our world. The critical educators who promote this response are exhibiting the critical stance of taking responsibility to inquire and being
reflexive. Some educators found value in drama and performance poetry to help students present their explorations of equity issues (Camangian, 2008; Hewitt, 2009; Shosh, 2005). Others promoted the idea of writing or presenting to specific audiences (Christensen, 2000b; Pescatore, 2007; Young 2007, 2009). Both Blackburn (2002) and Camangian (2008) argue that it is the critical educator’s responsibility to foster opportunities for students to participate in social change in areas that the students deem important. This is one area where critical educators can and should be reflexive about their own practices. If we are not allowing students to take responsibility for their own choices, are we still attaining the goals of critical literacy?

The critical stance taken by a teacher will be reflected in the personal and cultural resources they include in the classroom as well as the critical social practices they choose to engage in with students. Christensen (2000b) explains, “Community and activism: These are the goals in every course I teach” (p. 9). That statement is evident from the way she, and others, incorporate the rest of the instructional model being examined here.

**Personal and Cultural Resources**

Throughout my research I found that critical educators were mindful of the varied sources they rely on when emphasizing emancipatory literacy. They acknowledge the necessity of teaching the district mandated curriculum and literature, especially in light of the current testing situation in our country (Christensen, 2000a, 2000b; Pescatore, 2007). Neglecting to teach the nationally-deemed standards for reading, writing, listening, and speaking at the individual grade levels harms the students. They want their students to have a chance at success within the dominant structure by being able to read power relationships while learning academic skills (Christensen, 2000a).
Beyond those required texts, however, a vast majority of researchers emphasized the importance of including the student, their stories and experiences, or their sociopolitical interests. Blackburn (2002) demonstrates the power of renaming that occurred when Justine, a high school student, authored a text about lesbians that she shared with an after-school literacy group and her English class. Similarly, Camangian (2008) shares the story of a female senior in high school who was able to bring her world view into the classroom with performance poetry. She said, “It helped me voice the pain and problems of our society” (p. 46). Christensen (2000a) argues that students need to be given a chance to view their lives in relation to the larger world in which they live; she incorporates this through an examination of issues such as Ebonics, home languages, and immigration. Alsup (2003), on the other hand, encourages the use of texts that discuss issues important to adolescents’ lives (e.g., abuse, peer pressure, sexuality) but provide distance for the students to address these issues and therefore not implicate themselves in the process.

Texts can also be incorporated in the classroom to represent cultural resources. The critical educator often focuses on helping students take notice of voices that are not necessarily heard from in our canonical texts or textbooks (Bigelow, 2007; Christensen, 2000b, 2007b; Duffy, 2008). They incorporate social justice minded perspectives and guest speakers with particular insight into issues (Cammarota, 2007; Childs, 2007; Willis & Johnson, 2000; Young 2007). They include world events (Davies, 2006; Preston, n.d.). Popular culture played an important role in much of the research on cultural resources as well. Some critical educators worked with students to analyze the impact of media sources in supporting the dominant ideology in our society (Christensen, 2000b). Others
acknowledged student interest in popular culture and selected examples that presented a contrary perspective. Lesely (2008) incorporated Tupac Shakur’s *The Rose that Grew from Concrete* into her literacy group with at-risk students and found that the use of popular culture increased student engagement with critical discussions. Similarly, Morell (2000) paired the study of canonical literature with popular culture films like “A Time to Kill” and “The Godfather” to open dialogue about larger issues of justice and societal definitions of manhood. These examples highlight the role that selection of texts can play in critical literacy implementation.

*Critical Social Practices*

Critical social practices describe the heart of the classroom experience, the methods teachers use to engage in critical literacy. The descriptions in the research provided valuable and specific evidence of how these practices were included. I searched for each dimension of the critical social practice: disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple points of view, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action to promote social justice. Unfortunately, the majority of the sources ended up only including one or two of the dimensions in their research. Taken as a whole, however, the descriptions provided a clear idea of whether or not the dimensions are identifiable and the varied ways they are incorporated at the high school level.

*Disrupt the Commonplace.* Of the 48 sources examined, 33 discussed ways that teachers could engage in disrupting the commonplace with their students. These methods varied depending on the classroom context, but all asked students to consider the curriculum they were learning in a manner that was different from a traditional classroom
context. Traditional classrooms that emphasize a transmission mode regard the text as the primary source of knowledge. For instance, a literary text in an English-Language Arts classroom is viewed as being filled with neutral facts, effective means of characterization, and worthy themes to be searched for and discussed. In a class that emphasizes transformation, critical educators still discuss issues of characterization and themes, but with an explicit examination of how these messages are conveyed by a particular text and author through word choice, assumptions of the text, the notion of an intended audience, and exclusion of other voices (Appleman, 2000; Christensen, 2000a; Hines, 1997; Mellor & Patterson, 2004). Many critical educators emphasize the importance of questioning to identify lack of neutrality of the text being read.

McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) present a thorough set of questions teachers can use for promoting reading from a critical stance. These questions include:

- Whose viewpoint is expressed?
- What does the author want us to think?
- Whose voices are missing, silenced, or discounted?
- How might alternative perspectives be represented?
- How would that contribute to your understanding of the text from a critical stance?
- What action might you take on the basis of what you have learned? (p. 53).

These questions clearly aid in examining the messages of text and provide students with an opportunity to talk back to the author and the text with the inclusion of their world knowledge. While McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) only discuss the importance and effectiveness of asking such questions, other researchers report on what happens when these questions are included in the classroom setting.

Pescatore (2007) adapted McLaughlin and DeVoogd's (2004) questions in her research with 11th grade English classes. She introduced the questions with current
events articles on issues such as global warming, national parks, coal mining and other current sociopolitical issues. In regards to the use of critical questioning techniques, one student responded, “Asking about tone, point of view, and missing opinions really helped me to understand the writing. Without using these questions, I wouldn’t have been able to find the true meaning of the article” (Pescatore, 2007, p. 326).

A different research study, Nicolini (2008), used questions that were also very similar in her approach to the novel A Lesson Before Dying by Ernest Gaines. In the study, Nicolini (2008) questions whether or not the students were conscious of the ways they were disrupting the commonplace while they read the novel. This comment causes some concern for me. If the act is not a conscious one, the intention of making reading and learning a political act seems to be lost. One of the aims of critical literacy, to examine the world, is negated if students are unaware of why they are participating in the questioning process and how it changes the context of our understanding.

For this process of examining the world, some students participated in ethnography, connecting their observations to policies and practices in their lives, the community, or the world that do not represent equality (Bomer, 2000; Camangian, 2008; Cammarota, 2007; Shosh, 2005). Cammarota (2007) argues "Ethnographic insight helps students overcome their fear of liberation. Students mitigate the uneasiness of the unknown with their newfound critical vision, which compels them to take notice of conditions that they would have ignored or taken for granted before" (p. 347). One student in the study, for instance, observed only people of color working in the school cafeteria instead of as lead teachers or administrators. Bomer (2000) emphasizes the importance of a writing journal, common practice in English-Language Arts classrooms,
as a place for recording descriptions of what students observe and their individual critiques of the observations. Asking students to critique what they observe provides the possibility for transforming journal writing to serve as something more than a record of "what I see" or "my ideas for today."

Other students in the studies were challenged to examine their own cultural stance. They examined issues of privilege, specifically white (Beach, 1997; Foss, 2002) and heterosexual (Young, 2007, 2009). Beach (1997) and Foss (2002) both discuss the anger and resistance students felt as a result of the activities they participated in which disrupted the commonplace and showed the privilege that Caucasians are afforded in our country. I included the Beach (1997) article because it was supposed to address the issue of resistance from students that had initially drawn me to critical theory. Unfortunately, of the four suggested activities that the researcher presented, reflecting on one's stance as privileged only appeared to continue the cycle of resistance the researcher was addressing.

Interestingly, when students were asked to apply a variety of literary lenses, especially Marxist and Deconstructionist, to get at a more critical perspective on the literature and other texts in their English classroom and the world, resistance to the process of disrupting the commonplace also increased (Appleman, 2000). Appleman (2000) acknowledges "it is difficult for all of us, and especially for students, to critique and resist the prevailing ideology as we participate in it" (p. 72).

A different study that touched on heterosexual privilege did not result in the same resistance. Young (2009) quotes a student as saying, "We didn't just randomly attack homophobia for existing, we worked to try to understand why it existed, how prevalent it
was in our society, and the various ways we could address it" (p. 115). Perhaps this is the reason Young's studies (2007, 2009) led to less resistance on the part of students from disrupting the commonplace – they were given an opportunity to take action.

**Interrogate Multiple Points of View.** From a critical literacy perspective, one of the aims of interrogating multiple viewpoints is to help all participants “empathize with people whose circumstances might differ from theirs” (Christensen, 2000b, p. 6). This is as important for students who are members of the dominant ideology, the primary representation in the reading, writing, and speaking standards of an English-Language Arts classroom, as it is for the subordinate students in our schools. Both need to see and experience the validity of other perspectives. In the articles examined, 40 of 48 offered suggestions for ways to interrogate multiple viewpoints.

Some educators chose to include these multiple viewpoints by incorporating the students' cultural capital in the classroom. Some critical educators encouraged students to share with the class moments of discrimination they had experienced or observed in their community (Desai & Marsh, 2005; Morell, 2000; Spires, 2000). Foss (2000) asked her students to examine their positioning within our dominant society through participating in a privilege walk. Christensen (2007b) asks students to identify times when their voices have been silenced and directly compares that to the silencing that often occurs in school. These examples identify an important distinction between the notion of including students' lives often associated with transaction and inquiry modes of education and doing so with the intent of critical literacy. Often times, students are encouraged to include their lives and therefore write about their family vacation, their jobs, etc. With critical literacy, students are asked to include their lives for the purpose of
examining issues of equity and social justice. You start with students lives as "texts worthy or analysis, comparison, and critique," but then you move beyond to examine how they represent larger social issues (Rogers, 1997, p. 105).

While the value of adding all students' cultural capital is obvious from a critical literacy perspective, I have reservations about relying too heavily on their cultural capital as the source of multiple viewpoints. Adding these missing voices to the classroom discussion is greatly needed, but not for the purpose of subordinate students becoming viewed as the single informant about the life experiences of others. This puts a tremendous responsibility on students that they simply may not want (Alsup, 2003). Additionally, each lived experience is so different; it would be negligent to rely solely on one or a few students as a source of information about what it means to be "other." It has the potential to essentialize the student, to recognize him or her only in terms of the topic at hand, potentially placing the student in a subordinate position yet again.

With this in mind, an emphasis on juxtaposition becomes an effective means of examining multiple viewpoints. Preston (n.d.) discussed with students when they read Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* that there is "no one correct 'factual' interpretation of the play, but many different ways of looking at it" (p. 4). This is a similar approach to Appleman's (2000) use of critical lenses to examine a piece of literature. Depending on which lens a reader applies, i.e. reader-response, Marxist, feminist, deconstructionist, a different interpretation of the text can arise. Wallowitz (2007) supports this approach by saying "Reading from different stances or 'lenses' allows new understanding to emerge and creates a democratic space for various voices to be heard and examined" (p. 37).
Additionally, some teachers directly examine what perspective is missing from the text (Bigelow, 2007; Bomer, 2000; Wallowitz, 2007).

When further considering juxtaposition, some educators encourage students to compare and contrast their lives with those of the characters in the texts—novels, movies, song lyrics, advertisements, etc.—they are studying (Camangian, 2008; Christensen, 2007b; Vanderburg, 2009; Young, 2009). Some teachers encouraged students to write from a character’s perspective in the text that had been left out or was given a more subordinate role, thus providing space for students to empathize more with these quiet or missing voices (Beach, 1997; Bigelow, 2007; Bigelow & Christensen, 2007; Hewitt, 2009). Young (2009) identifies one student’s understanding of these contrasting viewpoints: “I learned to step back and try to understand the opposite stance from my own” (p. 115).

Others focus the comparison on multiple texts that were selected specifically for the purpose of presenting diverse perspectives on an issue (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2003; Mellor & Patterson, 2000; Willis & Johnson, 2000). Pairing texts is an effective technique used by critical theorists when using district required literature. This is especially true when they are paired with social issues texts that openly explore differences, give voice to those who have been marginalized, identify how others have acted on social issues, discuss dominant systems, and help question why people are positioned as “others” (Wallowitz, 2007; Willis & Johnson, 2000; Zigo & Moore, 2004). The contrast between some of the required texts and social issues texts helps identify the differences for students and teachers.
One caution that I noted as I read the research for interrogating multiple viewpoints surrounds the necessity of discussion about the varying perspectives brought into the classroom (Ricker-Wilson, 1998). Without teacher guidance to address student discomfort or lack of knowledge, the concern of slipping into stereotyping, thus supporting the dominant ideology becomes identified. Pace and Browning (2008) present an argument for the inclusion of minority characters in an 11th grade US literature course. Their students read a short story which questions the definitions of femininity and then are left to discuss their thoughts. The students in the article were struggling with vocalizing the words lesbian and tomboy. The researchers describe how “the students again use laughter, and they appear to ignore one group member’s concerns” (Pace & Browning, 2008, p. 11). Laughter can be used as a way of dealing with discomfort or unspoken thoughts, but it certainly does not address the need to empathize with those who are marginalized. This situation speaks to the necessity of including all four critical social practices when engaging in critical literacy and shows the importance of the teacher’s continued involvement in the process.

*Focusing on the Sociopolitical.* The third dimension of critical social practices calls upon teachers to acknowledge the importance of the world, and its political nature for the purposes of understanding and expanding the curriculum in the English classroom. I found 35 out of the 48 sources I analyzed for this project incorporated the sociopolitical aspect in their curricular suggestions.

A number of the studies and lesson plans considered how the texts being studied in the classroom can encourage thinking about justice in the world. Texts, whether novels, movies, or advertising, can be scrutinized in relation to the current political
climate or issues of importance in our world today (Childs, 2007; Davies, 2006; Willis & Johnson, 2000; Zigo & Moore, 2004). Wallowitz (2007) argued that Morrison’s The Bluest Eye, for instance, “lends itself to critical inquiry due to its criticism of racism, sexism, poverty, materialism, standards of beauty, and the cinema” (p. 38). Zigo and Moore (2004) propose pairing science fiction texts with required canonical novels to present a more modern version of issues such as colonialism, coming of age, and socio-economic crisis. This is one of the easiest ways to incorporate an examination of the sociopolitical dimension and remain within the current English-Language Arts constraints of district mandated literature and curriculum. The required texts are still read but with the goal of better understanding our current situation in the world.

Other educators chose to start with a contemporary or historic sociopolitical issue for students to research (Cammarota, 2007; Global Education Center, n.d.; Pescatore, 2007; Young, 2007, 2009). This pedagogical approach lends itself to an examination of sociopolitical contexts in general. It still addresses the curricular standards of reading research and writing for a stated purpose in an English classroom, however, instead of writing essays to demonstrate a close reading of a text or evaluating the effectiveness of literary techniques in the text, space is created for addressing larger social issues (Christensen, 2000a). Discussions of where we are now and how change can be brought about help to identify the fact that sociopolitical issues are not stagnant.

This dimension of the framework does allow for more specific inclusion of the students’ worlds in the classroom context. They are encouraged to write about their lives and the sociopolitical experiences they live (Camangian, 2008; Christensen, 2000a; Desai & Marsh, 2005; Lesley, 2008; Morell, 2000; Rogers, 1997). Such discussions can be
more central to students lives, such as proficiency tests linked to high school diplomas (Rogers, 1997) or address broader world issues, such as racial violence (Morell, 2000). When students' worlds and experiences are considered valid for consideration in a classroom, it presents not only "a larger social construct that the students begin to see their lives as part of" (Lesley, 2008, p. 187) but also identifies a way that they can add to the sociopolitical critique.

Some of the studies and lesson plans were very text centered in their examination of sociopolitical issues (Appleman, 2000; National Endowment for the Humanities, 2003; Mellor & Patterson, 2000; Preston, n.d.). An education site sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (2003) provides one example. In this lesson plan, students research how the cultural context of reviewers of Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* would have influenced their critique. On a limited basis, students then examine their own cultural context in relation to their review of the same novel.

In a similar manner, Appleman (2000) proposes teaching reader-response, Marxist, feminist, and deconstructionist critical lenses to students with the goal of helping them to "read and interpret not only literary texts but their lives" (p. 2). In regards to the Marxist lens, for instance, the researchers hoped that students would consider the political context of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by bringing "into greater visibility the issues of power, class, ideology, and resistance that are embedded in the texts" (Appleman, 2000, p. 62-63). Appleman (2000) argues that their approach to literary theory can be used as a framework for critical examination of text. Students are examining the text critically, but the lack of inclusion of the student, the world, or taking action for social justice identifies that this framework would not meet the aims of critical literacy. Her study does rely on
real-world teaching examples of critical theory in practice. These examples, while from urban, suburban, and rural settings, are mostly advance placement classrooms. This student population does not represent a good cross-section for comparison with more economically and culturally diverse school settings.

**Take Action to Promote Social Justice.** Pescatore (2007) explains that "...critical thinking skills involve reflecting and research, but critical literacy goes one step further: the formation of citizens who are empowered and emboldened to act as a result of their conscious enlightenment" (p. 330). This dimension of critical literacy addresses Freire's (1970) vision of praxis. It is of equal importance to the other three dimensions, and yet, in the research examined, only 15 of the 48 sources addressed taking action to promote social justice.

Many educators who integrate social justice action in their classroom emphasize the importance of students developing their own topics and agendas for social change (Bomer, 2000; Christensen, 2000b; Pescatore, 2007; Young, 2007, 2009). In the research examined, some students chose to present their analysis and findings on sociopolitical issues to groups that had the potential to make a difference. For instance, Christensen (2000b) described how a group of her students presented their version of a standardized test to teacher education candidates with the goal of questioning the notion of standard versus nonstandard English. Young's (2007, 2009) students presented arguments to the principal of their school to host a Day of Solidarity, focusing on homosexuality. Morell (2000) worked with students who wanted to make a magazine about the injustices they saw in their high school that was to be distributed to the student body. In this way, the student voices become "the focal point of their action strategy" (Cammarota, 2007, p.
Presentations to school boards and community members (Cammarota, 2007), organizing fundraising for others in need (Pescatore, 2007), participating in performance poetry and drama events (Blackburn, 2002; Camangian, 2008; Hewitt, 2009), letters to school and community newspapers or state senators focused on sociopolitical issues that were important to the students (Davies, 2006) are all activities that incorporate the English-Language Arts standards. They involve reading research, writing in the appropriate forms with Standard English, speaking effectively to convey message and listening appropriately to address concerns.

From the above examples, taking action to promote social justice appears to be a major undertaking for both the teacher and the students. Perhaps this explains why so few of the sources studied identify this dimension, even though it is one of the overarching aims of critical literacy. I would argue that students need to be given a chance to take action in a dynamic way, but as stated by Freire (1970) “Critical reflection is also action” (p. 123). Examining injustice and discussing how to make things happen also opens up the possibility for students to continue to take action after the end of the semester or school year. Regardless of how taking action is defined, I began to identify this dimension as one of the most important because of its ability to address student resistance.

Resistence

Why did you teach us this? I'm so sorry I know about this...How am I supposed to live with this knowledge? You've just demonstrated that everything we've learned up to this point has been a sham. Now what? Here I am at the end of my high school education, and now it seems as if everything I was trying to do is worth absolutely nothing. Nothing means anything. Is that what I'm supposed to believe?...And here we are left with nothing. What am I supposed to replace it with? (Appleman, 2000, p.112)
"For a number of students in my study, their sense of guilt simply immobilizes them from taking action to cope with their concerns" (Beach, 1997, p. 90).

"You need to include some more positive aspects. We can't live in a world where it's all negative. I became overwhelmed and angry. I felt I couldn't take it" (Christensen, 2000b, p. 62).

Every time Gaines began to describe the vicious cycle, I would actually get a bad feeling in the gut of my stomach, and I would become simply nauseated because I felt I was part of that vicious cycle, and sometimes I had to put the book down. (Willis & Johnson, 2000, p. 16)

These are just a few examples that describe the feelings expressed by students after their teachers used critical literacy pedagogy in their classrooms. One of the reasons I chose to examine critical literacy is because of my desire to address resistance on the part of students in the classroom. At first glance, these responses and reactions seem to negate that point. How can a teacher consider engaging in critical literacy to address resistance if it will only bring about resistance and frustration on the part of other students?

Appleman (2000) argues that the application of critical lenses to the literature in an English classroom could be viewed as a potential model of critical theory instruction. The resistance of students generated by their research and teaching, however, argues more for a different approach. The one aim of critical literacy that they did not incorporate into their study was that of taking action to promote social justice. I would argue that because the students were not given a means by which to address the wrongs that were made visible to them, as consumers, men, etc., they were not given a chance to leave the scene in a positive way.
Similar results can be seen with other researchers. Beach (1997) suggests creating a forum for dialogue but then does not include that component in his research. Willis and Johnson (2000) create a thorough argument for a "critically framed reader response" (p. 16) with clear examples of how to disrupt the commonplace, the varied sources they used to interrogate multiple viewpoints, and the connections to current sociopolitical issues. They note in their research that students' opinions did not change over the course of the study. The only component they did not incorporate in their research was taking action for social justice. Another researcher, Foss (2002), describes how her students were angry after learning about white privilege. However, she never gave them a means in which they could address the guilt they felt regarding the society in which they were raised.

I would argue that the resistance identified in these examples and the lack of changing viewpoints is directly related to the fact that taking action to promote social justice was never addressed by the researchers. Lee (2007) seems to agree with this perspective. She encourages teachers to talk with students about how people who represent the dominant ideology have fought for social justice in the past and discuss ways that students can bring about change.

Childs (2007) and Christensen (2000b) understood this lesson and changed their approaches in order to redress the issue of resistance. Childs (2007) continued to examine sociopolitical issues with her class but changed the approach to them. She states, "Being able to tie all our studies back to the theme of resistance helps us shift our focus from oppression and despair to organizing, determination, planning, solidarity, and hope" (Childs, 2007, p. 143). For her classes, focusing on social action changed the
dynamics of the class. Similarly, Christensen (2000b) believes, "If I want students to imagine a more just society, I must spend time teaching them how to find what's good as well as to find what's bad" (p. 55). She started incorporating more of the students’ cultural capital to celebrate the beauty in life. She also provided ways for students to take action on their new found knowledge. She explicitly integrates social action into her classroom.

Time and again, the value of a course of action for the students to pursue is highlighted and identifies an important consideration for teachers who are hoping to implement critical literacy pedagogy. Ellwood (2007) questions: “How do you maintain hope if you see the world as troubled and even systematically unfair?” (p. 110). For her and other critical literacy educators, the need to analyze the problems “with an immediate exploration of the large and small steps people can take, and are taking” is crucial (Ellwood, 2007, p. 110).

Further Considerations

Researchers can play a significant role in educating students for citizenship in a diverse society. Their most important responsibility is to conduct research that empowers marginalized communities, that describes complex characteristics of ethnic communities, and that incorporates the views, concepts, and visions of the communities they study. (Banks, 1998, p. 15)

Those words express the intent of this investigative project: to develop a better understanding of how to implement critical literacy in my own classroom so that I can implement an English curriculum that is empowering for all students. This curriculum needs to be one where students’ voices and visions are represented, considered, and acted upon.
However, Banks (1998) cautions that “Teachers need to critically examine the value assumptions that underlie their personal knowledge, the knowledge taught in the curriculum, and the values that support the institutionalized structures and practices in the schools” (p. 14). Part of why finding a viable framework for critical literacy is so important is that I know my own beliefs and ideas are still couched within the dominant perspective in which I was raised. There are many issues and world views to which I am blind. While the voices of my students will help me expand my world view, examining the experiences and action-research of other educators has also helped in this process.

An additional consideration is that I am still in the academic world of examination and not the daily practice of implementing critical theory. Because of this, my understanding of the experience of implementation is from a distance. I am not working with my own students or local educators and therefore lack access to “…people indigenous to the community who can provide…accurate knowledge of the perspectives, values, and beliefs within the community” (Banks, 1998, p. 15). For this investigative project, I am relying on others’ descriptions of their classroom experiences. Secondly, I am relying on my ability to interpret their comments as I identify how they address the components of the chosen Instructional Model of Critical Literacy.

Through the process of reading research and categorizing the methodology of teachers in relation to critical stance, personal and cultural resources, and critical social practices, I have gained a working understanding of the Instructional Model of Critical Literacy outlined by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008). I see more clearly how the components are interdependent. One of my most enlightened moments came as I was analyzing ways that teachers engage in taking a critical stance. The sources I examined
identified the necessity of bringing a questioning perspective to critical inquiry, the need to intermingle student voice and text, the importance of collaborating to examine multiple perspectives, and the benefit of action in regards to new found knowledge. In their ways of describing critical stance, they were also describing the IMCL.

My understanding of the four dimensions of critical social practice changed through the investigative project as well. Reading the varied ways that teachers engage in critical literacy forced me to accept that there are many different ways to address the four dimensions. While at first I was critical of what some teachers were doing as compared to others, the validity of their practices became more apparent as I triangulated their experiences. When multiple teachers described similar ways of engaging in critical literacy, it helped me to understand an expanded definition of the dimensions.

As with all research, only a certain percentage of the actual experience will make it into the final write-up. All researchers need to narrow their findings for publication. With this in mind, there were some references that lacked specific details regarding what students did in regards to the critical social practices, making it difficult to concretely classify their methodology. For instance, Camangian (2008) briefly discusses how the students disrupt the commonplace, interrogate multiple viewpoints, and focus on sociopolitical issues. The depth of explanation, however, does not arrive until describing how students took action through a performance poetry unit. At this point, we hear student voices and are presented with specific student examples. While the lack of specific details at first seems a hindrance to analysis, decreasing the ability to specifically define the four dimensions, I would argue that it helps address Freire’s concern about exportability (Freire & Macedo, 1987). The lack of specific details prevents teachers
from taking a lesson plan and fitting it onto their classes, when there may not be a direct fit. Instead, it seems more valuable to have a comprehensive and proven framework that teachers can apply to their individual situations.

Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) outline such a framework. The components of their Instructional Model of Critical Literacy proved to be identifiable among critical theorists in the high school English-Language Arts subject area. In some cases, where educators did not include all components of the four dimensions of critical social practices, the students and teachers noted increased resistance to the process. Instead of being a fault, this should be viewed as evidence of the interdependence of the model components.

Is critical literacy as ambiguous as it appears? I would argue that it is not. The practices of other critical theorists at the high school level are easier to analyze, learn from, and integrate into any high school English-Language Arts classroom with the aid of the Instructional Model of Critical Literacy. As a novice critical theorist, I have come to an understanding of critical literacy that represents the aims of the original theorists. Now it is my turn to act.
Chapter V: Conclusion
A Future for Critical Literacy

And this is the end,
the car running out of road,
the river losing its name in an ocean,
the long nose of the photographed horse
touching the white electric line.
This is the colophon, the last elephant in the parade,
the empty wheelchair,
and pigeons floating down in the evening.
Here the stage is littered with bodies,
the narrator leads the characters to their cells,
and the climbers are in their graves.
It is me hitting the period
and you closing the book.
It is Sylvia Plath in the kitchen
and St. Clement with an anchor around his neck.
This is the final bit
thinning away to nothing.
This is the end, according to Aristotle,
what we have all been waiting for,
what everything comes down to,
the destination we cannot help imagining,
a streak of light in the sky,
a hat on a peg, and outside the cabin, falling leaves.

Educational reform has been a charged topic in our country for a while. Some
argue that testing will bring about accountability. Others propose school choice as the
way to ensure change. These approaches to reform assume that all students enter the
classroom with the same resources and therefore have equal chance at success. Based on
this thinking, the problem must be one of unskilled teachers not following standards
based curriculum. I’ve worked with far too many teachers who teach standards based
curriculum and daily endeavor to make school dynamic and challenging for their students
who still face resistance from the students to the curriculum they teach. It’s not about
accountability or privatizing schools. It is about our students and whether or not they are
being honored in our classes with curriculum and instruction that pertains to their lives and helps them envision a future where they can have a positive impact. McLaren (2007) supports this by stating, "While it is probably true that schools cannot remake society, they must find better ways of making themselves vital places for all students" (p. 176). This entails empowering students to feel in control of their lives instead of hindered by their position (McLaren, 2007).

What kinds of English-Language Arts classroom can help to promote that change? In arguing for reshaping the high school English classroom, Pirie (1997) envisions the following:

> an English classrooms in which students are not parasites on a body of literature, but active participants in an unfinished culture, agents with the power and responsibility to make sense of that culture and to contribute to its ongoing construction. (p. 73)

High school students need to be educated in a different way. They need a classroom where they are challenged to analyze the texts around them, approach others with empathy, and defend what is just. A classroom that engages in critical literacy pedagogy can help bring about reform, maybe not for the entire system but for those students and teachers who collaborate to read, write, speak, and listen for social justice. This is a lofty goal, and teachers need help to bring about such pedagogical change.

Behrman (2006) argued that critical literacy was not being accepted as a coherent curricular approach because of a lack of common instructional strategies. This is no longer true. The Instructional Model of Critical Literacy presented by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) provides a guide for any teacher willing to experiment with critical literacy, regardless of curricular subject or grade level. The research in this investigative
project has demonstrated its value at the high school level, particularly in regards to the English classroom.

Of the 48 sources studied for emphasizing critical literacy in education, however, only seven actually integrated in a classroom setting all aspects of the Instructional Model of Critical Literacy: critical stance, personal and cultural resources, and critical social practices (Camangian, 2008; Cammarota, 2007; Christensen, 2000a, 2000b; Hewitt, 2009; Pescatore, 2007; Young, 2009). The methodology chosen by these teachers was not based on any instructional model, but rather on what they know to be good teaching for their students. There were four other sources who discussed all dimensions of the IMCL, however, some or all of the components were presented more as pedagogical suggestions than actual research or classroom practice (Beach, 1997; Bomer, 2000; Davies, 2006; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). As yet, studies have not been conducted with teachers specifically intending to integrate the IMCL in their high school English classrooms. This needs to be done. While the studies and lessons examined for this investigative project hint at its broader application, that premise now needs to be investigated.

Collaboration should also be considered a necessary component of future studies regarding critical literacy and the IMCL. Appleman (2000) argues that collaboration 
"...facilitates the development of teacher knowledge [and]...encourages the kind of locally based reform that is the heart of true school reform" (p. 132). The value of collaboration is also highlighted by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) and Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002) when working specifically with critical literacy. Teachers who engage in critical literacy need time to become familiar with a new way of teaching that "involves
learning, understanding, and changing over time” (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, p. 55). Collaboration will help facilitate that process.

A student in Cammarota’s (2007) study said the following:

Before I took this class...it was kind of like running a race without a map. This class helped me learn how to channel my anger. You're given a map where you can see the obstacles. I didn't feel part of my education, but in this class, I feel connected. (p. 351)

That is a powerful statement about the benefits of critical theory and critical literacy pedagogy in the classroom. It promotes a sense of hope, for the student and society. Hope is a powerful emotion that can bring about great change, for the individual, the school, the community, or the larger world. Freire (1994) states “hope, as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice” (p. 8). To promote more hope, we as teachers need to see the value in critical literacy. This is our chance at educational reform.
## Appendix: IMCL Findings

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