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by

Samuel Brower

August, 2012

EXAMINING TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE UTILIZATION OF
COUNTER-HEGEMONIC TEXTS IN THEIR SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES
CLASSROOMS

A Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Critical pedagogy and social justice call for teachers to use their dialectical authority actively to promote democratic classrooms where students have the freedom to create their own knowledge (Kincheloe, 2008). As opposed to viewing students as receptacles for accumulating knowledge, critical pedagogy views students as active participants in their education. Teachers relinquish their authority as knowledge centers and allow students to become the centers of knowledge creation. In this classroom environment, teachers become teacher-students and students become student-teachers (Freire, 2008). Rather than teachers dictating the experience, they use their authority to support students in the process of knowledge creation.

The use of counter-hegemonic texts adds to this process by exposing students to an array of possibilities and perspectives. Allowing students to utilize counter-hegemonic texts that affirm them as human beings enables students to explore their identities and cultural legacies. It further allows them to investigate their place in schools and how schools act as a normalizing force for privilege. The use of counter-hegemonic texts fosters the appropriation of the language of the dominant culture to act as agents of change in their schools, communities, and society (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007).

My primary research question was: How are educators using counter-hegemonic texts to move beyond the traditional teaching of social studies? I wanted to know how they arrived at the point where they rejected the banking concept of education and decided to attempt something different (Freire, 2008). I also wanted to know about the evolution of that process, including their successes and failures along the way. To answer my question of why and how these teachers are moving beyond traditional teaching through the use of counter-hegemonic texts, I acted as what Yvonna Lincoln would call a *bricoleur* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The qualitative researcher acts as a *bricoleur* to conduct what Kincheloe describes as multiperspectival research methods (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). Kincheloe (2005) reconceptualizes the *bricoleur* as someone who draws on diverse theoretical traditions in a critical theoretical framework to lay the foundation for a transformative methodological approach to research.

Carspecken's (1996) critical qualitative research methodology enabled me to capture the voice and perspectives of my three teacher participants on their journey towards student empowerment and collective critical consciousness. My employment of critical qualitative research investigated how each teacher used counter-hegemonic texts to break through the constraints of a standards-based educational system and promote a social justice oriented curriculum. By employing this approach, I addressed my research question by investigating the complexities of cultural hegemony and power relations at multiple levels in a nuanced and rigorous fashion. Their perspectives and experiences flow through the research and offer critical insights into the complex lives of critical educators operating within a suppressing system.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental.... The freedom to learn... has been bought by bitter sacrifice. And whatever we may think of the curtailment of other civil rights, we should fight to the last ditch to keep open the right to learn, the right to have examined in our schools not only what we believe, but what we do not believe; not only what our leaders say, but what the leaders of other groups and nations, and the leaders of other centuries have said. We must insist upon this to give our children the fairness of a start which will equip them with such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have a real chance to judge what the world is and what its greater minds have thought it might be. (Du Bois, 1970, p. 230-231)

My Untold Story

As a teacher, I regularly faced cynicism from beleaguered colleagues who were unwilling to push beyond the prescribed curriculum. A teacher might expect such an attitude from students who are being challenged in ways they had not previously experienced. On the contrary, they excelled and exceeded even my expectations of what was possible in the classroom. It was my coworkers who repeatedly told me, “I can’t do that.” I would develop and implement different pedagogical strategies that I then shared with them, but I often encountered attitudes of frustration, indifference, and a myopic view of what was possible. For instance, when I would suggest that we use alternative resources or try different teaching strategies, they responded with a resoluteness that forced me to refocus my attention solely on my students. Many of the

teachers with whom I taught acted as if they were confined to a very limited array of options. It was not that they were poor teachers. Likewise, it was not that they did not find my ideas valuable. It was that many of them were entrenched in a traditional way of teaching social studies. They held a limited perspective on the role of the teacher. For a myriad of reasons, they viewed the teacher as an implementer of a prescribed curriculum and in their paradigmatic framing of schools, not as an individual who should be challenging that status quo.

When I began teaching, I did not have any delusions of grandeur. I did not believe that I was there to save kids. I have always been too cynical for that. Recognizing that while teachers are extremely important, there are so many factors that influence a child's life that an individual teacher is facing an arduous task in attempting to change students' lives. However, that did not mean that I did not want to be the best possible teacher I could be and challenge my students to value, honor, and share their own perspectives and cultural legacies. To me, the most important thing I could do as a teacher was to develop my student's critical literacy skills through a shared language that empowered them to challenge their lived conditions. It was not my role to change the lives of my students. Rather, it was my role to foster the critical consciousness necessary for them to have the efficacy needed to attempt to change their own lives.

When I was in school, I was one of those kids who did not find a whole lot of value in being a student. I got bored very easily. I got tired of people talking at me about information that rarely pertained to my life. The things I found most meaningful in school were socializing with my friends and participating in extracurricular

activities. Despite that, there were the rare times when a teacher taught an amazing lesson or we did a project that left a lasting impression on me. For the most part though, I just went through the motions of doing just enough to be a decent student while never putting in enough effort to be a stellar one. Reflecting on my school experience, I realize I was able to survive and, frankly, thrive in school because I was in a position of privilege. I had two parents who had graduated from college. I also had five older siblings who all attended some form of college. My parents, brothers, and sisters all spent quite a bit of time with me when I was young to prepare me for school. Therefore, upon entering school, I was academically a little ahead of the curve.

The middle school and high school I went to were situated almost directly on the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso, Texas. Both schools I went to were around 95% Latino, and many of the students were going to be the first in their family to graduate from high school. Therefore, while my parents used their cultural capital and experiential knowledge to navigate the educational system with ease, many of my fellow students were regularly denied access because they did not understand the gatekeepers of the school system. My point in relating this information is not to say my upbringing was any better than anyone else's, because many of my friend's parents were extremely dedicated to raising their children and were absolutely accomplished as parents. I bring this up to critique a system that assembles barriers for students whose families do not have the cultural capital to navigate the educational system. Simply put, I had many advantages that made surviving in school an easier task than it was for some of my fellow students. I was a young White male and experienced White privilege at a very young age. I think my race and gender were

even more impactful than might be found elsewhere because of the unique conditions of the border community in which I was raised. Upon arriving in El Paso in 6th grade, my homeroom teacher looked at my schedule and immediately asked why I was not in the gifted and talented (GT) classes. The assumption was that as a White student I belonged in GT courses. I immediately tested into those courses at her recommendation. I quickly realized that these GT courses were where the majority of the White student population was enrolled. While White students made up only about 5% of the student body, they comprised around half of the students in GT courses. The schools I went to definitely followed the segregation tactics of many minority majority schools around the nation (Berliner, 2006).

Therefore, while I did not have any pretensions about saving kids when I first began teaching, I also recognized that schools did not treat students equally, that I was a product of that inequitable treatment, and that I had a responsibility to negate the social injustices of schools as much as possible. On a personal level, I intended to try and make my classroom as meaningful and engaging as possible for *all* my students. To me, that meant trying to develop and implement a curriculum that was culturally relevant while trying to teach my students critical thinking, literacy, and questioning skills. This did not always match what my coworkers were attempting to accomplish in their classrooms. While I truly believe they were well-intentioned individuals who were trying to make lessons interesting for the students, they did not seem interested in a culturally relevant pedagogy. They held very generalized and superficial notions of equality and multiculturalism that viewed the historical and current social, economic,

and political arrangements through a colorblind lens where everyone was supposedly treated equally even if the results did not indicate equal treatment.

At the first school where I taught, we planned as a subject area team and were expected to deliver common assessments. This had a limiting affect on what my coworkers were comfortable with implementing. In all honesty, I initially did not have the self-efficacy to stand up for my ideas and, more importantly, the needs of my students. The textbook was essentially our curriculum where we received virtually all of our test questions, objectives, and teaching resources. The constant lecturing and textbook work seemed to be destroying my students' desire to learn. I knew that what I was doing was not really working, but I did not know how bad it was until one of my best students came up to me in the hall before class and asked, "Mr. Brower, how come we never do projects like we do in Ms. Carpenter's class?" Many of my other students had complained about why we were learning about world history and how boring it was. This student though, was the epitome of what would normally be considered an ideal student. She knew all the answers, was always attentive, and never complained. When she came up to me and wondered why I was essentially teaching in such a meaningless fashion, I knew my approach was not working.

If learning needs to be experiential and interactive to be meaningful, I had to get my students to do social studies rather than simply teach them social studies (Dewey, 1997). This came into direct conflict with what Freire (2008) would call the "banking concept" of education that many of my coworkers and I unknowingly practiced (p. 72). We were attempting to deposit information into our students. The students would then regurgitate the information back to us. The roles were clearly

defined. The teacher held all of the knowledge while marginalizing the students to feel that they had little to offer. I recognized that while this may keep students passively behaving in my classroom, it also was having a very negative impact on them.

My over-reliance on textbooks was both dangerous and boring for my students. Textbooks regularly provide an inaccurate and bland version of history. As Loewen (2007) details, social studies textbooks omit much of the historical narrative while repeating historical myths. Textbooks focus on the history of those in power and are skewed towards White history, or what is commonly labeled western history. They marginalize and disregard people from subaltern groups, such as the poor and working classes, women, and individuals of color. Zinn (2005) wrote about this issue in a counter narrative to traditional American history. He chronicled the history of the United States through the eyes of common people as opposed to the ruling class. His book, *A People's History of the United States*, has created a historical revolution where many authors and teachers are now placing value on the history of everyday people, whereas before, historical value was placed on famous individuals and major events. After having my world rocked by this student's comment, I wanted to follow the paradigmatic model provided by Zinn and Loewen that used less of the textbook and included more stories about regular individuals to whom my students hopefully had a better chance of relating.

I started by introducing counter-hegemonic texts that provided multiple perspectives on issues instead of the singular perspective found in the textbook. I also began to incorporate more research and project based learning. My hope was that the students would find the counter-hegemonic texts more relevant and that the

constructivist approach would engage the students at a more meaningful level. I found what Loewen (2010) argued to be true, to get students excited about history, they must actually *do* history. I noticed that if I simply used counter-hegemonic texts in a similar fashion as I had the textbook, the students might find it more interesting, but it did not always teach them anything beyond the actual content of the text. For example, I could provide an emotionally touching primary source document that the students really connected with, but I was not using that emotion to engage in a social justice or social action component of social studies. Even if I had the students take control of their own learning by doing research or projects, it was really only a better way for them to learn facts. Therefore, I approached my team for help and suggestions.

Unfortunately, when I went back to my team with my issues, I met resistance. I expected some of the teachers to respond that they felt their students could not do what I wanted to do, but instead, they flatly said they could not do it and could not offer any help. They felt that with the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test forthcoming at the end of the year, they could not deviate from our chapter-by-chapter curriculum. The school where I taught had a very high level of academic success. It had been rated exemplary or recognized by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the previous twenty-plus years. The students had a history of doing exceptionally well on the social studies TAKS tests with ninety-eight and one hundred percent of the students passing the test in most years. This created a climate where teachers were unwilling to accept or respond to alternate teaching practices. My experience matches the research on teacher attitudes towards change. Gold (2007) found teachers unwilling to change in both high and low achieving schools. Teachers in high

achieving schools were unwilling to change due to their belief that student success was a result of teaching and not outside factors such as the socioeconomic status of their students. Conversely, Gold (2007) found that teachers at low achieving schools maintained such a defeatist and deficit-thinking attitude towards their students that they too, were unwilling to change. At my school, with students performing so well on Advanced Placement (AP) exams, the TAKS tests, and being accepted into top-tier universities, there was not a desire to change the status quo. The focus was on the TAKS test, and teachers did not want to buck the system to adjust things in an uncomfortable fashion. I even had two of my colleagues talk to me about not teaching my on-level world history classes at what they considered an AP level. They counseled me that the administration might take issue with me using a curriculum that was different from the other on-level world history teachers.

These teachers limited their curricular decisions based off a perceived fear of the administration. Their fear was Foucaultian in nature in that it was a perceived fear and not necessarily real (Foucault, 1995). The administration watched the teachers just enough that they felt administrators were watching them at all times. When I suggested we try something different as a team, I encountered a fear that the administration would find out and disapprove. No one actually talked to the administrators to find out if they had an issue. Instead, my teammates assumed their disapproval and did not wish to face the consequences of that perceived disapproval. I also met resistance from other teachers who did not find the value in trying anything different. They were comfortable with their teaching practices and did not see the

purpose in changing their teaching style. They told me that I was making more work for myself.

Recalling my own lack of satisfaction with school as a student, I ignored their advice and waded my way through a murky mess without any real direction outside of the fact I wanted a better classroom for my students. Having now spoken to many critical educators, I think this is a typical experience. We know that what we are doing is not working the way we would like it to, but we do not have the language necessary to transform it to where we would like it to be. There were days that everything came together and it just clicked, but I had a difficult time of sustaining that momentum. By the end of the year, I felt I had done a decent job with my students but not nearly as well as I would have liked.

I recognized that simply using counter-hegemonic texts was not enough to create a meaningful learning environment. The projects were nice and so were the in-class activities, but there was a missing component. Kincheloe (2008) writes that teaching must include a critical element. This critical element must be “concerned with the development of a literacy of power to help understand and take action in relations of inequality” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 126). My approach was infused with multiple perspectives and a multicultural approach that did engage my students in a positive way; however, it did not contain a social justice or critical literacy element that would be necessary for me to have a classroom that could truly be transformative and powerful for my students.

After my first year of teaching, due to budget constraints, I moved to another school within the district. I was also asked to teach a new subject in world geography.

This was a blessing in disguise because, at the time, world geography was not tied to a standardized exam. During this time, I was also completing my master's degree, and we were constantly discussing how classrooms should belong to the students and the importance of developing skills that students needed beyond high school. I was also reading Paulo Freire and gaining some of the language that I needed to voice and even recognize my underlying frustrations with my teaching. When Freire (2008) discussed the traditional geography classroom where students were required to learn the capitals of states without learning what the capital meant to the state or what the state meant to the capital, it spoke to me. I was facing the same issue with my fellow geography teachers. Students in geography normally spend an excessive amount of time memorizing capitals, countries, and other rote facts. I maintained the position that students were familiar with Internet search engines like Google, and forcing them to memorize facts from almanacs was simply a waste of time. I felt I needed to shift my classroom to one that modeled Freirean pedagogy. Freire (2008) discusses the need to change the teacher-student relationship for the world to be revealed to students and for them to be able to transform it. If the teacher is THE thinker, talker, knowledge-producer, and sole decision-maker, it minimizes students' creative power and their ability to question critically.

For me to provide a classroom setting where students would be able to "see the world not as a static reality but as a reality of a world in the process of transformation" (Freire, 2008, p. 73), I would have to change the traditional teacher-student relationship drastically. I transformed the curriculum in an attempt to move towards a democratic problem-posing approach. This was a difficult process. It is difficult to

move beyond the replication of traditional teaching that is rampant in schools. Furthermore, it is also difficult to move beyond the limitations of state standards, particularly in Texas. Moving beyond traditional teaching and the state standards were issues that the students and I tried to address simultaneously. It involved my being in constant dialogue with my students where we attempted to deconstruct the curriculum together. We would critically question the positivistic approach of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). They began to recognize the marginalization of disenfranchised groups of peoples throughout history. Moreover, they recognized their own marginalization in the schooling process and how groups were still being underserved and oppressed. This raised a lot of emotions and integrated issues into the classroom that required a lot of dialogue where they talked through their feelings with their classmates. This also required me to bring different resources to class than the ones provided to me by the school. I needed counter-hegemonic texts similar to *People's History* to introduce students to alternative perspectives (Zinn, 2005). Additionally, the students began seeking out texts that they brought to class. The process was an arduous one, but in the end, it was beneficial to them and helped me maintain my sanity in a world where I saw the needs of kids ignored and disparaged on a daily basis.

There were many struggles throughout the year. I failed many times in getting the students invested in the classroom. The times I felt were most successful though were when they or I brought in counter-hegemonic texts that they could relate to and found engaging. The texts sparked the dialectic process that led to the beginnings of a critical consciousness for my students. The texts offered different perspectives on

cultural and human geography and I tried to make them as culturally relevant as possible. However, if I simply used these texts in a banking concept fashion, I do not believe they would have had a positive affect on my students. Instead, I tried to use them as a way for them to understand how hegemony and ideology have historically worked and how they still exist. For example, by using stories from the ongoing struggle of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers for workers' rights in Florida, they were better able to enhance their understanding and relate to the struggle to obtain worker's rights throughout history. Additionally, by listening to stories and watching interviews of the struggles of undocumented immigrants in Houston, students developed a better understanding of the historical struggles of immigrants. It became relevant to them because the texts we were using were dealing with modern-day struggles that the students had experienced or knew someone who was experiencing similar issues. It also provided a personal touch that is necessary for meaningful understanding about the impact of historical events. Students may be able to recite back the facts about events and dates, but if they do not understand how those events and dates actually affected real people on a very personal and emotional level, the whole exercise is fruitless.

When I took what I was doing to the other world geography teachers though, there was still resistance. Once again, I was told, "I can't do that" by other teachers. Even more disheartening, many questioned if what I was doing was even sound practice. Only one other geography teacher supported my approach and worked with me to develop a culturally relevant curriculum. Fortunately, my department head had an indifferent attitude about what I was doing, so I did not get any pushback from her

or the administration. Still, when I talked to other teachers, they seemed concerned that I would get in trouble or be questioned because of my approach. Once again, there was this perceived threat or innate questioning. It was like an imaginary wall that they could not look over, which limited everything they did. No one had told them they could not go beyond it, but they assumed they could not and refused to even approach the wall.

The problem of moving beyond traditional resources seemed to be quite difficult for teachers at both of the high schools where I worked. The constant feedback I received was that was simply not, what a teacher was supposed to do. The over-reliance on the textbook became problematic at both schools. Many times, the textbook would not address a state mandated objective, but some of the teachers were not familiar with the issue because they trusted that the textbook would address all that they were expected to teach. Instead of using the state curriculum as our guide and the textbook as a resource, the textbook became the guide while the state curriculum was an afterthought.

Statement of the Problem

Social studies teachers who rely on textbooks and state standards are inadequately meeting the needs of their students (Gay, 2010). In Texas, the social studies TEKS recently underwent a highly politicized and controversial revision process. Eventually, the conservatively dominated state board approved standards that many claimed were an attempt to indoctrinate Texas students and only served to embarrass the state (Soto, 2011). Less than a year later, the Fordham Institute, a

conservative think tank, slammed the new standards by grading them at a “D” and criticizing their political nature. They stated, “Texas combines a rigidly thematic and theory-based social studies structure with a political distortion of history. The result is both unwieldy and troubling, avoiding clear historical explanation while offering misrepresentations at every turn” (Stern & Stern, 2011, p. 141). The report goes on to state further that, “Complex historical issues are obscured with blatant politicizing throughout the document. Biblical influences on America’s founding are exaggerated, if not invented” (Stern & Stern, 2011, p. 142). The report lambasts the fragmented nature of the standards and accuses the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) of ignoring slavery and segregation while exaggerating the conservative and religious influences on American history. The authors close by declaring, “Texas’s standards are a disservice both to its own teachers and students and to the larger national history of which it remains a part” (Stern & Stern, 2011).

Unfortunately, the politicization of the social studies is typical. Traditionally, the retelling of history has been fraught with historians and writers attempting to impose their own views on their writers. There is now a legacy of research into history textbooks that has shown that textbooks regularly distort history for political reasons (Lesh, 2011; Foner, 2011; Zinn & Steffoff, 2009; Loewen, 2007; Loewen, 2010; Kincheloe, 2001). Furthermore, Merryfield and Wilson (2005) note that even textbooks that attempt to eradicate political bias regularly fall short in their coverage of multiple perspectives and overlook minority populations. They whitewash history through a Eurocentric lens that ignores non-Western histories and histories of minority groups in the U.S. Thus, the two resources all social studies educators are given,

standards and a textbook, are inadequate as the sources of knowledge in a social studies classroom.

Need for the Study

Ladson-Billings (1994) was the first to call on the educational community to develop and implement a culturally relevant pedagogy that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 17). Since then, researchers have been investigating and reshaping the possibilities of culturally relevant pedagogy and teaching in schools and communities (Gay, 2010; Sleeter & Cornbleth, 2011; Delpit, 2006; Howard, Banks, & Nieto, 2006; Nieto, 2009). Through their examination of culturally relevant teaching, some researchers have transitioned to using culturally responsive teaching, but the essence of both terms is virtually identical. This literature combined with the literature that critiques the traditional historical narrative taught in schools calls for researchers to investigate how educators are enacting culturally relevant teaching. There are now multiple examples of educators engaging in critical and culturally relevant pedagogy with their students to counter the traditional narrative (Ayers & Ford, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Howard, Banks, & Nieto, 2006; Fleischer, 2009). What is rarely addressed in the literature though is which texts educators use to challenge the narrative. Due to the broader focus on developing and implementing a culturally relevant pedagogy, authors focus on the eventual outcome of student empowerment. Mainly, the literature addresses utilized texts from two perspectives: either the research discusses which kind of texts to use that honor the

cultural heritages of students, maintains academic rigor, and challenges the marginalization of students or from a basic multicultural perspective where educators attempt to use texts to encapsulate a perspective while not actually challenging the hegemony of the historical narrative. This creates a gap in the research where the specific kinds of counter-hegemonic texts being used by educators need to be researched. Additionally, the poor nature of social studies textbooks and state standards in Texas further creates a need for researchers in Texas to investigate how social studies teachers are addressing the inadequate resources given to them by the state.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate secondary social studies educators' use of alternative texts. My research focus is framed through these questions:

Research Question 1: How are teachers moving beyond the traditional teaching of social studies by using counter-hegemonic texts?

Research Question 2: How did teachers arrive at the point where they rejected the banking concept of education and decide to implement an alternative curriculum? Research Question 3: What was the evolution of that process, including their successes and failures along the way?

Countering Hegemony

Typically in dissertations, the research questions are followed by a definition of terms. Definitions can become quite tricky though in critical qualitative research

framed through social education. Social education attempts to realize some semblance of social justice in a perpetually unjust world. The questions surrounding how to achieve such a reality fuel our inquiry. Thus, social education has always been about the question and not the answer. These questions are framed in distinct conditions through the perspective of the social educator. A positivistic approach of defining terms for others becomes problematic for a social educator because in social education, there can never be Truth. There can only be the journey of how we make sense of our world. Therefore, transferable definitions are antithetical to the essence of social education. Furthermore, as I attempt to research educators' use of counter-hegemonic texts, I must provide space for my participants to offer their own definitions. By imposing definitions on them, I would negate their voice. Consequently, as opposed to providing a list of definitions, I am going to attempt to make sense of what counter-hegemonic texts, critical pedagogy, the role of the teacher, and cultural hegemony mean to me as a social educator.

Standardizing curriculum and teaching limits what teachers are able to use as resources in their classrooms (Ravitch, 2010). However, within the standards-based movements, teachers must accept the responsibility of teacher authority. Bascia (2009) argues that teachers must accept their responsibilities as professionals and reclaim teaching as a profession. Furthermore, educators must challenge the standard practice of passively and apolitically implementing standards. Teachers cannot be neutral curriculum-implementers. Rather, they must challenge and critically analyze the standards as they develop their own curricula. As Giroux (2007) argues, "Teachers can make a claim to being fair, but not to being either neutral or impartial" (p. 2). Teachers

must accept their authority and their role in curricular decisions. Teachers must be willing to take a stand and not simply stand still (Giroux, 2007). Kincheloe (2008) asserts, “To deny the role of authority the teacher occupies is insincere at best, dishonest at worst” (p. 17). Therefore, pedagogy cannot be about impartiality or implementation. Rather, pedagogy is framed in the economic, social, and political conditions of the students and teacher (Giroux, 2007). To attempt to separate the lived conditions of the students and teacher in a supposedly unbiased fashion is in reality, a value-laden decision. The very notion of objectivity with prescribed standards is an attempt to deskill teachers and deprofessionalize teaching (Giroux, 2007). Regardless of the teacher’s recognition of it, pedagogy is value-laden and political in nature. If teachers stand still and simply implement the curriculum solely based on the standards given to them, they are allowing someone else to make those political choices.

As teachers begin to reclaim the curriculum, they are devoid of readily available resources. The textbook adoption process requires textbook publishers to curtail their textbooks to the state standards (Scharrer, 2012). Therefore, teachers must find resources beyond the textbook if they are going to challenge the traditional narrative found in the standards and textbooks. Counter-hegemonic texts are critical in this process. They provide an alternative to textbooks. Textbooks are based off politically motivated state standards (Stern & Stern, 2011; Loewen, 2007). Politically appointed committees that must answer to their benefactors create the standards. Moreover, standards act as agents of cultural reproduction. Standards are created by members of the dominant culture and are regularly used to maintain that dominance (Giroux, 2007). They are also the tools of oppressors, used to deskill teachers and

marginalize students (Giroux, 2007). They teach students and teachers to not question the hegemonic superstructure of education (Fleischer, 2009). The hegemonic superstructure of schools requires passivity and complicity from students and teachers while simultaneously neutralizing their agency.

Kincheloe and McLaren (2008) discuss how this process of internalized compliance operates. Historically, privilege is maintained through the underlying principles of objectivity and rationality. By possessing the power to claim rational impartiality, those in positions of privilege control the social structures, discursive power, ideologies, and epistemologies that support their privilege. “In the epistemological domain, white, male, class elitist, heterosexist, imperial, and colonial privilege often operates by asserting the power to claim objectivity and neutrality” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008, p. 484). By possessing the power to create the standards, the State Board of Education and other conservative politicians use the standards to claim objectivity to push forward their colonizing agenda. They partially maintain their positions by framing the standards to support their political ideology. They normalize their power by creating a system where they are the only ones in power to claim rational objectivity. In this climate, critical educators must operate as outsiders and expose the oppressive power arrangements that maintain the elite’s position of rational authority.

Teachers can use counter-hegemonic texts, conceptualized in the paradigmatic framework of critical pedagogy, to unpack and scrutinize the dominant ideology found in the curriculum (Kincheloe, 2001). Counter-hegemonic texts, by their very nature, are alternative to textbooks in that they provide alternative viewpoints through

alternative mediums. Moreover, they are texts that promote social justice and equality through the transformative process of emancipation and empowerment. Teachers use counter-hegemonic texts to help students recognize education's role in social reproduction, develop a "consciousness of freedom," and transform their resistance to make it "liberating for themselves, the class, the community, and broader society" (Duncan-Andrade, 2007, p. 34; McLaren, 2006; Giroux, 2010. While it may be a sound teaching strategy for teachers simply to use texts that are different from textbooks, whether they be literature, music, films, or art, that does not make them *counter-hegemonic*. Counter-hegemonic texts must come from a place that teaches students to read the word and the world (Freire, 2008). They must help students develop a shared language of resistance, possibility, and hope (Giroux, 2007).

Critical pedagogy calls for teachers to use their dialectical authority actively to promote democratic classrooms where students have the freedom and are capable of creating their own knowledge (Kincheloe, 2008; Freire, 2008). As opposed to viewing students as receptacles for accumulating knowledge, critical pedagogy views students as active participants in their education. Teachers relinquish their authority as knowledge centers and allow students to become the centers of knowledge creation. In this type of classroom, teachers become teacher-students and students become student-teachers (Freire, 2008). Rather than teachers dictating the experience, they use their authority to support students in the process of knowledge creation. The use of counter-hegemonic texts helps in this process by exposing students to an array of critical perspectives. Furthermore, teachers can facilitate the process of students selecting

their own counter-hegemonic texts. Allowing students to take ownership of their culture and identity is critical to emancipatory education (McLaren, 2006).

Banks (2009) writes that teachers “must speak to and address their [student’s] experiences, personal identities, hopes, struggles, dreams and possibilities” (p.101). Students need experiences that “validate them as human beings; affirm their ethnic, cultural, racial, and linguistic identities” (Banks, 2009, p. 101). Allowing students to select counter-hegemonic texts that affirm them as human beings enables students to explore their identities. It allows them to investigate their place in schools and how schools act as a normalizing force for the dominant society. It also allows them to appropriate the language of the dominant culture to act as agents of change in their schools, communities, and society.

When I taught, I had a framework and foundation that I felt comfortable with, but it was not complete. I did not have the theoretical foundation necessary to practice emancipatory education. I did not fully understand the language of critical pedagogy enough to ground me theoretically. At the same time though, I recognized the oppressive nature of schools and attempted to change things even if it was on a very small scale. What I would like to do with this work is help those who are attempting a similar journey, as others have helped me along my own. This study will hopefully provide some insight on how other educators struggled with praxis, the meeting point of practice and theory. It is meant to capture the stories of educators who have also resisted being complicit in cultural reproduction. It is focused on how and why teachers reached the point where they chose to question the system and do something radically different from their peers. It asks how teachers conducted that process with

the intent of letting them speak freely and share their experiences. It is not meant as a guide. Rather, my hope is that it can be used as a reference when an educator is looking for insight on how other educators have struggled and are still struggling.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

As a teacher in public schools, the classroom is open to surveillance at any moment. Most schools have at least one window into each classroom that administrators can peer into at any given time. Schools are panoptic in nature. The disciplinary power that comes from the architectural design influences the ways teachers and students behave. Teachers are aware that someone could be watching them at any moment and adapt their behavior (Giroux, 2007). For example, when I taught, I had one principal in particular who continuously peered through my window. She would come by every thirty to forty-five minutes and just look in for a minute or two standing at the door with her head pressed up against the window. When I asked her if everything were okay, she would simply say she was checking on all the classes. I finally got tired of her creeping by so I placed a poster over the window. She came in and asked me if there was an emergency. I responded by saying that she was more than welcome in my room at any time, but her standing at the door was distracting the students from their learning. I did not have anything to hide, but I felt her behavior was dehumanizing to both the students and me. Moreover, the students were starting to change the way they acted when she would stand there because they thought she was monitoring them. The architecture of the school intentionally allowed administrators to view multiple classrooms at any given time. The school was panoptic in nature in that one could stand in the center of the hall and literally see into twenty different classrooms.

Foucault (1995) analyzed Jeremy Bentham's prison design called "Panopticon." Bentham shaped the prison so that someone could sit in a central tower covered by blinds in the middle of the prison and see into every cell. The prisoners would never know if someone were in the tower, but the fear that someone could be behind the blinds was supposed to curb unwanted behavior. The prison was never built in Bentham's time, but since then, prisons, hospitals, and even schools have utilized forms of the design. Foucault highlighted how the idea of architecturally structuring a building in a way that one individual could monitor multiple locations from just one vantage point had transferred to other institutions. He noted that hospitals, factories, and schools were increasingly becoming panoptic in their design. As evidenced from my own school, designers are still building schools in a panoptic fashion well into the twenty-first century. Most have small windows on the doors with all the doors in a hall or wing facing a central point. It is supposed to provide easy viewing access into classrooms in case of a crisis or emergency. It also is a constant reminder to teachers that someone could be watching at any moment. Even in schools that are not architecturally panoptic, there is always the reminder that a principal could walk in at any moment, or that with cell phones, a student could post anything a teacher says or does online. This perceived fear moderates what teachers are willing to do (Giroux, 2010). Even though the threat may not be real, it still factors into the decisions that teachers make on a daily basis. It has a limiting affect on the range of choices that they see as possible for their classrooms.

Similarly, perceived fear grips American society. It is embedded in almost everything people do. Fear limits people's decision-making process. It affects

elections, who parents let their children play with, and which laws legislatures pass (Furedi, 2002). The educational system reflects the larger society it serves, and as a result, helps lay the foundation for fear in America. Students go through an educational system where everyone lives with some form of fear, starting with the pressures placed on schools by society, the pressurized fear trickles down to administrators, then to educators, and finally to the students. Whether it is teachers afraid of losing their jobs, administrators worried about their schools closing, high school students stressed about failing a test, or elementary students scared about not lining up properly, there is a constant fear of *something* in the current educational system.

The institutional fear in schools acts as a form a disciplinary power that supports schools as ideological state apparatuses (Foucault, 1995; Althuser, 1970). Administrators and educators knowingly make poor decisions because of the disciplinary power that they face (McNeil, Coppola, Radigan, & Vasquez Heilig, 2008; Ravitch, 2010; Lipman, 2011). Their fear has become normalized and they do not step outside the status quo. The status quo maintains the privilege of the elite and they utilize education as one tool to perpetuate the power structure of society. As Althuser (1970) noted, the educational ideological state apparatus normalizes the process of social reproduction. Those in positions of power are able to gain the acquiescence of public school workers by normalizing a system where the control over schools is shifted from parents, administrators, teachers, and students to politicians who are ideologically aligned to and supported by hegemonic political mechanisms. On the school level, they perpetuate the status quo by instilling fear in the teachers and

students. Administrators are afraid the states will shut their schools down if they do not meet Annual Yearly Progress. They then impose harsh and limiting conditions on teachers and students by demanding more test preparation and requiring teachers to link all of the instruction directly to the almighty test. The teachers are fearful of principals firing them if their students score poorly, so they stress to students all year long the importance of passing the test. In the end, everyone is scared and tensions rise to unhealthy levels in the weeks leading up to standardized tests (Perlstein, 2008; Ravitch, 2010).

Critical educators must navigate these conditions. This work attempts to provide an opportunity to address the ideology and oppression that exist in schools through the use of counter-hegemonic texts. A simplistic definition of a counter-hegemonic text is a text that is counter to the hegemony of the traditional historical narrative found in the textbooks and state standards. These texts can include books, novels, pictures, music, videos, and political cartoons. However, just using a text that is different from the textbook is not enough for it to be an authentic *counter-hegemonic* text. The text also needs to provide an alternative perspective that challenges the traditional narrative. Counter-hegemonic texts are similar to culturally relevant texts, but in addition to being culturally relevant, they should provide a counter to or critique of the ideology found in textbooks. Counter-hegemonic texts can contribute to the empowering of students (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007). They go beyond being a resource to engage students and make content more relatable. Students are able to challenge and question their prior knowledge. They help build students' critical literacy skills while promoting social justice and equality. They

should also empower students to action to address the oppressive conditions of society and replace them with just social relations.

According to Kincheloe (2008), educators should be focused on empowering students. Justice and equality for all should be the goal of educators. The appropriate uses of counter-hegemonic texts can help support Kincheloe's vision. One major issue is that the disciplinary power in schools pushes educators away from using resources other than the textbook. Counter-hegemonic texts do not support social reproduction; instead, counter-hegemonic texts support a problem-posing pedagogy. As Freire (2008) writes, "Problem-posing education cannot serve the interests of the oppressor. No oppressive order could permit the oppressed to begin to question: Why?" (p. 86). Counter-hegemonic texts used in conjunction with problem-posing education cannot support current power relations. Rather, they force students to challenge marginalization and oppression directly.

As is the case with most critical practices, teachers are not normally educated on their uses unless they seek them out on their own. Due to accountability measures, schools are standardizing teaching and learning at a higher and faster rate than ever before (Ravitch, 2010). Hence, the opportunities to move beyond the textbook or the prescribed curriculum are very limited. Moreover, counter-hegemonic texts require more work than traditional textbooks. Textbooks often work in tandem with resource packets, videos, and worksheets designed by textbook publishers not to require a lot of independent work from the teacher. They are intentionally designed to be "teacher-proof" (Sawyer, 2004). It is much easier for the teacher to rely on the textbook than to seek out texts that could enhance their students' learning experience. Furthermore,

since counter-hegemonic texts provide a space for multiple voices and multiple perspectives that challenge traditional ideology, educators have difficulty using them because the social studies curriculum in public schools does not allow for multiple perspectives (Rios & Rogers Stanton, 2011; Kincheloe, 2001).

Many teachers are wary of going beyond the standardized curriculum and textbook (Perlstein, 2008; Ravitch, 2010). It increases their workload and can draw the attention of the administration. For example, at the elementary school in which my wife teaches, all of the teachers were told that if they did not use the district curriculum, their jobs would be in jeopardy at the end of the school year. Obviously, this is not indicative of every school, but it highlights the challenges that many teachers face. Cultural hegemony is the determining factor in establishing curriculum in schools (Giroux, 2007). Furthermore, it is the basis for most decisions made by those in positions of power. This literature review will look at how hegemony and ideology operate in society, how ideology influences education, and how to address ideology through counter-hegemonic texts. The first part looks at how cultural hegemony can take hold in society by looking at what people are willing to support when ideology becomes normalized. The second part focuses on the culture of fear in education by describing the fear associated with high stakes accountability and how that fear affects administrators, educators, and students. High stakes testing is strangling education. The third section investigates the current state of education. The fourth part evaluates how ideology influences the social studies curricula in Texas and California. The boards of education in both states do not want educators to teach a complete history to students. The fifth section describes the need for critical hope in

education. The next two sections of this chapter concentrate on how counter-hegemonic texts, in conjunction with critical pedagogy, can challenge ideology. By using counter-hegemonic texts, students can learn to address complex issues as adults. They can learn the skills needed to address complex issues by analyzing past events and linking those events to the present. By providing students with multiple voices and perspectives, they will hopefully move beyond the fear of others while appreciating and recognizing the value that inherently exists in all human beings.

The purpose of counter-hegemonic texts in this framework is not simply to include a variety of perspectives to promote multiculturalism. It is to develop critical literacy, thinking, and questioning skills amongst students. It is an attempt to move students in a direction where they challenge the information they interact with daily. Democratic education should be the goal of all schools (Dewey, 1997). Counter-hegemonic texts are an essential part of the process of democratizing education. They allow students to deconstruct the traditional historical narrative, empowering them to have the ability to challenge and reframe the existing economic, social, and political relations in America.

Cultural Hegemony in America

Gramsci (1971) developed the theory of cultural hegemony by analyzing how a singular ruling-class can impose its views on a diverse society. By dictating cultural and societal norms, the ruling-class maintains their position of power by normalizing their views through layered social structures. Through a complex weaving of multiple social structures, the ruling-class maintains the status quo by getting the dominated

classes to accept its societal views as rational and objective. By validating their ideology, the ruling-class no longer has to use force to maintain their position of power, but they use social constructs. Althusser (1970) extended this to show how social structures act as ideological state apparatuses. These ideological state apparatuses, such as religion, education, the media, the judicial system, the political system, unions, and the arts form the foundation of social beliefs and practices. Through control of the ideological state apparatuses, the ruling-class is able to validate its ideology by normalizing its social constructs. Its normalized social constructs perpetuate the status quo while the base (the dominated class) complicity supports the ruling-class. In reality, they are regularly acting against their own interests but do not perceive it as such because the power relations have become normalized. For example, an analysis of pre-World War II Germany highlights cultural hegemony in practice. Hitler and the Nazis were able to rise to power during an economically perilous time. Once in power though, they were able to gain control over all of the ideological state apparatuses and impose their social constructs related to Judaism and non-Aryans on the German people as a whole. This extreme case of cultural hegemony led to complicit imprisonment of millions of Jewish people and others, and eventually produced the Holocaust. The Nazis were able to normalize their views that Jewish people were evil and deceitful through institutions such as schools, the media, and politics. Obviously, this is an intentionally extreme case, but it offers an example of how the ruling-class can utilize hegemony and ideology to gain the support of the base. What is important to note about this example, is that Hitler was actually

democratically elected, and he then transformed Germany into a totalitarian state that controlled the masses through ideology and fear.

In a democracy, cultural hegemony is going to operate in a more complicated fashion. One would hope that something like the Holocaust could not happen in a place like the United States due to rights guaranteed by the Constitution. However, when people are controlled by ideology, it is difficult to look beyond the social constructs imposed by the social structures. Those in power can harness these social structures to gain support for their agendas and maintain their position of privilege. For example, the media, schools, and even churches have repeated the normalized belief that the United States is a purveyor of democratic righteousness internationally. Even though the United States has repeatedly overthrown democratically elected governments, this belief has become so normalized that the American people have repeatedly supported going to war (Kinzer, 2007; Klein, 2007).

When former President George W. Bush and his administration wanted to invade Iraq, he perpetuated the fear of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) getting into the hands of terrorists by misrepresenting that there was a link between Iraq and Al-Qaeda (Palast, 2006). Bush pushed this home by connecting the “War on Terror” to Iraq. Bush then capitalized on his control of the social structures by utilizing the media to propagate the beliefs that Saddam Hussein was a tyrannical dictator with ties to terrorism and he possessed WMDs. During his famous “Mission Accomplished” speech aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln he stated, “The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11th, 2001 and still goes on” (Bush, 2003). In reality though, the Bush administration planned to use Iraq’s alleged

possession of WMDs as a reason to go to war eight months before the invasion (Palast, 2006, p. 131).

September 11th provided the Bush administration with an opportunity to manipulate America's fear to maintain Bush's position of power and the positions of power occupied by his supporters from the military-industrial complex (Klein, 2007). He lied about the possible connection between 9/11 and Iraq (Snow, 2006). By giving the American people an immediate threat, he used their fear to demand an immediate solution. Bush, Cheney, and the rest of the administration provided that solution by actively supporting military action in Iraq. Instead of looking at alternatives to war with Iraq, a large majority of the American people and the American Congress supported military action against Iraq. According to a Gallup Poll conducted in March of 2003, 72% of Americans supported the U.S. war with Iraq while 75% did not think the U.S. had made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq (Gallup, CNN, & U.S.A. Today, 2003).

Why was there broad support for the Iraq war early on? How is it possible that so many Americans were so willing to succumb to the ideology of the Bush administration? First off, a very strong propaganda machine supported the Bush administration. More importantly though, the Iraq War is just another example in human history where people willingly believed leaders who promote their agendas through propagated ideology. Being reflectively critical is not something that is currently valued or fostered in America. This was also the case in 1942, when President Franklin Roosevelt ordered the internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans.

After the shocking attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the United States government launched a propaganda campaign against the Japanese (Foner, 1998). Government and war films demonized Japanese people to the point where Americans viewed them as inferior beings (Foner, 1998). Even though most of the Japanese people living in the U.S. were American citizens, Roosevelt ordered the removal and internment of 120,000 of them. The belief that Japanese Americans were acting as spies had become so normalized in the U.S., that the vast majority of Americans said nothing when 120,000 people were interned by the government (Foner, 1998). The internment of tens of thousands of American citizens would normally cause an outcry amongst the American people. Only one Senator though, Robert Taft, spoke out against this internment, and there were no large protests (Foner, 1998). Instead, the American people sat idly by or actively advocated for the removal of Japanese Americans from their neighborhoods. Propelled by propaganda and fueled by the American people's wartime paranoia, the American people supported a hate-filled policy that was unconstitutional, unethical, and unconscionable. Unfortunately, as is the norm when ruling-class ideology is the precursor to policy, rationality is rarely found.

Culture of Fear in Education

Fear creeps into all parts of society, and education has not been exempt. When the Soviets launched Sputnik into orbit in 1957, it changed the course of American education (Hiatt, 1986). There was an immediate shift of attention to math and science. The people of the United States had fallen behind their Soviet counterparts

and felt they needed to enact educational reform to regain the preeminent status of the U.S. (Powell, 2007). The Eisenhower administration viewed the launch of Sputnik as a security threat that the U.S. needed to address. Sputnik galvanized the nation to action. In 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) (Powell, 2007). The legislation increased funding for education at all levels. Initially, most educators viewed this as a positive refocus on education. However, because fear of the Soviets' missile launching capabilities was the catalyst to the increased funding levels, Congress added a caveat to the bill. The act provided \$295 million dollars for low interest loans; however, loan recipients had to swear a loyalty oath to the United States (Grossman, 1959). They were required to sign a disclaimer affidavit stating they did not believe in the overthrow of the U.S. government. By the time Congress overturned the disclaimer affidavit clause in 1962, one hundred and fifty-three universities and institutions were protesting the act and refusing NDEA funds (Benjamin et al., 2011).

The belief that reforming education is the appropriate way to compete internationally has become normalized in American discourse. From Eisenhower, to Reagan, to Bush, and now Obama, embedded in the political discourse of global competitiveness is the accepted argument that reforming education is the key to “winning the future” (Obama, 2011, para. 24). The same ideology that galvanized the nation after Sputnik also jolted the nation in 1983. The propagated Cold War fear still gripped the country when President Reagan released his national education report, *A Nation at Risk*. In this Cold War infused environment of education, politicians wrapped everything in militaristic language that bred fear in the populous (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Our Nation is at risk . . . The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people . . . If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war . . . We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament . . . (A Nation at Risk in Ansary, 2007, p. 1)

The fear-inducing language in the report was intentionally scaring the nation to action. People were supposed to believe that the current state of education was so poor that the only choice was the radical reforms proposed by Reagan. The report declared that America was suffering from a level of mediocrity that Americans would normally consider an act of war. The nation's future was in jeopardy and education, once again, was at the forefront of combating America's foreign enemies. The perceived failing of schools had to change if the country was going to rebound from this descent into mediocrity. It was an indictment against the liberal education policies of the 1970s and a harsh critique of the current state of education in the United States (Ansary, 2007). Reagan normalized this worldview through discursive power by utilizing the ideological state apparatuses of politics and the media. He used fear to limit the conversation by labeling the mediocrity of education as a grave concern for the future of America; he dictated that the discourse surrounding education must immediately address his fabricated crisis. The supposed educational crisis became the validated ideology that still exists to this day.

The combative language in *A Nation at Risk* has dictated education policy since the National Commission on Excellence in Education published it (Ansary, 2007). The attack on education and educators has been a staple of every president

since Reagan. Being tough on education is a safe critique for politicians because it overlooks the social welfare programs required to have a strong educational system (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Being tough on education does not address the social calamities facing millions of America's children (Kozol, 2005). It does not address the institutional marginalization of subaltern populations in curricula and schools (Duncan-Andrade, 2010).

The same critique of education still exists today. In his 2011 State of the Union address, President Obama made education a key focus. He stated that, "This is our generation's Sputnik moment" and that education reform was necessary to "winning the future" (Obama, 2011). He and his Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, regularly cite America's failing schools as the impetus for Race to the Top reform (Obama, 2011; Duncan, 2011). This reform is really just an extension of the reforms of NDEA, *A Nation at Risk*, and Bush's No Child Left Behind policy. The reforms have shifted and become more encompassing, but at its core, they demand more accountability, more classes for students, and increased flexibility over the hiring and firing of teachers. It is a continuation of the legacy of NDEA that looks at education as the training grounds for future combatants in the war for global dominance. This educational policy has far-reaching implications on America's youth and educators. It imposes harsh accountability measures on them with strict consequences of school closures and job loss. It breeds militarism in schools that should be some of the most welcoming places that any child encounters.

Current State of Education

Cultural hegemony operates through passive obedience and compliance of the populous (Gramsci, 1971). Schools operate within cultural hegemony as ideological state apparatuses that also actively suppress disobedience (Althusser, 1970).

Administrators and educators reflect society by frequently teaching children not to question or be critical (Ayers, Ladson-Billings, Michie, & Noguera, 2008).

Questioning those in authority is unacceptable in schools and in the larger society (Zinn & Macedo, 2006). The hegemonic superstructure of schools place children in a culture of compliance and obedience. This culture hinders students' criticality and social activism. Ravitch (2010) argues in her latest book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, that the current educational system is failing students. The current high-stakes accountability system places so much importance on test scores that principals' and educators' jobs depend upon how well their students do on tests. Administrators have resorted to bludgeoning their educators into compliance because the stakes are so high. Educators are subjecting students to knowingly harmful education practices out of fear of job loss. As one example among many, Ravitch (2010) chronicles how the San Diego school district gave control to Alan Bersin. Bersin's style was to force teachers to go along with his reforms or to quit. As one San Diego educator noted, "People complied because of fear. All up and down the system, there was fear" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 62). Bersin's totalitarian style left educators feeling angry and unwanted. Instead of empowering teachers, he was dictating his reforms on them. Teachers were unwilling to speak out because they were afraid of being fired. The principals placed students into programs, such as three hour long test taking strategy classes, that teachers knew were harmful, but they had no outlet. When a

normalized ideology, such as high stakes accountability, controls the educational system, it breeds obedience and compliance. Those who are ultimately harmed are the students who receive the brunt of damaging educational practices. They are subdued into becoming compliant test-takers and unquestioning individuals that are spoon-fed direct instruction.

High-stakes accountability in schools leads administrators and teachers to make unconscionable decisions out of fear of losing their jobs or their schools being closed (McNeil et al., 2008). Due to their fear, administrators have devised strategies to game the system by intentionally manipulating test scores. In Houston, administrators held back students because they were “liabilities” on state mandated tests (McNeil et al., 2008). By holding students back in ninth grade, they could not reach testable grade levels. Thus, their scores could not detrimentally affect the school’s rating. This led to an increased drop out rate, but also higher test scores. In these same schools, educators were forced to teach to the standardized tests while sacrificing what they knew to be best practices. (McNeil et al., 2008). The focus was not providing students with quality education. Rather, the focus was simply on getting students to pass a test. If the student could not pass the test, then they were “triaged” out of the system (McNeil et al., 2008, p. 36). Administrators forced educators to reshape their classes to focus on passing the test. Similar policies have been enacted across the nation (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Perlstein, 2008; Ravitch, 2010, Kozol, 2005). With the focus being placed solely on passing the test, students across the U.S. are now graduating from high schools unprepared for college or the workplace. They are taking remedial courses at an alarming rate, taking longer to graduate, and

businesses are stating that students are less prepared to enter the workforce (Smith Amos, 2012; Staff, 2012). Moreover, and more importantly, the educational system is failing to empower students to be actively engaged citizens intent on bettering their communities and the world.

Reimers (2010) argues that in an increasingly globalized world, students must be “globally competent” and not necessarily globally competitive (p. 185). Schools are not preparing students to deal with complex issues with multiple solutions, some of which may be controversial. Teaching to the test teaches students to look for only one correct answer and not to analyze a multitude of solutions that may all be reasonable. Teaching to deal with complex issues is not a part of our current educational system. Direct instruction, which is what teaching to a test relies on, is not enough for global citizenship education and human rights education (Reimers, 2010). Students must engage with issues through a variety of methods. Students need to develop the skills necessary to address the issues they will face as adults and not be strictly prepared for tests and given direct instruction. Allowing students to address complicated issues on their own is a cornerstone in developing globally conscious citizens (Reimers, 2010). Without these skills, students will continue to be unquestioning adults consumed by cultural hegemony, and caught in a quagmire of cultural reproduction that they are unknowingly complicit in promoting.

Ideology in Social Studies Classrooms

It is difficult to develop a transformative curriculum in education because state standards embed dominant ideology into the current social studies curriculum. There

is a fear that if education does not socialize and indoctrinate American children using xenophobic and conservative ideologies, they will not maintain the status quo as adults (Loewen, 2007). The traditional American ideology acts as a form of discursive power that helps to maintain the dominance of the elites and promotes cultural reproduction (Kincheloe, 2001; Foucault, 1975). By not viewing traditional history with a critical lens, students will only learn how America is exceptional, unique, and a progressively good nation. According to the traditional narrative, over time, the U.S. has extended rights to more groups and the nation has gotten progressively better (Loewen, 2007). This narrative negates the negative impact that the United States has had on groups of people inside and outside the U.S. (Kinder & Kam, 2009). Analyzing and deconstructing the social studies curriculum provides a window into the way those in power maintain their positions of power.

California and Texas are the two most populous states in the United States. Their curricula have a tremendous impact upon the national curriculum because of their purchasing power (Stille, 2002). Textbook companies cater their textbooks to California and Texas because they want their textbooks to be on the approved adoption list in both states (Stille, 2002). Therefore, the California and Texas standards are a strong starting point to study American social studies curriculum.

California standards, for the most part, focus on facts, dates, and major events. There is not a lot of critical analysis in the standards. Students are expected to describe, discuss, and examine, but they are rarely asked to judge or evaluate. By not requiring the students to analyze history, the State Board has preemptively decided

what students need to know. More importantly, they have also decided how it needs to be known. For example, standard 11.9.1 reads:

Discuss the establishment of the United Nations (UN) and International Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the importance in shaping modern Europe and maintaining peace and international order.

In this context, the education board in California has already decided for the student that the UN, UDHR, IMF, World Bank, and GATT maintain peace and international order. However, there is another side to the issue that the standards overlook.

California does not teach that the UN, IMF, and the World Bank have worked in conjunction to stranglehold underdeveloped nations into complying with their trade demands. They regularly will lend money to countries as long as those countries only use the money to trade with the countries making the loans (Klein, 2007). They also continuously keep those countries beholden to them by forgiving part of the debt for trade concessions or by gaining increased access to markets (Stone, 2009).

By using standards such as this, the California State Board is teaching students not to think critically and blindly to accept the standards as a normalized form of ideology. The standards take for granted that the organizations are morally just. As an alternative, standards should allow students to investigate institutions on their own with a full understanding of their history. If standards only maintain the status quo of a marginalizing and oppressive school system, they will help reproduce institutionalized discrimination in the future. Students need to be able to deconstruct and analyze the system itself if they are going to be able to transform it (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007).

Both California and Texas have standards that address the imperialism of the United States in the South Pacific after the Spanish-American War. However, both standards have labeled it “U.S. expansion” (TEA, 113.41.c.4.A & California DOE, 11.4.2). These standards fall under sections on the U.S. emerging as a world power. Yet, when Japan and Soviet Russia expanded, the standards did not call it expansion. Rather, it was labeled aggression. By selecting expansion to label U.S. actions and aggression to label Japanese and Soviets actions, these two standards are teaching students that when the U.S. takes control over foreign lands through force, it is acceptable. Conversely, a more critical reading of this time in history should include an evaluation of the legality and justness behind conquering the Philippines amidst a popular uprising led by Emilio Aguinaldo. The current framework does not allow an analysis though, because of a narrow perspective. The State Boards’ standards are teaching students that the oppressive actions of the U.S. government are acceptable. They are not teaching students to critically analyze history.

Consequently, when Soviet Russia and Japan expand, they are viewed as antagonists and students should view them with fear. When someone is an aggressor, someone must stop him. Thus, if a country is acting as an aggressor, it too must be stopped. By labeling Soviet Russia and Japan as aggressors, it justifies the United States’ actions against both countries. It justifies the dropping of the Atomic bombs and the Cold War. It nicely labels one side good and the other side evil. It provides students with easy, tight categories that they do not need to deconstruct.

When faced with such a limiting curriculum, what are the options for a critical educator? While critical educators will obviously critique and take issue with the

current standards, they also have an obligation to help their students graduate. They cannot simply lampoon their student's future by ignoring the standards. At the same time though, they cannot support a system of cultural reproduction. As their students move beyond high school and are faced with rhetoric laced with dominant ideology, they need to be able to deconstruct the rhetoric. If students do not practice this in schools, they will not be able to analyze rhetoric as adults. A critical analysis of the standards and the textbook is needed then.

In 2010, Texas went through a revision of its standards. A major theme of the new Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) is a move towards the celebration of the free enterprise system and conservative economic policies. For example, the old standard read, "analyze causes of economic growth and prosperity in the 1920s" (TEA, 113.41.c.13.A) while the new standard reads, "analyze causes of economic growth and prosperity in the 1920s, including Warren G. Harding's Return to Normalcy, reduced taxes, and increased production efficiencies" (TEA, 113.41.c.16.A).

Former President Warren G. Harding gave his famous "Return to Normalcy" speech on May 14, 1920. He called for citizens to pull themselves up independently and not to rely on the government. "The world needs to be reminded that all human ills are not curable by legislation, and that quantity of statutory enactment and excess of government offer no substitute for quality of citizenship" (Harding, 1920, para. 5). The theme of his speech was a call for smaller government and increased economic deregulation. What the Texas standards overlook is that the lack of government oversight and reduced taxes contributed greatly to the Great Depression (Foner, 1998).

Similarly, lack of government oversight and the Bush tax cuts contributed to the current global recession (Klein, 2007). Combining Warren G. Harding's "Return to Normalcy" and a call for reduced taxes is the current conservative economic philosophy (Republican National Committee, 2008). The Texas SBOE has decided to promote and reinforce conservative ideology through the standards. Students do not learn to analyze economic issues from a variety of perspectives. Rather, the SBOE tries to socialize them into conservative philosophy. It is supporting the cultural hegemony by attempting to limit the ideological breadth educators are able to use in teaching students.

The Texas SBOE further promotes conservative economic philosophy by including Reaganomics in the standards. One objective is, "describe Ronald Reagan's leadership in domestic and international policies, including Reaganomics and Peace Through Strength" (TEA, 113.41.c.10). Two central goals of Reaganomics were to reduce so called "entitlement" programs and reduce taxes. Economists contest the success or failure of Reaganomics. Proponents of the Milton Friedman philosophy of economics point to the uptick in economic growth during the Reagan years (Rutledge, 2004). Keynesians argue that Paul Volcker, head of the Federal Reserve, caused the upward trend, not Reagan's reduced taxes (Krugman, 2008; Greenspan, 2007). They point out that to cover the federal budget-deficits caused by reducing taxes, Reagan raised the national debt from \$700 billion to \$3 trillion (U.S. Department of Treasury, 2010). This debate is one that currently carries on to the present day. Allowing students to evaluate both sides of the debate, as opposed to telling them which side is right, is one way to prepare students to evaluate issues as adults. Due to the SBOE's

ideological bias, they have littered the curriculum with standards that limit critical thinking and questioning. They are imposing their ideology onto students by enacting a strict paradigmatic framework in the classroom.

Another issue that arises when analyzing the social studies standards is that the SBOE directs educators to only teach information about individuals and events that the SBOE considers “safe.” For instance, students are taught Nixon was a great leader during the Vietnam War, but not that he was forced to resign because of the Watergate scandal. Another individual, whose complete story is omitted by both California and Texas, is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In both the Texas and California standards, students are required to read King’s “I Have a Dream” speech and his “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” The State Boards consider these speeches safe because they promote unity and justice for all while not attacking the United States or the government. What the standards neglect to include are his opposition to the Vietnam War and criticism of U.S. domestic policy. In his speech, “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence,” he argues against the war.

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home, and death and corruption in Vietnam. (King, 1967, para. 44)

This piece of the historical narrative is not included because it challenges the right-wing view of American exceptionalism. The traditional narrative does not account for dissenting opinions, especially not from individuals who are propped up to be exemplars of how good Americans should behave.

What is evident after analyzing these standards is that there is a fear of public dissent and questioning amongst the state boards in Texas and California that they exhibit throughout 11th grade U.S. history standards. These standards try to push forward the ideology that America is an exceptional nation that has a just and righteous history. This history negates and ignores nonconforming views of history. These standards teach conformity and obedience, not critical questioning and thinking. Critical educators have to find an outlet where they can work within the standards while constantly being mindful of their oppressive nature.

The Need for Critical Hope

Educators must criticize the hegemonic superstructure of schools. The majority of public schools are oppressive and marginalizing places for students (Rios and Rogers-Stanton, 2011). There are students who are currently being marginalized without an outlet. Therefore, they cannot wait for an educational revolution. They need educators now more than ever. Duncan-Andrade (2009) details how we must stop offering youth false hope and advocates the need for critical hope. He speaks of hope not as a psychological construct, but as a social construct of the shared struggle of teachers and students. Following in the footsteps of Cornel West's vision of hope, Duncan-Andrade chronicles the need for what he labels critical hope. He argues that there are three enemies of critical hope in schools. The first is *hokey hope*. This is where forces from the outside tell students that things are going to get better and that they only need to pull themselves out of their situations. Those in power view this as providing support and hope to students, but it comes from a position of privilege that

does not relate to the student. The second is *mythical hope*. Mythical hope celebrates the individual exceptions that are able to arise out of oppression and suffering. It promotes a “myth of meritocracy” that negates the oppression and marginalization that millions of students of color experience (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 3). It relies on the law of averages where the few exceptions are able to be “successful” in spite of their surroundings. People overstate these exceptions to the point where people think that there actually are no underlying institutional issues supporting the oppression. The third enemy is *hope deferred*. Hope deferred is a critique of social inequality while not responding with a “transformative pedagogical process” (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 4). Duncan-Andrade points out that the critical Left recognizes that students are not to blame and they shift the blame to the system while not attempting to transform the system. It offers what he calls deferred hope to the student so that once the system changes, their situation will get better, but does not actually address their current needs to do so.

The opposite of false hope is *critical hope*. According to Duncan-Andrade (2009), critical hope “demands a committed and active struggle against the evidence in order to change the deadly tides of wealth inequality, group xenophobia, and personal despair” (p. 5). He argues that there are three elements of critical hope: material, Socratic, and audacious. These three elements must operate together. *Material hope* recognizes that even though schools are oppressive in nature, there are cracks where educators can affect the quality of teaching and resources that students receive. This may not be an ideal situation for learning, and the progress may be painful, but it is necessary for any growth to exist. The courage to go down this painful path is what

Duncan-Andrade (2009) calls *Socratic hope*. Finally, *audacious hope* is the willingness to share in the suffering of others. To sacrifice yourself so that others may experience the successes that you may have experienced. It is recognizing that we succeed or fail collectively as a people and cannot withdraw ourselves from the pain of our students. Educators must share in their students' struggle and figure out how to engage students' "righteous rage" and direct it towards a path of radical healing (p. 9). Only then can educators actually provide students with critical hope. While recognizing that Duncan-Andrade is using the concept of hope liberally in his work, his work is important because it refocuses the efforts of critical educators to not only critique the educational system, but also to work from within it to assist the students who are currently in the struggle.

Educators must find the cracks in the system where there are opportunities to engage their students in the transformative process of what Duncan-Andrade calls "radical healing" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p.9). Radical healing is where students and teachers come together, share their struggles, and direct their anger towards changing their lived conditions and the conditions of society towards a path of social justice. They form a shared understanding of their pain and form a shared language of oppositional ideology. They recognize the system is marginalizing, but simultaneously not all encompassing. There are cracks that cast in light to offer opportunities for transformation.

In her thirty years of research, bell hooks has found that the spaces in schools are where the most powerful work can happen (hooks, 2010; hooks, 2009; hooks, 2003; hooks, 1994). By chronicling the educational systems in California, Kentucky,

Wisconsin, and the U.S. system as a whole, hooks concludes that the “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” of schools systematically marginalizes students of color, in particular Black women (hooks, 2009, p. 20). Therefore, teachers must find the spaces where they can empower their students to address this marginalization. Fleischer (2009) concludes in his research that a similar path to emancipatory education is available to teachers. He researches the use of Paulo Freire’s, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, with both high school and college students. He finds that educators who use the available spaces in schools to engage in an emancipatory curriculum spark radical change in their students. He criticizes those who simply analyze the educational superstructure while overlooking the students who are currently in the oppressive superstructure. He finds that many well-minded educators attack the superstructure, but forget that students still need help. Fleischer models Freire’s model of literacy to engage his students. He uses counter-hegemonic texts and self-reflection with them to achieve what he calls critical praxis, which is similar to Duncan-Andrade’s notion of critical hope. His actions are very similar to Duncan-Andrade and he experiences a similar outcome. By using Freire, with students, he empowers them to question the oppression they face while forming a shared language where they can critique and pinpoint the oppression.

Both of these authors provide a foundation that critical educators can emulate. The concept of critical hope is a powerful one in that it does not provide a scapegoat for the educator. Educators cannot blame the system for their failures. They must accept the responsibility of developing a transformative pedagogical process. By finding the cracks, or spaces, educators can appropriate the system and transform their

classrooms into places of empowerment. Through this process, teachers will need resources that support the emancipatory process of critical pedagogy. When educators find the cracks, counter-hegemonic texts can supplement the necessary emancipatory process by providing critiques and perspectives that are not found in the standards or textbooks.

Counter-Hegemonic Texts

If critical educators are going to challenge the ideology of the standards and textbooks, educators must utilize counter-hegemonic texts. They provide an opportunity for multiple perspectives and voices to enter the classroom. Likewise, they can challenge preconceived apprehensions by addressing stereotypes and misconceptions. They provide an alternative to the traditional retelling of history that regularly marginalizes subaltern groups. They can show how power and privilege has been historically maintained, offering insight on current power struggles. Moreover, they can help students appropriate the language of the oppressor so they can use it to liberate themselves.

In his book, *Lies My Educator Told Me*, Loewen (2007) seeks to counter traditional historical lies found in textbooks. Whether they are blatant or unintentionally omitted Loewen points out the multitude of lies promulgated by U.S. history textbooks. His book takes on complicated issues in American history and attempts to address the singular narrative provided in U.S. history classrooms. He analyzes six of the most popular textbooks and points out where the authors got it wrong or misleads students. A strong historiography directly challenges the tale that

America has progressively gotten better as a nation since its inception. Loewen points out that at different times people evaluate individuals, ideas, and movements differently. For example, textbooks have depicted John Brown in vast extremes over time. John Brown is a famous abolitionist that attempted to start a slave revolt at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (Reynolds, 2005). Before 1890, textbooks depicted him as a sane man. From 1890 to 1970, textbooks showed that Brown had somehow gone insane and was full with rage. Since 1970, textbooks are slowly returning to the notion that he regained his sanity.

This type of historiography shows that students must view history in context. A counter-hegemonic text such as this teaches students that history is a social construct. History is not neutral. History must be contextualized to the American culture and society in which historians are writing. For example, Loewen argues that there was a nexus of race relations between 1877 and the Civil Rights Movement that changed public opinion on slavery and the Civil War. Historians reversed earlier opinions and began to demonize the alleged Northern “aggression” during the Civil War and Reconstruction (Loewen, 2007). This is something that students should view in context though, because the South was demanding this revisionist retelling in history books. Historians met this demand by supplying textbooks that coincided with popular Southern beliefs about the Civil War. Similarly, the current Texas demands of new conservative textbooks will change the landscape of the popular narrative. The new textbooks will have to reflect the new Texas standards or the Texas SBOE will not place them on the approved adoption list. Texas holds a tight grip on textbooks in the nation because its buying power is so large (Stille, 2002). Smaller states will

receive textbooks that meet Texas' standards and not necessarily their own (Elliott, 2009). Students using a book such as Loewen's could deconstruct how historians wrote the historical narrative in the past. From there, they would be better prepared to deconstruct the current historical narrative they are faced with in social studies classrooms.

Another popular counter-hegemonic text is Zinn's, *A People's History of the United States* (2005). It focuses on the history of common people and not those in power. History is normally a retelling of major events, dates, and famous White males. Standards often ignore how the decisions of those in power affect the people that must live with the consequences. They also ignore how common people's decisions affect those in power. He shows how the decisions of those in power are often not in the best interest of the people. Rather, they sustain the elite's dominance over the people. It provides a counter-narrative to popular textbooks by telling the "people's history." By only teaching the history of those in power, educators are inadvertently helping to maintain their power in the United States.

Historically, education has been used as a tool to maintain power (Rios & Rogers Stanton, 2011). Whether it is in Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, or even late in U.S. South in the late 19th century, the educational system was utilized to propagate the ideology that supported the situational cultural hegemonies (Harman, 2008). Thus, educators need to teach students to question those in power. They need to be able to question critically politicians' agendas to look for potential motives that may not be in the best interest of the people. Counter-hegemonic texts can help facilitate this by educating students that those in power have often made decisions that have been

detrimental to the American people while being beneficial to politicians and their supporters. If students are not prepared to analyze critically those in power while they are students, they will be unable to do so when they are adults.

The book of Loewen and that of Zinn are two of the most widely used counter-hegemonic texts in social studies classrooms today. They are excellent because they are well documented and written at a level that is readable for most high school students. They reinforce critical literacy because their premises are that traditional history has gotten it wrong or neglected the history of marginalized groups altogether. Their books have reached a large audience and have helped in shifting the historical narrative to a more critical one. In many ways, the revised Texas standards are trying to counter books such as these. Both are national bestsellers and widely used by social studies teachers. By narrowly refining the standards, the Texas SBOE is attempting to reshape the curriculum to eliminate these types of books from the classroom. They have their limits, as does any text, and one of the limits is the lack of focus on the United States' relation to the rest of the globe.

America on the World Stage: A Global Approach to U.S. History is a counter-hegemonic text that attempts to provide a global approach to U.S. history (Reichard & Dickson, 2008). This counter-hegemonic text directly addresses the xenophobic nature of California and Texas' standards. While those standards attempt to negate the impact the world has had on the United States, this book places the U.S. in a global context. It is a series of essays written by both historians and high school teachers. The book attempts to reverse the narrative flow of American history.

Historians typically write history from a limited perspective. As with all individuals, historians are situated in their time period's social contexts and their work reflects those contexts. This leads to historians writing history from biased perspective that may not be visible until decades later when future historians are able to analyze the time period holistically. For example, what is currently happening within the U.S.'s borders or directly affecting the U.S. is the primary focus of most U.S. history textbooks. Textbooks normally only include events beyond America's border if they play a major role in United States history, such as the tearing down of the Berlin Wall or World War II. Rarely do American history textbooks focus on how the social and cultural happenings of the world influence the United States. They limit the scope to American society and culture and its influence on other nations, not the reverse. *American on the World Stage* though, attempts to teach students that globalization is not a new phenomenon. Countries have been dependent on each other for thousands of years. Therefore, the development of the United States has not been an isolated event. While it may be the most dominant nation in the world now, it has historically relied on other nations and will continue to do so.

By using a counter-hegemonic text that places U.S. history in a global context, educators would teach students that other nations are valuable. It teaches that other nations are important to the success and failures of the United States. It directly challenges the xenophobic nature of social studies standards. Students are taught to recognize the interconnected nature of all humans. In this narrative, all people have worth because one nation is not superior to all others. Furthermore, it does not

marginalize students from other nations by devaluing their contributions to human history.

In contrast, the Texas standards ask students to “describe how American values are different and unique from those of other nations” (TEA, 113.41.c.22.A). The Texas SBOE also expects students to “identify the impact of popular American culture on the rest of world” (TEA, 113.41.c.25.C). The goal of these standards is for students to recognize the United States as exceptional in comparison to other nations. U.S. history, in this framework, is independent of other nations. The California State Board of Education wants its educators to teach that the United States is a model to other nations (California DOE, 2000). It is true that the United States has served as a model for other nations. For example, other nations have used the U.S. Constitution as a model for their own (Maddox, 2007). The ideas found in the Constitution were not unique to the U.S. though and were developed and formalized elsewhere. Moreover, the United States has also used other nations as models. When African American soldiers fought in World War II alongside foreign integrated units, it was a precursor to the demand for integration at home (Foner, 2011). By limiting the scope of the standards, both Texas and California are reinforcing xenophobia. These narrow-minded curricula ignore the affect of other nations on the United States.

Educators can address limited curricula with counter-hegemonic texts that promote a view of history that recognizes and honors the value of all people (Gay, 2010). This type of exploration must have a theoretical foundation of social justice and shared peace found in critical pedagogy. Counter-hegemonic texts, on their own, can be extremely powerful in the classroom, but still fall short of being tools of liberation.

Without the language needed to break down the ideology found in schools, educators using counter-hegemonic texts will only be complicit in cultural reproduction. The language of critical pedagogy provides a framework to deconstruct ideology in society. It empowers educators and students to question cultural hegemony. Furthermore, it empowers them to form a shared language used to find the cracks in the system where they can seek to actively change society. Counter-hegemonic texts informed by critical pedagogy can prove vital in this process by helping students and educators explore and identify oppression.

Critical Pedagogy and Counter-Hegemonic Texts

Giroux (2003) argues that pedagogy must allow the oppressed to explore and identify the oppressive nature of schooling and society.

Critical pedagogy opens up a space where students should be able to come to terms with their own power as critical agents; it provides a sphere where the unconditional freedom to question and assert is central to the purpose of the university, if not democracy itself. (Giroux, 2007, p.1)

It must be motivating enough for students and teachers to attempt to reclaim and appropriate the current structural inequalities and replace them with just and equal social structures. Education addresses issues in isolation making it difficult for educators to explore the oppressive nature of society (Giroux, 2001). This creates a lack of historical consciousness in education. The culture of positivism that controls education does not comprehend the “world holistically as a network of interconnections” (Giroux, 2001, p. 13). Rather, there is a narrow view that limits the examination of the specific economic, social, and political structures that have

intentionally framed the world. The culture of positivism acts as if these structures appeared naturally. The lack of critical examination denies students the opportunity to recognize the oppressive and marginalizing way schools have siphoned them into the dominant hegemonic ideology. Under the guise of neutrality and objectivity, teachers are complicit in this oppression and help maintain the dominant political structure. Instead, teachers need to be fair, but never neutral or objective (Zinn, 2005; Giroux, 2001). It is impossible. Moreover, it is dangerous because it perpetuates cultural reproduction that marginalizes and subordinates the oppressed. Educators must use critical pedagogy to counter positivism (Giroux, 2007). They must create spaces where students can critically examine hegemony and ideology and come to terms with their power as critical agents (Giroux, 2007).

Kincheloe (2001) points out social studies classrooms are the natural place for spaces of exploration. Like Giroux, Kincheloe notes that social studies cannot maintain neutrality in the classroom. Every decision that an educator makes is political in nature. Therefore, educators must be conscientious of their curricular decisions. Using the lens of critical pedagogy, educators can recognize the hidden curriculum that is found in standards and textbooks. They can empower themselves and their students to be able to name the hidden curriculum that supports the hegemony of schools (Kincheloe, 2001). To understand the hegemony of schools, educators situated within critical pedagogy must deconstruct the ideology of the traditional American historical narrative, found in the hidden curriculum. In this framework, social studies educators must unpack it to develop socially aware and socially active students. This kind of social studies education moves towards democratic education with an

examination of what is ethically required to be a citizen in a globalized world (Kincheloe, 2001). It explores the issues of the abuse of centralized power in the hands of a few while the poorest and most vulnerable people are being exploited. It reconceptualizes the notion of citizenship to be something more than simply someone who votes and stays informed. Rather, citizens need to be socially active in their communities and society where they have “the ability to interpret the world they confront daily” (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 212).

Similarly, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2007) argue critical pedagogy fosters a counter-cultural community of practice, intent on addressing the social and structural inequalities that exist in communities and schools. These two critical pedagogues use critical pedagogy to inform their practice in the work of empowering students. They bridge the theory of Giroux, Kincheloe, and other critical pedagogues with their practice. Their work is a strong example of what can happen when educators move towards democratic schooling that embraces socially active students. Part of their pedagogy is the use of counter-hegemonic texts that are culturally relevant. They advocate that educators need to get to know the cultures and communities of their students. From there, they are able to develop what Gay (2010) would call a culturally relevant pedagogy. They can then combine traditional canon with counter-hegemonic texts (music lyrics, films, music, poetry, and literature) that are culturally relevant to their students. Their students are able to make connections between the texts they are more familiar with and the classical works. They feel comfortable reading and challenging the traditional texts. By conducting a critical reading, students are able to

critically question the portrayal of people of color and the class and gender issues in the canonical texts.

When Duncan-Andrade and Morrell did this in their classrooms, they experienced a very high level of success. In each instance, students achieved at a higher rate than what would be expected based on the statistics of their peers (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007). Students were taking AP exams, graduating, and going to four-year universities at much higher rates than their urban peers. They did not attribute this success to simply the implementation of counter-hegemonic texts. They felt their holistic approach of building a counter-cultural community focused on the deconstructing of canonical texts through counter-hegemonic texts empowered the students to be academically and critically prepared for both high school and their lives moving forward. The students were engaging in critical praxis. This is the main benefit of counter-hegemonic texts if used properly in the classroom. As Duncan-Andrade and Morrell show, educators can use counter-hegemonic texts to help empower students. They used counter-hegemonic texts to help educate students to a point where they were comfortable engaging in traditional textbooks that they had previously feared. These students always knew the traditional textbooks did not provide a narrative of their history. They gained the language express those frustrations. Moreover, they gained a shared understanding of a language of social justice. Many of their students are currently engaged in social activism in their communities after graduating from college. A purpose of their curriculum was to help students obtain academic literacy that they would use in their professional and civic lives. The students conducted participatory action research. Instead of learning about

history or research, they actually went out and conducted research. The research challenged the social and structural inequalities of their communities. The use of counter-hegemonic texts in this setting contributed to the empowering of students to change their lived conditions and the conditions of their community.

The example of Duncan-Andrade and Morrell is a powerful one. They intentionally got to know their students and found culturally relevant counter-hegemonic texts that had similar themes or issues in the mandated canonical texts that they had to teach. From there, they were able to get their students interested and familiar with the themes and issues so when they investigated the canonical texts they were not as intimidating or meaningless. In addition, they were then able to do a comparison of the texts focusing why one is taught in the standard curriculum while the other is disregarded. This taught students critical literacy skills that could extend well beyond the classroom while simultaneously breaking down the oppressive nature of education. They provide concrete evidence that utilizing counter-hegemonic texts can help empower students. It can promote justice and equality. It can also equip students with the skills they need to challenge the traditional historical narrative that largely overlooks the suffering they face on a daily basis. This example also should serve as a caution. Counter-hegemonic texts by themselves will not achieve the outcome that Duncan-Andrade and Morrell experienced. They had to combine the use of counter-hegemonic texts with critical pedagogy founded on the ideas of Paulo Freire to implement a transformative pedagogy.

Critical Epistemology

Before moving on to chapter three and the research design I intend to use in my study, I want to step back and briefly analyze the theoretical underpinnings of the critical epistemology that will frame my research from a literary standpoint. Critical researchers build their research upon the foundation that is critical epistemology. Critical epistemology differs from the epistemological approaches of many researchers in the social sciences. As Carspecken (1996) notes, “Most mainstream research epistemologies implicitly depend on our experience of sense perception to derive their definitions of validity, truth, and so on” (p. 11). By relying on sense perception as the basis for theories of truth, researchers rely on observation. They learn about the world by observing it and that codified forms of “unbiased and repeatable observations” ensure validity (Carspecken, 1996, p.11). They rely on a feeling of certainty that the way they see the world is the way the world exists (Carspecken, 1996).

Phenomenology has since broken down this epistemological lens. Husserl (1970) argues that when we see an object, we are only seeing one side of the object through our perspective (as cited in Carspecken, 1996, p. 12). Unconscious synthetic activity connects perspectives together so that the object is constituted. This means that when we view one side of the object, we unconsciously constitute the rest of the object based on experiences and future expectations of what the rest of the object will be. According to phenomenologists, object existence is not known immediately through sense perception, but through unconscious activity that tears away at the underpinnings of the epistemological approach of the natural sciences that utilize sense perception. Therefore, the only guaranteed knowledge is the perspective experience of the observer, which is not the object being observed, but rather the

phenomenon of viewing the object (Carspecken, 1996). The phenomenon of viewing the object relies on the certainty of presence and forms the basis of the phenomenological theory of truth.

Postructuralists and postmodernists extended the work of phenomenologists and deconstructed the idea of presence. Derrida (1973) utilized the work of Husserl to show that phenomenology implodes when taken to its furthest extent because observers cannot simultaneously be aware of an object and be aware that they are aware of the object (as cited in Carspecken, 1996, p. 14). This creates disequilibrium in attention where the observer alternates between viewing the object and noting that the object exists. Derrida argues the presence of the object becomes a belief and not a certainty where the observer relies on the trace of the object right before the moment of awareness (Carspecken, 1996). The trace acts as a sign that represents “objects given in presence” (Carspecken, 1996, p.14). For example, the word “sky” acts as a sign that represents our perception of our vision of the sky at the moment the sky is present to our consciousness. The “sky” and all signs can repeat an infinite number of times. The infinite repetitions of signs constitute our understanding of the sky. This is the opposite of the phenomenological approach, which argued that the phenomenon of viewing an object created the sign (Carspecken, 1996).

Due to the fact that infinite repetition of signs constitutes understanding, postmodernists argue that there are limitless possibilities of interpretation and there are no standards for judging interpretations (Carspecken, 1996). If our reality is constructed through our understanding of signs, and the signs are constructed through repetition that is unique to each one of us then our reality and our truth can only be

accessed by us. Therefore, there can be no reality and there can be no truth (Carspecken, 1996). Instead, there are only limitless interpretations that can be accessed through deconstruction. Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) label this pure form of postmodernism as “ludic postmodernism.” Ludic postmodernism confronts critical researchers’ value orientations because a lack of reality and truth calls into question the purpose of their work. If oppression is simply deconstructable through rhetoric as opposed to research, then critical research serves no purpose. If a critical researcher cannot make a truth claim that unoppressing the oppressed is needed, then critical research falls apart.

To address this issue, Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) have reappropriated postmodern thought and relocated it through critical epistemology (Carspecken, 1996). As opposed to viewing signs and signifiers as related through universal perceptual experience, they argue that they are “mediated through power relations” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 15). Critical researchers can then use standards of truth to analyze and unpack such power relations (Carspecken, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Critical epistemology provides criteria to judge theories of power relations. This epistemological approach differs heavily from qualitative researchers that rely on visual perception. For example, constructivists agree with criticalists that we are heavily influenced by our value orientations; however, they go further to argue that what we see is constructed by those value orientations (Carspecken, 1996). Thus, constructivists argue that there are multiple realities constructed by individuals and culture and not a single reality (Carspecken, 1996). Logically though, this creates immense issues when approaching research. If there are multiple realities created by

both individuals and cultures, it is then impossible to gain access to those realities or even know if those realities exist. Transcultural communication and interaction would be nonexistent without a shared reality. Using visual perception as the basis for gaining access to a culture eventually creates a similar problem that ludic postmodernism creates because there can be no standard of evaluating visual perception (Carspecken, 1996).

Rather than relying on visual perception, critical qualitative research relies on shared perception that is structured communicatively (Carspecken, 1996). Carspecken notes Mead's influence on critical epistemologists by stating that "Mead's idea that self-consciousness is the result of internalizing culturally given expectations of routine social interaction" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 19). Hence, our reactions to given scenarios are not reliant on visual perception, but our internalizations of cultural norms that create a shared perception. So, instead of utilizing realities, critical epistemology utilizes three ontological categories that are structured communicatively. Carspecken has labeled these subjective, objective, and normative-evaluative ontological categories. The subjective ontological category is the state of mind and feelings that only the person experiencing those feelings can access. The objective ontological category is where all people have access to existing objects and actions. The normative-evaluative ontological category is the existing "appropriateness of activity" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 20).

These three ontological categories give critical researchers access to subjective, objective, and normative-evaluative truth claims that form the basis of critical qualitative research. Truth claims are validated through consent. Carspecken

(1996) points out that, “unequal power distorts truth claims” (p.21). For example, we often agree with others not because we believe their claims are true, but because we consent to the truth claim due to unequal power relations. Unequal power influences every action, however miniscule, and is the reason why critical researchers maintain their value orientations. Critical epistemologists’ utilization of the three ontological categories analyzes thought and action mediated through power relations. Truth claims are explored through power relations and system structure using a methodology that allows for such an analysis. Critical qualitative research meets the needs of critical researchers utilizing a critical epistemological framework.

Summary

Education must address the cultural hegemony of American society. Those in power utilize ideology and ideological state apparatuses to push forward their political agendas. Therefore, educators must teach students how to deconstruct rhetoric. Arizona recently passed a law that allows officers to question, detain, and require identification of people they “reasonably” suspect are in the country without authorization (Archibold, 2010). Governor Jan Brewer declared she was signing the bill because the federal government has refused to fix the crisis caused by illegal immigration (Brewer, 2010). Brewer claims the violence in Mexico is creeping north of the border into Arizona. She argues that drug cartels are threatening the quality of life in Arizona. She has done a great job of framing illegal immigration as a problem that Arizonans must address. She builds off people’s existing apprehensions about violence to gain support for her bill. By doing so, she creates the framework under

which people will discuss the issue. Since it is a problem, if one does not like her solution, he/she must come up with a better one.

On the other side, those critical of the bill are also using ideological speech to argue against the bill. They are claiming it “institutionalizes racial-profiling” and violates the Fourth Amendment (Phillips, 2010). Writer Aaron Phillips argues that police officers could stop anyone, anywhere and request identification. Evangelical Christian writer Jim Wallis calls the bill a social and racial sin (Wallis, 2010). He questions if simply having “brown skin” will be reasonable suspicion enough to question and detain individuals. This rhetoric is drawing on apprehensions of historical racial profiling and police abuse to push forward their political agenda.

This type of debate takes place daily in American politics. Both Republicans and Democrats try to gain support by using their ideology. The culture of fear in the United States buys into this rhetoric because the discourse is quite reactionary in nature and eliminates potential solutions. Education needs to prepare students to address similar situations. Neither side is talking about the potential benefits of illegal immigration. The focus of the debate is solely on the bill and politicians are overlooking other issues. Gordon Hanson, an economist at the University of California, San Diego, has shown that illegal immigrants are actually a net benefit to the American economy (Hanson, 2005). Americans wrongly think that illegal immigrants hurt the economy because the idea of illegal immigration as a danger to the American way of life has become normalized (Campo-Flores, 2010). By addressing illegal immigration as a benefit to the United States, as opposed to a “crisis,” it changes the way people view solutions. If illegal immigration is a problem,

then politicians must address it. If it is a benefit though, maybe politicians will want to determine how to harness the benefits while addressing the issues of drug cartel violence separately. This removes the stigma from illegal immigration and places it on drug cartel violence.

Educators using counter-hegemonic texts can help prepare students to address similar issues. Educators normally view counter-hegemonic texts as a way to relate material to students. An educator will use a contemporary film clip to introduce students to a concept using a film the students might have previously seen. They can then relate it back to the material they want the students to know. While this is a noble effort by educators, it is not enough. Education should focus on empowering students for justice and equality. If educators are only using counter-hegemonic texts to reinforce traditional notions of content, then they are simply more engaging forms of the textbook. They do not enhance the education of the students outside of being a better way to teach traditional content.

Educators can use counter-hegemonic texts as a tool to counter hegemonic power in the curriculum. The goal should not be to teach the students a watered-down curriculum. Rather, the focus should be on promoting critical literacy in students. Student empowerment should be a goal of a critical educator (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2007). Using counter-hegemonic texts can help educators navigate students through the transformative process of empowerment. Counter-hegemonic texts foster critical questioning and thinking skills. If future adults are unable to deconstruct the rhetoric they hear from politicians, cultural reproduction will continue to perpetuate in the United States. As long as politicians utilize ideology to support their cultural

hegemony, the status quo will not change in the U.S. Those with power will continue to impose their ideology onto the curriculum. Students will learn a narrow view of history that will limit their ability to address issues as adults. If those who do not know their history are destined to repeat it, then hiding from history predetermines that people will repeatedly make the same mistakes.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Qualitative Research

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) write, “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 14). As opposed to quantitative research that investigates the causal relationships between variables, qualitative research investigates how social reality is created and given meaning in situational contexts. Qualitative researchers recognize that reality is socially constructed and therefore, they attempt to capture individual’s perspectives instead of conducting a broad empirical study. They also differ by emphasizing the value laden nature of research and do not attempt to claim neutrality or objectivity (Berg & Lune, 2011). When deciding on which research avenue to head down, I had to take into account which branch of research would best suit my research question, “Why and how are teachers moving beyond traditional teaching through the use of counter-hegemonic texts?” The process of how is extremely important to me. I am not interested in the relationship between two variables, such as the relationship between counter-hegemonic texts usage in the classroom and student test scores. I am also not interested in broad generalizability. Every educator is situated in unique conditions with unique students that will all have different issues to address. Hence, generalizing to the broader education field would be fruitless because what one teacher does may not be appropriate for another teacher based on their situational contexts. Therefore, I wanted to find out how educators are arriving at their decisions and why they make

them. I had to discover their values, their decision-making processes, and the social constructs that inform those decisions. From there, I examined if any commonalities existed or if educators arrived at similar destinations by entirely divergent paths.

For my study, I included three teacher participants. Due to the specific nature of my research question, my selection criteria were equally specific. Therefore, I generated criteria that consisted of selecting teachers who were:

1. Secondary social studies teachers;
2. Currently using counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms;
3. Willing to be observed and interviewed for the purposes of this research.

Secondary teachers differ from most elementary teachers because they normally only teach one content area. Most elementary teachers must teach their students all content areas while most high school teachers normally only teach one content area, such as math or social studies courses. I wanted to focus on a single content area, in particular social studies, because it is the subject area that the SBOE has designated where students are supposed to learn society's supposed values such as democracy, freedom, equality, and social justice. If schools are sites of social injustice, then breaking down the patterns of injustice through social studies courses that should be empowering students to transform society is a natural starting point for this form of research.

Teachers using counter-hegemonic texts are extremely important to me because it supports transformative education and compliments a culturally relevant pedagogy. To investigate how and why teachers are using counter-hegemonic texts, my teacher participants had to be currently using them in their classrooms. I selected each of my three teacher participants because they all teach at different schools and teach different

subjects. Thus, their experiences will greatly differ, and in turn, those differences will enrich my study by offering varying perspectives of their unique circumstances. I used a judgment sampling to select my participants. I have known all three for many years now and through this informal process of building a relationship with these individuals, we have had multiple conversations about their use of counter-hegemonic texts that has made it evident to me that they used them on a regular basis and not solely as an engagement strategy. This was important to me because many teachers will use counter-hegemonic texts in a variety of ways, but I needed educators who used them as the foundation for their classrooms. I also needed educators who were not using them to simply diversify their instructional techniques to keep their classes more entertaining because then the texts are not necessarily counter-hegemonic in nature. For example, many teachers use primary source documents in their classrooms but their usage is for critical thinking purposes and not intentionally challenging the historical narrative of the textbooks and standards.

My final criterion was critical for the success of this study. The teacher participants had to be willing to let me observe and interview them. They had to be willing to share their experiences with me so that I could capture their perspectives and their voice. Interviews were the primary data gathering mechanism I employed. Therefore, I needed educators confident enough in their own teaching that they were willing to share their successes as well as their failures. They also needed to be willing to look over my analysis of the data to ensure I was capturing their voice accurately. I asked my participants to provide multiple member checks as I progressed through my research. Regularly, I would have a question about a statement they made or a piece of

our conversations. I would call or e-mail them and ask them their to look over the way I presented their views and my analysis of our conversations to guarantee that I was accurately capturing their voice.

Voice is a critical component of qualitative research. If I wished to know how and why teachers are utilizing counter-hegemonic texts, I had to give them the space to answer that question. It was my role as a qualitative researcher to collaborate with my teacher participants in an attempt to capture their voice during the research process. I observed their actions to establish how they were using counter-hegemonic texts and then I attempted to capture their voice through formal interviews and informal conversations. Likewise, my voice and my biases also played a role in my research. I could not remove myself from the research. Instead, I recognized that my research was informed by my belief in critical pedagogy and social justice. Therefore, I needed a research methodology that allowed me to work through my assumptions, values, and my voice as a researcher while still giving voice to my participants. To maintain the voice of my participants while conducting a rigorous study, my research design used Carspecken's (1996) critical qualitative research model. This methodology maintained the objective validity of the study and helped me to capture the voice of my participants, all while still maintaining my value orientations as a critical researcher.

Value Orientation as a Criticalist

My value orientation is grounded in social justice and critical pedagogy. I regularly find schools to be sites of oppression and marginalization. I also regularly

find that the curriculum taught in schools contributes to that oppression and marginalization. For example, history textbooks are traditionally littered with personal narratives of White males while marginalizing the stories of others by relegating them to minor footnotes or trivialized stereotypes (Loewen, 2007). These kinds of textbooks act as marginalizing forces in schools by teaching students the narratives that are valuable and which ones are so inconsequential that the writers ignore them entirely

Thus, I wanted to find out how and why teachers were moving beyond a standardized curriculum that contributes to the social injustice found in schools. Critical qualitative research reinforced my value orientation and provided a research framework that guided me as a researcher. I am a criticalist concerned with the inequities of our society. Kincheloe and McLaren have produced a lengthy definition of a criticalist, yet I think it is important to include the entire description, as their framework had a tremendous influence on my research:

We are defining a criticalist as a researcher or theorist who attempts to use her or his work as a form of social or cultural criticism and who accepts certain basic assumptions: that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription; that the relationship between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption; that language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness); that certain groups in any society and particular societies are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable; that oppression has many faces and that focusing on only one at the expense of others (e.g. class oppression versus racism) often elides the interconnections among them; and, finally, that mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class,

race, and gender oppression. (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, pp. 139-140)

I want my work to enact social change and move society towards a more just existence. I acknowledge the assumptions Kincheloe and McLaren list. As a qualitative researcher, power relations, social relations, subjectivity, privilege, complicit oppression, and interconnectedness will influence every piece of my study.

As Carspecken (1996) notes, it is crucial that qualitative researchers examine their researcher bias and discover their value orientations. My value orientations as a criticalist align with Reason and Torbert's (2001) vision of inquiry. Inquiry is not simply about adding to a wealth of knowledge, deconstructing assumptive realities, or even simply developing emancipatory theory, but they view the purpose of inquiry as a means to "forge a more direct link between intellectual knowledge and moment-to-moment personal and social action" (Reason & Torbert; 2001, p. 2). As I investigated the power relations, privilege, and complicit oppression that curriculum and schools contributed to, I wished to bridge my findings to future action. I did not desire to be a passive observer who simply reported what he/she saw happening. I wanted to take my work forward in an attempt to bring about a more equitable educational system and society that honor the value of all students, teachers, parents, and community members. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) articulate this by postulating that the role of the qualitative researcher is not to generalize about educational practices, but to visualize and capture the world as it is in order to change it.

Critical Qualitative Research

For my research design, I adapted Carspecken's (1996) model of critical qualitative research. Since the introduction of his qualitative research model in 1996, leading critical researchers have praised Carspecken's ability to bridge critical theory, critical epistemology, and rigorous research in a way that maintains the objective validity of the study and facilitates social change (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Apple, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008; Lather, 2007; Cannella & Lincoln, 2009; Foley & Valenzuela, 2008). His methodology has become widely accepted in the field of qualitative research due to its structured nature that addresses the critique that researcher bias overly influences qualitative research. His model consists of five stages, but he advocates that most researchers will only utilize the first three stages and that it is appropriate to separate the stages out for the researcher's purpose. He even goes on to note that rarely do doctoral students attempt stages four and five because of the longitudinal nature of establishing systems relations between multiple sites. The stages are not necessarily linear, but I will approach them in a linear fashion for explanatory purposes while examining how I implemented them nonlinearly. For my study on social studies teachers' use of counter-hegemonic texts in the classroom, I only used the first three of Carspecken's five stages (1996). My study consisted of three participants who were secondary social studies teachers. In the first stage, I established a primary record. In the second stage, I conducted preliminary reconstructive analyses of the primary record. In the third stage, I used that reconstructed monological data to generate dialogical data through participant interviews.

In stage one of Carspecken's model (1996), the researcher establishes a primary record through the collection of monological data. I used a field journal to record informal conversations, observations of the school and community, and my own notes and reflections. I used a personal journal to document informal conversations with my teacher participants. During three qualitative methods courses, I established a thick record through passive observations of secondary social studies classrooms using priority observation techniques that reduced researcher bias by recording all of the actions, such as body language, vocal tones, and proximal movement as observer comments. The observations lasted approximately two hours and I recorded them with SoundNote software on the iPad and a second digital recorder as a backup. I transcribed all of the recordings and combined them with my observer comments to create the thick record. I then utilized this monological data as archival data to move forward to stages two and three of Carspecken's research model.

Throughout my research, I needed to support the objective validity of the data. I constantly shared my research and findings with a peer-debriefer and my participants, who conducted member checks. The peer-debriefer had an in-depth knowledge of Carspecken's model to ensure that I properly adapted the model and was not allowing my biases to inappropriately influence the research. The member checks were essential by ensuring that my generated data and analysis was congruent with my participants' views. For the most part, we were metaphorically on the same page and if there were divergences, I asked further questions to clarify, which is a major reason why I conducted follow up interviews with two of my participants.

After developing a primary record, I began the process of reconstructive analysis. During my reconstructive analysis in stage two, I needed to shift truth claims to validity claims and categorize them into one of the three ontological realms. The three ontological realms are the objective, subjective, and normative-evaluative realms. The objective realm arises out of multiple access. This means that everyone has shared access to the claim. For example, if a teacher places a test on a student's desk and asks the student to begin the exam, they both have shared access to the desk and test. As long as they have a shared understanding that the paper on the desk is a test, they can empirically recognize it as such. The subjective realm, on the other hand, stems from privileged access. The subjective realm is the realm of wants, intentions, and desires. In this scenario, when the teacher asks the student to begin the test, the subjective claim could be the desire for the student to begin the test. The teacher is the only one with privileged access to that claim so I, as the researcher, had to develop subjective claims carefully through intersubjectivity while utilizing my peer-debriefer and member checks. Finally, the normative-evaluative realm involves position-taking to establish what is proper or what is the norm. In this scenario, the teacher's normative-evaluative claim could be that students should listen to their teachers. This claim would represent the norms of schools. This is also a claim of position-taking by the teacher taking the position of the student and stating that the student should listen to the teacher. All validity claims will fall under these three ontological categories and I utilized them during my reconstructive analysis through vertical and horizontal reconstruction.

Stage two of Carspecken's (1996) model is preliminary reconstructive analysis. After establishing a primary record, it was my role as the researcher to read the record multiple times to begin the process of reconstructive analysis. During these readings, I utilized a critical hermeneutic process (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). This process goes from the tacit to the explicit, and finally to the holistic. The critical hermeneutic process is a way of understanding meaning and meaning-making. For instance, I read the primary record holistically and then looked at individual parts, which then reshaped my holistic understanding of the entire record. Cycling through this process ensured that I read all parts of the primary record equally, as well as kept the holistic picture of the record in my mind as I began to look for underlying meanings and discover emerging themes.

After multiple readings and using the critical hermeneutic process, I began to look for underlying meanings. This was part of the larger process of coding the data. During this process of coding, I searched for instances that stood out or seemed important. I used Carspecken's process (1996) of having two word documents open side-by-side with the primary record on one side while copying and pasting the raw codes over to the second document with searchable notations. I conducted low-inference coding through the development of meaning fields and validity claims through intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity utilizes the process of position-taking, where I took the position of my participants. This is why I needed to get to know my participants and the cultures of their school. My attempt to gain a cultural understanding of my participants' schools and my development of a personal relationship with each of them greatly enhanced my position-taking. Based on this

low-level coding, I began to generate topic domains based on my research questions and data analysis in stages one and two. I shifted the raw codes over to the second word document and then shifted the codes under broad related categories. As I began to highlight points of importance, themes began to emerge.

Teacher Interviews

Following the preliminary completion of my reconstructive analysis, I entered stage three of Carspecken's model, which is the generation of dialogical data through participant interviews. Based on my reconstructive analysis of the primary record, I developed topic domains based on the themes from the raw codes. Throughout the process of coding, I developed hierarchies of codes and subcodes, which clued me in on recurring themes. I analyzed these themes to develop topic domains. Using the topic domains, I constructed the interview protocol (see Appendix A) I used with my teacher participants. The interview protocol I used with the participants consisted of leadoff questions that directly correlated to the topic domains based off the emergent themes of the primary record. Each leadoff question had a series of follow-up questions, but regularly the participants answered the follow-up questions in their initial responses. In addition, the interviews were semi-structured and intended to be conversational to provide space for the teachers to share their voice as opposed to me dictating all of the topics that we discussed. With all three participants, the interviews followed a similar formula, but all three went in different directions throughout the interviews, which captured the differences between the participants. I also recorded these interviews using SoundNote software while I constructed a thick record of the

interview based off the participant's body language, vocal tone, and linguistic tendencies. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and the participants all said they could make themselves available again for further questions if needed.

Teacher Participants

Clayton (all names are pseudonyms) was the first teacher I interviewed. He was kind enough to speak with me the day before leaving the country to take students to Europe. Clayton has been teaching now for almost ten years, but teaching is his second career. He believes his independent love of social studies makes him a better teacher because he can relate the passion he has for the subject through real world examples that he experienced before teaching. He had switched schools the year before to an inner-city school in Houston. He told me he made the switch because of the autonomy the new school was giving him in his courses. At his new school, he teaches geography and world history. Additionally, he told me he was becoming much happier with life in general because he had made a commitment the previous year to not bring any schoolwork home. He said it made him manage his prep time better at work and he was able to spend more time with his two younger sons. He said if he could, he would stay at his current school for as long as possible because of the attitude of the administration in allowing the teachers to essentially have academic freedom over their curricula and the collaborative attitude of the teachers there.

Paula was the second teacher I interviewed. Like Clayton, teaching is her second career. She started teaching in a drug rehabilitation school and she believes teaching there honed her classroom management skills. If you ever walked into her

classroom, her students would usually be engaged and participating in the learning process. Paula's area of expertise is European history, so in addition to teaching world history, she also teaches AP European History. She is well established at her current school and students in the past have taken the elective AP European History course just to take another class with her. She believes teaching can transform student's view of the world and attempts to bring a global perspective into her classroom.

James was my last participant I interviewed. He has two young children and a wife who also works full time, so scheduling a time to meet was a little more difficult. James teaches at an extremely diverse school, with a majority minority population that is without a subpopulation making up over fifty percent of the overall student population. He is also seeking his second master's degree. His first one was in curriculum and instruction while his second degree has a dual focus on history and English. He says it will definitely be his last degree because of the amount of time he has to spend away from his children. He has the most diverse teaching experience background of my participants. He initially taught for five years at a middle school before seeking his first master's degree. Then, he moved to high school where he has taught for six years. He has taught U.S. History, AP U.S. History, AP World History, and dual credit U.S. History. He lives in the same community as his students and feels that his interactions with them outside of school enhance his relationships with his students. Additionally, he understands the community in which his students live and can make connections between their home lives in his teaching.

All three of the participants are friends of mine who willingly participated in my study. They had all known I was seeking a doctorate and how I intended to

research teachers who were using counter-hegemonic texts in the classroom. Clayton volunteered over a year ago when I first told him about my intended study. I asked Paula and James through e-mail if they would participate and both gladly accepted. I had been in all three of their classrooms on multiple occasions over the last couple of years as part of qualitative research methods courses. We had also shared many separate evenings where we discussed our philosophies of education, how we approached the curriculum, and our frustrations with education. I used judgment sampling when selecting these participants because I knew they were using counter-hegemonic texts in their classroom and they offered a wide array of perspectives and experience. They all teach at vastly different schools that create unique research sites and offer different perspectives on how critical and culturally relevant pedagogy can be implemented in schools.

Data Analysis

Following my interviews, I then moved back to stage two to conduct reconstructive analysis of the interviews. I had to transcribe the interviews. Once I had the transcriptions finalized, I began to code the data, construct meaning fields, and conduct vertical and horizontal analyses. After the reconstructive analysis of the dialogical data, I conducted a follow-up interview with two of my participants to address a few remaining questions and to mainly address some of the ambiguous nature of language being used by both the participants and myself during the first interview.

Once I established meaning fields, I conducted vertical and horizontal reconstructive analyses. This process involved the use of the three ontological realms of validity claims and foregrounding and backgrounding those claims. I also conducted power analysis. Power analysis relies on Carspecken's (1996) four forms of power. The first is normative power, which is doing an act because of norm status. The second is coercive power, which is complying due to fear of potential consequences. The third is interactive power, which is doing an act for something in return. The fourth form is the power of charm, which is doing something because someone is charismatic. For example, if a teacher asked a student to, "Please be quiet," the student may comply due to differing power relations. If the student feels that the norm status of teachers requires that students obey them, then this would be an example of normative power. The student may also comply due to the fear of a potential consequence, such as a verbal reprimand or being sent to the office, which would be a form of coercive power. The student may also comply for some sort of reward. Regularly, teachers make bargains with their students by promising if they are quiet and behave they will get five free minutes at the end of class or participate in a desired activity. The student and teacher would have established a social contract, which is a form of interactive power. Finally, the student may comply because of the charm of the teacher. The charismatic nature of the teacher may cause the student to be quiet simply because they like the teacher.

I cycled my data through stages two and three twice with two of my participants while conducting the high level coding and high level inferencing that led to my findings. My findings are contextually located and I do not intend the findings

to meet any standard of broad generalizability. However, my hope is that this research will inform other educators, who may be facing similar issues, of how my participants addressed those issues on a very practical level. Additionally, I attempted to discover how we as an educational community could help facilitate this type of teaching practice.

Conclusion

To answer my question of why and how these teachers were moving beyond traditional teaching through the use of counter-hegemonic texts, I acted as what Yvonna Lincoln would call a *bricoleur* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The qualitative researcher engages in *bricolage* as a *bricoleur* with what Kincheloe would call multiperspectival research methods (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). *Bricolage* is derived from the French verb *bricoler*, which means to tinker with and patch together. Lincoln argues that the qualitative researcher engages in *bricolage* by using whatever strategies and methods are available to the researcher given the contexts and setting of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Kincheloe furthers this argument by reconceptualizing the *bricoleur* as someone who draws on diverse theoretical traditions in a critical theoretical framework to lay the foundation for a transformative approach to research (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). My employment of critical qualitative research investigated how teachers were using counter-hegemonic texts to break through constraints and promote a more social justice oriented curriculum. By employing this approach, I addressed my

research question by investigating the complexities of curriculum and usage of texts in schools in a nuanced, yet still rigorous fashion.

Chapter Four: Interpretations and Discussions

Introduction

As I researched my participants' use of counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms, the emergent data moved me beyond just my initial research questions. The lead-off questions for topic domains in the interview protocol were purposefully related to the research questions, but the participants' answers regularly took the conversations in unexpected directions. These unforeseen paths became equally as important as the anticipated focus. They also forced me to follow up with unanticipated questions that asked the participants to elaborate on their thoughts. This form of semi-structured interviews was intentional. I deliberately constructed divergent questions, while still maintaining the focus of the research, to provide space for participant voice. While many of the follow up questions were unanticipated, the need for unanticipated questions was expected. To capture the voice of my participants, I needed an interview style that addressed my research questions, but also allowed them to share their perspectives and their views. In many ways, the responses followed a similar pattern. I would ask the lead-off question and the participant would answer, but part of the answer left me wanting to know a little bit more. I would then ask the participant to elaborate on the event, the process, or the issue they had upon in the previous conversation. From there, we would wind our way back to the interview protocol with further questioning. In that space though, an abundance of data began to emerge that indirectly addressed my questions, but there were also themes that moved beyond the initial research focus.

My initial research focused on educators' pedagogical decisions; however, there are so many factors that influence an educator's pedagogical decision-making processes that the scope broadened in the interviews because my participants repeatedly reflected on the factors that influenced their pedagogical choices. To openly and honestly represent my participants' perspectives, I have included the unintended emergent themes as well as the sought after themes. I believe this enriches the research by capturing my participants' perspectives on a variety of issues while being true to their voice. Some issues I intended to be a part of the final research, while others were so revolutionary that they had not ever crossed my mind as potential issues. Nevertheless, all of the issues are intertwined with undertones of power relations, identity, and perceptions on the role of the educator.

My participants were constantly forthright in their assessment of education, textbooks, standards, and teaching as a profession throughout the process. I attempted to capture their sincerity and candor by going back to them after interviews to ensure I was accurately representing their perspectives. They were all gracious enough to make themselves available to me through e-mail, and two of them sat down with me again to conduct a second interview. The continuous dialogue between the participants and myself helped me shape and reshape the narrative as we expanded on previous conversations by clarifying the past statements they made and exploring issues and events in greater detail. The result is the emergence of a mixture of themes that are interrelated and equally deserve their own independent analysis and discussion. In this chapter, I discuss the emergent themes through the voice of the teachers and incorporate my perspective and voice by offering an analysis of each theme. I

recognize that my biases and perspectives jade my interpretations and analyses, so I have heavily utilized a peer-debriefer and member checks to sharpen my analysis. Any failings in the analysis are my own; while any successes are in large part because of the ongoing relationship of trust, I have with my participants and their willingness to be active participants.

Issue #1: Curricular Autonomy

I began my interviews by gauging my participants' level of curricular autonomy in their schools. Before moving on to their usage of counter-hegemonic texts, I wanted to know what constraints, if any, were placed on them based on their independent circumstances. While in their schools, I noticed they regularly worked with their content specific teammates and attended team meetings. For example, Paula attended weekly world history meetings while James attended weekly social studies meetings where they sometimes met as a content team. Many of these meetings were focused on either unit or end of the year TAKS exams. The focus on assessment dictated many of the curricular conversations because other teachers were developing curriculum that focused on those assessments. Only Paula's school had common assessment requirements, but they were limited in nature while James' school was moving in that direction with common assessments consisting of half of all assessments, but many of the teachers at the school were resisting so it was not enforced. Clayton was the only teacher without any form of common assessment. While he worked with other teachers, he maintained complete autonomy over his

assessments outside of district-based assessments that district periodically gave to all of the school district's students.

When I interviewed my participants and asked them how much of their curriculum they developed, they all responded by stating that the curriculum was their own, but they all had maintained some underlying reservations about their statements. Clayton related to me that he had moved schools the previous year and when he interviewed at the new school, he specifically asked his future principal if they used a scope and sequence or common curriculum. The principal's response was no and to just make sure the students were learning. "It was the most refreshing thing I've heard in education in my career," he told me. It was the main reason he transferred schools. He added that he had always had a level of autonomy, but that he earned that autonomy by "making people realize by producing results with students." His focus in his courses was not on the TAKS exams, but his results were high enough that principals gave him space to teach in his own fashion. He has to keep the TEKS in mind, but it is far from his focus. "I don't like standardized testing and think that it's a bad measure, but it would be neurotic if we pretended we could ignore it." He did say though that if his test scores dropped, he knew that his level of freedom would be immediately constrained by the administration.

Paula has stated that within the bounds of the state, the curriculum is her own. She did not feel bound to a textbook, but did feel she had to address the standards because the school's rating was based on students' scores on the TAKS, and now STAAR, exams, but that they were "obviously stupid." She utilizes the standards to challenge the bias she finds in them through alternative perspectives. She then asks her

students to analyze both her perspective and the perspective found in the TEKS. She intentionally plays devil's advocate with her students to get them to analyze and evaluate points of view. She says, "I challenge them so that they will challenge me and each other. I want them to be willing to discuss their viewpoints and recognize the viewpoints of others." In the interview, she emphasized that we all have our own slants on history and society, but that her role was to present multiple viewpoints to get her students to recognize and digest the viewpoints as perspectives on history because there could never be a "singular story." For her, there are multiple stories and students have to engage in those stories to begin to develop their own.

James feels he has critical autonomy for two reasons. The first is that he teaches AP and dual credit courses, which limits curricular oversight from the outside because he must develop his own syllabi. Before teaching AP and dual credit, in his eleven years of teaching, he had never had a student fail the TAKS test so the administration had left him alone. "They evaluate me through the scores." Due to the fact that his scores were stellar, his evaluations had always been equally as high. Within his courses, the textbooks were mandated, but the way he used it in the classroom was entirely his own decision. He had the freedom to select "novels, documents, primary sources, films, and speakers that are appropriate." He made his selections based on his belief that the students needed to interact with multiple perspectives through a variety of texts as opposed to teaching as if the standards are the "infallible truth." He said:

Here in Texas social studies is particularly fraught with political implications. The recent battles over what constitutes essential knowledge and skills has been highly politicized in Austin with various

factions on the political right and political coming out in favor of what should be taught and should not be taught. And of course none of these people are historians so they're usually cultural critics or people with a political or cultural agenda wanting to push on kids and us, society as a whole, a vision or revision, of history.

Like Paula's, his curriculum is a process of wading through these viewpoints by not supporting one viewpoint over others. Rather, he constantly challenges these viewpoints through the curriculum to engage the students in higher order thinking and critical analysis. In his view, all standards are political in nature because of the political factions that create the standards. Similarly, he views all curricula as political because educators are also biased political beings as well. All educators have to make value-laden choices. They must decide who and what to include and what to leave out. His goal then is not to put forth a curriculum that teaches truth. Rather, his objective is to develop the students' critical literacy and thinking skills to the point where they are able to deconstruct and evaluate rhetoric from both a contemporary and historical vantage.

The similarities between the freedoms the three participants experience is noticeable. They all feel as if they have curricular autonomy. That coincides with what I witnessed in their classrooms. Their curriculum development was left up to them. Both James and Clayton pointed out that their students' test scores relieved them of many of the pressures other teachers feel. All three of them felt some form of pressure to teach the standards, but in a manner where students were analyzing the standards and not simply regurgitating the facts and dates in the standards back to them.

I find their experience with curricular autonomy both promising and limiting. The promising nature is that there is hope for other teachers that curricular autonomy is available. More importantly, curricular autonomy is available through a curriculum that fosters student's critical literacy through questioning and analyzing narratives as opposed placating to the standards by simply preaching them. These educators were able to contextualize the standards for their students and by doing so; their scores reflected the higher level of engagement. All of them felt they achieved their high test scores not because they engaged the content through a lecture and worksheet method that drilled rote facts. Instead, they felt their movement away from facts and dates and the focus on critical analysis of historical and contemporary perspectives contextualized the facts for students and that the students grew to enjoy the investigative nature of deconstructing texts.

The limiting nature derives from their experiences that administrators left them alone because of their students' results on standardized exams. The reliance of these mechanisms to measure and evaluate educators does not take into account the amazing experiences that teachers such as Clayton, Paula, and James are creating in their classrooms for students. These teachers could have relied on the banking concept to prepare their students for the high-stakes exams. They all believed that doing so does not yield high quality education and it would be limiting their students' ability to address issues in society. Student test scores do not capture what happens in their classrooms. They do not capture the dialectic nature of their courses. They do not capture the critical

analysis that the students are engaging in with a variety of texts and sources. They do not capture enjoyment students experience while in their courses. Finally, they do not capture the burgeoning self-efficacy of students who walk into their classrooms unable to synthesize, much less evaluate, what they have read and move to a point where they are making connections between the modern-day and past events and circumstances.

Issue # 2: The Sad State of Textbooks

One of the first items I received after being hired, as a social studies teacher was the teacher's edition of both textbooks I was expected to use and the accompanying resource kit. This is the typical experience for teachers in Texas. Schools and school districts rarely have the resources to provide teachers with curriculum guides. Instead, teachers receive textbook resources that are aligned with the TEKS. The standards-based textbooks then become the foundation for many teachers' curriculum. With many teachers relying on the textbook as their curriculum, I needed to capture the views of my participants concerning textbooks and standards. I needed to know how they used them in their classroom and what their perception was of their use in the educational system.

"The textbook that is available in the state of Texas is almost worthless," Clayton told me as I asked him about his view of state issued textbooks. He pointed out that social studies textbooks have not gone through the adoption process in over ten years, but history was still ongoing and courses, especially AP courses, were constantly changing. He said, "Texas hasn't adopted a textbook in something like 12

years now. We've had a promise recently that social studies would get new texts in 2014." He felt if educators relied on textbooks, they would be depriving their students of the last ten years of history, which was the most relevant to their lives. Educators have a responsibility to bridge the past to the present, so my participants needed to include texts that addressed their students' current lives.

Paula finds textbooks "dry, old, and boring." For her, they just lay out facts in a tedious fashion and do not tell a story. They also contribute to the relegation of history to minute details. She believes that because of fact-driven textbooks, students no longer ask about the stories. Rather, they ask, "Do we have to know this for the test?" During the interview, she advocated that teachers should make social studies about the investigation of history:

Sometimes I try to say something that's really provoking in order to get the kids to start to discuss so that we can hear their take on different events. It's not always that I agree with what I say, but I say it in order to provoke the kids because you need to have good interaction between the kids.

She gets her students to delve into the controversies by helping them not view historical figures monolithically, but exploring their actions through a historiographical lens where students look at how the culture of a time and place influence people's actions, both good and bad. She feels this kind of analysis is lacking in social studies classrooms because teachers rely solely on the textbooks, which do not investigate the controversies. If it were up to her, she would throw textbooks out the window because she believes it would force other teachers to create their own curriculum and actually prove their ability to teach. "We have teachers who believe that if it's not in the textbook then they shouldn't teach it or even open it up."

Paula also discussed the new social studies TEKS revisions from the SBOE and how schools may not receive new textbooks until 2015 or 2016. She recently accepted a position as head of her social studies department and has had to work heavily with the world geography team on moving away from the textbook to prepare their students for the new STAAR exam. “We are teaching out of old textbooks based on old TEKS, so you have to bring in new information because of the things they’re asking to be taught.” While the state has revised the standards, the textbooks teachers are still using are now even more out of date because they do not address the current iteration of the state standards. She feels that textbooks become a crutch for teachers because they can sit back and firmly state that they are properly teaching their courses because the one resource they are given confirms their teaching style.

While James related to me his displeasure with textbooks, he did not seem to have as negative of an attitude towards them as Clayton and Paula. He believes that teachers should treat textbooks as just another text:

I love to constantly refer to the text, if we’re using a specific text, not as the book, which sounds like the Bible, but I refer to author’s last name to frame it in a way that an author is speaking through the text and not giving answers, but an interpretation of history.

When the textbook is taught as the truth, then they become extremely dangerous because it limits students’ opportunities to engage in critical analysis. He notes that textbooks are based off highly politicized standards and are just as political as any other text he uses in his courses. He tries to demystify the text for his students by deconstructing a textbook through the author’s vantage point. For example, he will say, “What does Kagan think about that?” His usage of the author’s name and

questioning of the information found in the textbook removes the infallibility of the text. The students can then view the text as just another perspective on history amongst many perspectives. “I’m not there to lecture the correct version of history. Like all historians, we interpret the past and reinterpret the past from our own vantage point.” Therefore, the text is just another version of history he wants his students to analyze. He wants his students to evaluate all texts that with which they interact. By removing the mythical nature of the textbook and recognizing that it is simply another text written by another person who, like all people, will have his/her own biases, the students can begin to realize that can evaluate textbooks just like any other text.

What is immediately apparent from these conversations is how thoughtful and cognizant of the curricular choices my participants make with their classrooms and students. As they repeatedly told me, most of their coworkers rely on the textbook as their curriculum and that it would be easier for them to follow suit. Yet, none of them could reconcile that with their conscious and felt it would be unethical to not foster criticality and questioning amongst their students. They all felt that quality teachers had to move beyond the textbook because of its poor nature. They all cautioned me that it was not their responsibility to simply replace the textbook with a better text. Any reliance on a sole text creates an equally problematic situation even if it is a better written, more engaging, and inclusive text.

This speaks to a larger issue with how these educators view their role in the classroom. None of them felt it was their place to teach their students the “correct” form of history. When Clayton told me, “The textbook that is available in the state of Texas is almost worthless” I had a difficult time engaging in reconstructive analysis on

the statement. As we were discussing the topic, I kept sensing as if there was something more than simply the textbook being worthless. Did he simply mean that the world geography textbook he was referencing was worthless or did he potentially mean that all textbooks in Texas are worthless? While I attempted to foreground and background the claim, I questioned how backgrounded the idea was that Texas' textbooks could not ever be worthwhile due to the political nature of Texas or if his claim was a foregrounded claim that textbooks in general are worthless. I could not comfortably conclude even though his initial statement seemed straightforward. I had to ask him about it again. His response was a combination of the particular textbook he was referencing being extremely poor because of the way it addressed geography regionally, but also because that textbooks, for the most part, were useless for their intended use. They were intended to be used as a text that students could learn from and reference without having to question the validity of the information found within. They are treated as encyclopedias of unquestionable knowledge, which relegates all other texts to a secondary status. Textbooks, for him, were not all useless since they could be used to critically analyze traditional and inaccurate viewpoints of history, but they were useless for him in the way they were designed because he was not there to teach a "correct" form of history.

All of my participants' issues with textbooks stemmed from them regularly being the sole source of information for students. As I attempted to deconstruct their frustrations with the textbook, I constantly went back to the idea of how textbooks are designed. I am sure that most textbook authors do not intend teachers to use their texts as the sole source of information in high school classrooms. The way they are

implemented without any other resources, as is the case in my participants' schools, inevitably leads many teachers to utilize textbooks in that manner. My participants did not want a singular narrative. They wanted multiple voices and multiple perspectives. One text can rarely provide multiple voices and multiple perspectives, especially when they are written in a broad overarching fashion that narrowly covers each portion of history. Some books are used in conjunction with textbooks that do offer space to multiple voices.

James and Paula had extensive experience with AP courses, so I asked them if they viewed the Primary Source Reader (PSR) textbooks similarly to the state issued textbooks. The PSRs are collections of primary source documents. They are intended to have students read a series of documents from a variety of perspectives on a particular topic. Paula said she used the primary source reader weekly with her students and preferred it to the textbook. James also preferred it to the textbook, but he was also critical of the primary source readers because they only covered the topics prescribed by the AP curriculum. The design of the textbook was much better because they felt it forced the students to evaluate different viewpoints; however, James felt it still focused on history through the eyes of Western civilization and most of the sources outside of the Western world were only included to show their response to European and American action.

Could it be possible then to develop a textbook that meets the needs of educators such as James, Paula, and Clayton? Is the problem with textbooks or is it the way they are written? They are written as a singular and objective narrative, which eliminates the opportunity for critical analysis for students. Furthermore, they are the

only resource given to teachers. If PSRs can offer the opportunity for students to conduct critical analysis, there could be other texts that could offer similar opportunities. An adaptation of PSRs that included other counter-hegemonic texts could be useful for classroom teachers.

The adaptations would need to address four issues. The first issue would be the selection of texts to include would have to be much broader than the AP PSRs. They would need to incorporate more voices from regular people and not rely on the perspectives of famous figures to encapsulate time periods. Secondly, they would need to go beyond primary sources and include other forms of texts that meet the needs of all students and equally represent the cultural legacies of different peoples. Many students respond well to primary sources, but there are multiple forms of cultural representation that are not text-based. Paintings, music, film, and other non text-based representations also help to engage students with different learning styles and linguistic backgrounds. Additionally, this model would have to move away from one textbook and provide teachers with multiple texts. The teachers could then select from a variety of sources which pieces from each source most appropriately address their circumstances. Finally, these new textbooks should include a section on how the authors researched and discovered the various texts they incorporated. No one textbook or even a series of textbooks is going to include enough resources for teachers to rely exclusively on them. However, if the textbooks included ways to move beyond textbooks and seek out resources elsewhere, it could empower teachers in two ways. One way would be the knowledge gained by learning how to find resources. The second, and more important way, is the potential empowerment of educators

through the immediate acknowledgement that textbooks are not intended to be used as the only resources in the classroom and that even the textbooks are reinforcing the idea that educators *should* be moving beyond them in their classrooms.

Issue #3: The Political Nature of Standards

Removing textbooks in Texas from the state standards is impossible due to the textbook adoption process. Textbook publishers must align their content to the state standards if they hope for their textbooks to be adopted. Any discussion about textbooks in Texas must be followed up or include a conversation on the standards because the two are intertwined. I extended the conversation surrounding textbooks with my participants to discover their views on the state standards. They had told me that they had to work within the parameters of the standards, which in their view meant they had to teach the standards but not only the standards. They constantly moved outside of the prescribed curriculum in the standards to incorporate themes, issues, and sections of history entirely ignored or distorted by the standards. I wanted to know how they moved beyond it, but I first needed to know why. How did they perceive the standards, why did they move beyond them, and what was their role as a teacher in addressing them in their classrooms?

As I asked my participants their opinions on the TEKS, they all seemed to agree that they were problematic. What was of particular interest was that only James and Paula were highly concerned with them, while Clayton almost brushed them off as an afterthought. They all agreed that there was a very distinct conservative or right-wing bias in the TEKS, but James and Paula said they intentionally took it upon

themselves to counter the hegemony of the TEKS. Clayton's approach was similar to the other two, but he framed it as quality teaching. He viewed quality teaching as developing the necessary skills students will need beyond high school. He felt that the SBOE designed the TEKS so poorly that they had minimal affect on what happened in his classroom outside of having to cover a few topics that he would otherwise omit. "There's bias in there for sure, but I don't think it's bias that's going to impede a good teacher from doing a good job."

James critiqued the standards and their perpetuation of the tradition of American exceptionalism and their exclusion of multiple groups for the TEKS:

There's a perspective as Eric Foner said that America was born great and is getting better. A lot of things in standardized textbooks are sidestepped or omitted. The eugenics movement, for example, has very little, if any place, in American mainstream textbooks... a lot of the wars on Indians, the massacres, the genocides that took place in the mid and late 19th century are briefly mentioned by textbooks if not entirely omitted. It was not until the 1990s when textbooks began to take seriously the episode in American history of Japanese internment.

James' reference to Foner here is a powerful one because his work is a deconstruction of how textbooks traditionally narrate American history (Foner, 1998). As James points out, textbooks regularly omit pieces of American history that do not comply with that narrative. His analysis is important because it connects textbooks to standards and how the two operate in tandem to support the idea of American exceptionalism. American exceptionalism becomes dangerous here because it negates and marginalizes groups of people by ignoring their history and the collective history of the United States and fosters cultural hegemony.

Cultural hegemony operates by those in power utilizing ideological state apparatuses to propagate their privilege (Althusser, 1970). By regulating what teachers teach in the classroom through the construction of the TEKS, politicians in Texas can reinforce their privilege by preaching their ideology. James touches on this subject by noting how the perspective in standards preaches patriotism and American exceptionalism. Paula expands on this idea by stating:

We have a school board that has a particular slant. This is what the state board says we have to teach you and this is the way they want it taught. They're in control and they have their slant and this is their chance to start with the young ones and bring them up to see their viewpoint... Public education was formed as propaganda and unfortunately this state is really trying to push their own right-wing propaganda and yes, I feel upheld to counter that.

Paula believes that the SBOE intentionally constructs standards that push forward their agenda to perpetuate their position of power through indoctrinating Texas' youth. This scary proposition fuels her inclusion of multiple perspectives to counter the propagated views in the TEKS. She believes her responsibility as an educator dictates that she has to counter the propaganda. She cannot sit idly by and force-feed propagated facts and dates to her students that help to maintain the privilege of conservatives in the state. She feels she has to counter that by shaking up her students' worldview. She feels many of her students come from conservative homes and regularly have narrow views of the world. She does not wish to change those views, but she wants the students to be able to support their views through evidence and historical references. She, like James, constantly remarked that her responsibility was to get her students to think and question. "I want them to question all the information they encounter." Her responsibility was not to replace the standards with her own view

of history, but to get them to be able to analyze all the perspectives they face, whether it be in the standards, a textbook, or one she intentionally introduces them to in class.

James shares Paula's sentiments that it is not his responsibility to replace the standards with his own view of history because he feels that then puts him in an identical position as the SBOE who are attempting to dictate what students should learn. He furthers that idea by questioning whether any fact-driven curriculum is ethical:

In a sense, any content-based learning outcome is unethical. Any predetermined learning outcome where I predetermine what it is you're going to learn and the direction you're going to learn it in, is unethical. My thinking is I direct your freedom to inquiry. And if I direct you to a certain place that is an unethical usurpation of your right to inquiry.

What we see here is an educator fully accepting his responsibility to educate his students. He is not relegating his role to develop his curriculum to the SBOE. He knows his students will need to pass the TAKS exam to graduate so he fulfills his responsibility to prepare them for the exam, but in a questioning and critical manner that forces his students to move beyond receptacles of knowledge. In this way, his students begin to create their own knowledge and view the world through a critical lens.

James accepts his responsibility to both ensure that his students graduate by passing the TAKS exams and ensuring that they recognize that the information in the TEKS should be viewed similarly to all information they encounter, with a critical lens. James also expanded on his idea on the role of the educator in the classroom. He relayed a story to me of a coworker of his that is an amazing storyteller and captivates

her students through her story weaving of history. Yet, he questioned what the students were learning in her classroom. “Are they being entertained for an hour each day or were they learning to critically consume the stories they were being told?”

The larger concept of teacher authority was something that each of my participants considered when approaching their classrooms. They understood the implications of the standards and their need to address them; however, James and Paula were not abdicating their teacher authority by guaranteeing their students would graduate. Rather, they are embracing it by challenging the standards through their teaching. They understood the position of power the SBOE held and how they were using the standards to maintain their power. They subverted the hegemony of the SBOE by challenging its ideology through their deconstruction of the TEKS in the classroom. Clayton similarly addressed the TEKS in his classroom but he had a divergent view of the SBOE and the standards.

“Social studies has got lots of Eurocentric biases, it has a lot of capitalist bias, there’s bias in it for sure, but I think that can be easily obviated by a good teacher so it’s not really an issue,” Clayton told me. He believes that good teachers can reconcile the bias through quality education that incorporates multiple perspectives into the classroom and asks the students to evaluate those perspectives. He said to me:

Even if you accept the notion that the TEKS or the STAAR exam are going to force teachers to teach something that someone in their infinite wisdom thinks students need to know, they’re not even well suited for that. They don’t even do that very well... The simplest way to approach that is to bring in a diversity of texts, a diversity of secondary and primary sources that address that issue and let students operate at the highest level of Bloom’s taxonomy and evaluate the relative merit of a given position.

Similar to his views on the TEKS, Clayton feels that the SBOE poorly designed TAKS and the STAAR exams and that teachers are able to maneuver within them to develop their students' critical literacy skills. While they are biased, all standards would be similarly biased so the teacher in the classroom must obviate the bias by introducing a diversity of texts and instructing students on how to deconstruct and evaluate those texts. His approach to addressing the standards is virtually identical to James and Paula. He differed when it came to his concern over the standards. He felt what he was doing was what teachers should naturally be doing and that standards and his teaching style could coincide.

My participants' approach to the standards speaks to the purpose behind utilizing counter-hegemonic texts in the classroom. All three advocate for diverse perspectives in the classroom. The diverse perspectives are not only included to represent multiple viewpoints in an attempt to be inclusive of all students, but they are also included to intentionally counter the hegemony of the SBOE. Even Clayton, who does not find the bias and socialization of the standards as problematic as James and Paula, still counters the bias through his usage of counter-hegemonic texts in the classroom. All three maintain the attitude that critical educators should not supplant the TEKS with their own hegemonic view of the world. These are important points to consider because they highlight how educators can best use counter-hegemonic texts in the classroom. If educators are going to counter hegemony, they must counter the ideology that is used to support the hegemony. Ideology can be broken down with counter-hegemonic texts. Thus, to gain a better understanding of how these educators were challenging ideology in their classrooms and to answer my primary research

question, I had to delve deeper into how they were using counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms.

Issue #4: Utilizing Counter-Hegemonic Texts in the Classroom

My participants' use of counter-hegemonic texts flowed throughout all of my interviews. It was the constant underlying theme and so even though I asked specifically, how and why they used them in their classrooms; later in the conversations, we would go back and discuss even further, how they were using counter-hegemonic texts and how their students responded to them. The use of counter-hegemonic texts was intertwined with most of their answers. Therefore, while we discussed their perceptions of their curricular autonomy, textbooks, and standards, we also simultaneously discussed their usage of counter-hegemonic texts. I have separated out the issues in the dissertation because I feel that their perceptions inform their selection of texts and to fully represent those perceptions, I needed to delineate the issues. The issues were not delineated in the interviews, so this section is representative of our entire conversations.

Clayton responded to my question about how and why he used counter-hegemonic texts in his classroom by saying, "It's very liberating to get away from the textbook." For him, it maintains student interest because if there's something that sparks a conversation or point of inquiry in the classroom, he can go home that night and find multiple texts that address that conversation and continue it the following day by helping the students investigate and analyze the point of inquiry through multiple lenses. The texts help him sustain the students' interest by fueling the spark that was

lit the previous class. “It lights a fire under them because we can continue that conversation the following day with appropriate documents that support the lesson.” He believes it permits the students to have a say in what is happening in the classroom by making curricular decisions based on their in-class feedback. He could sit back and dictate which texts he would use in his classroom, but he said he regularly asks students to investigate topics of interest and bring their own texts to share with their classmates.

Clayton says the internet has changed his ability to find sources. There are multiple websites full of primary and secondary sources, as well as multiple websites dedicated to infusing multiple perspectives into the classroom through a variety of texts. He also thinks the internet has changed the way his students interact with history. When he asks them to find texts to share with the class, they are able to find articles and new stories from all over the world that they would not have had access to ten to fifteen years ago. It equalizes access to information because now his students do not have to rely on the text and the teacher to learn. “The internet has changed what we can do. It has revolutionized our ability to connect students with history.” They are able to scour the internet for information of interest. For this reason, he says he focuses less and less on places, people, and events as he teaches because everything a student needs to know about a place, person, or an event, they could find in fifteen minutes using their phone to access Wikipedia. His goal then is not to use a variety of perspectives to introduce more facts to his students. He uses diverse perspectives to develop their critical literacy and thinking skills by evaluating the merits of the given positions. Showing them how to access these texts online furthers their skills

development because it teaches them how to look for texts that would challenge rhetoric they will encounter as adults.

Paula similarly stated that the internet had become her favorite place for seeking out counter-hegemonic texts. “The internet has made life much easier.” She said she used to have to sift through multiple textbooks and primary source books to find pieces she could use from each one. Now, she can go online and utilize databases such as the multiple sourcebooks Fordham University has made available on their website. She also advised going to other teacher’s websites and investigating which resources they were using. “Teachers are thieves and we steal from each other all the time and you take and you adapt it.” She uses the documents to address the standards, but she intentionally incorporates texts that counter and provide multiple perspectives on the standards to force students formulate their own opinions as opposed to passively digesting information. This way, she guarantees that students are learning the “low-level facts and dates that the state board requires, but are also learning that what the state board wants them to learn in a particular way that supports their perspective.” This statement impressed me because it showed Paula was constantly considering her objectives as an educator when conducting her classes:

The end goal for me would be to have my students leave as critical thinkers who know how to read, find out, and make a decision for themselves. They have to look at both sides and say this is where I stand and this is why I stand here.

This statement for me was extremely powerful because Paula knew she could not teach the standards as they were written but she had to teach them for the sake of her students. She bridged her frustration with the TEKS and her knowledge of counter-

hegemonic texts to empower her students. This gives hope to other educators facing the same frustrations with standards. All of my participants expressed similar frustrations and all of them were able to navigate the standards in a way that liberated their students from them. She repeatedly emphasized that it was not her place to dictate what her students think. Rather, it was her role to teach them how to think for themselves.

James' approach to counter-hegemonic texts was almost identical; however, he said when he first introduced them to his students, which they had a very difficult time:

I wish I could tell you that it has always been an eye-opening epiphany... My most common reaction is confusion and "What do you want us to know?" "What's the answer?" "What's going to be on this test?" You are having to teach against sixteen years of training, not education, but training.

James' word choice of training is important because it highlights his views on education. He is making multiple claims about how education treats students and how teachers instruct students before arriving in his classroom. Teachers are not developing critical thinkers. They are training students how to passively receive information to pass tests and move on, meanwhile forgetting everything they had learned in the process. The heavy emphasis on testing rote information does not prepare students for his classroom, where he ignores rote information and moves on to higher order thinking. He related to me:

That's one of the battles I struggle with all year long is to overcome the expectation that I'm going to deliver them the infallible truth. That I'm going to give them the names, and the dates, and the important battles that they'll be able to match and then forget about.

Instead, his students are contextually learning the information, which he believes is why his TAKS scores have always been high. He says he has to re-teach how students should operate in the classroom before they can really begin to investigate texts at a meaningful level. He has to establish a trusting relationship with them where they are willing to share their opinions and challenge each other.

James' approach is also a strong example for other educators. As discussed above, all educators operate within a specific set of circumstances that influence their lived conditions. Within those unique circumstances, there can be room to reframe what we do as educators. His approach of building a relationship of trust with his students and holding them to the expectation that they will come to participate in class and actively engage with texts can be used as an adaptable model for other educators who are seeking to move beyond the textbook but are similarly having to re-teach ten years of education as James has to do.

James says he also accomplishes this by intentionally selecting texts that challenge the system. Students are naturally inquisitive and education has distilled that inquiry through testing and compliance-based classrooms. He counters that model by selecting texts that challenge the system. For example, the first thing he gives his students when they walk into the classroom is chapter two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. They read the chapter as a class and process through it in groups where the students share their thoughts and feelings about how their educational experience relates to Freire's views on education. He then tells his students, "We may not be here every day, but this is where I want to be and now that you know, we have a collective responsibility to get there." He says the initial process of including someone such as

Freire shakes up the students a little because it has little to do with history and challenges everything they have experienced in schools. At first, they get a little frustrated because it is not easy for them to read and they are not really sure why they are having to do “real schoolwork” on the first day of school. As they examine the text, those attitudes begin to change and they become active in their small group discussion, which creates a “very lively whole class discussion.” It is the first step for him in a year-long process of getting students to recognize that they have the ability to create knowledge and they do not have to rely on others for their worldviews.

James’ use of Freire shows the theoretical underpinnings of his educational philosophy. He understands why he is using Freire because it underscores his desire to move away from the banking concept of education that is frequently found in history classrooms. The mere reading of Freire can be a powerful experience, but for high school students, who are mired in the positivistic mentality towards schooling, it can be liberating because it opens up doors that they may have never realized were possible. It also develops their critical literacy by helping them verbalize their dissatisfaction with education. They begin to unpack their formative years by recognizing the way schools have herded them through the educational system while largely ignoring their ability to create knowledge.

Ironically, James and I had never discussed Freire but it was refreshing to hear him get excited about discussing how remarkable the concept of critical pedagogy can be when introduced to students. There are two major points I took away from this portion of our conversation. The first is that James’ theoretical understanding of education dramatically shaped his teaching style. He said that as an undergraduate,

they investigated the works of critical theorists and it helped lay the foundation for how he taught. The educational training he received was one that modeled what he currently practiced by framing the educator's role in society and thus, the role of the educator to actively influence society by challenging the status quo by fostering the development of his students' ability to read the world. The second point was his inclusion of theoretical dialogue concerning education. In many instances, teachers overlook why students are in schools. Students passively show up to class and teachers teach. There rarely is a discussion about why educators have decided to teach with students. More importantly, there rarely are conversations concerning what students can hope to achieve in schools beyond high grades and going to college.

James began those conversations with Freire and then he extended them with counter-hegemonic texts such as Zinn's *People's History*. He said he uses Zinn in his classes not because he agrees with him, he in fact made it a point to state that he believes Zinn is a poor historian at times, but because it challenges the establishment and forces students to think beyond the textbook. He wants to "shake things up in his classroom." He believes Zinn "invites the conversation around interpretation of history." He said students have to reconcile their cognitive dissonance between the textbook and Zinn:

I love to have kids make a comparison between the American Pageant, which is what we use as the official text, and Howard Zinn's, which is *The People's History*. And that's the process that I invite. Again, it's to open up the question about historical interpretation and about the conflict that exists in deciding what is history.

By evaluating both and forming their own views on history, they begin that reconciliation process. The narratives in the textbook and Zinn leave students with two

drastically different viewpoints so that they have to deconstruct each text, compare them to one another, and start to reshape their views on history through the perspectives found in both texts. Simply by challenging the establishment, they are no longer able to passively consume information, but have to create their own because they have to decide which text they believe is more credible and accurate. He continues that process by continuously including a variety of viewpoints that dispel the myths of history and force students to create their own perspectives.

In addition, James believes he has a responsibility to challenge the marginalizing nature of the textbooks. He incorporates counter-hegemonic texts that intentionally represent marginalized viewpoints because he believes students need to recognize that traditional history largely ignores minority populations. He said he does this because of the marginalization of multiple groups:

Probably the most marginalized students are going to be our Native American students because their pre-Columbian history is about four paragraphs long in our American history textbooks and then we get to the part where we slaughter them and then we get to the part where we slaughter them again in the 19th century and that's the end of their story. They're presented as foils to White Americans. The other group, as far as I know, that is absolutely ignored is the gay, lesbian, and transgendered population that have no history. Certainly not in Texas books, or not that I know of at all... I think that's the purpose of counter-hegemonic texts though is to challenge what the standard histories, the patriotic histories, the conservative histories, and the liberal histories try to tell us about the past and thereby, if not answering the question and if not giving everyone's full story, you are at least introduced to it. You at least let people know that there's more to learn. It's probably the biggest objective that we have is to let people know that graduation day is not the end. You do have more learning to go. You would use Zinn, or Eric Foner, or film, or something not as a corrective necessarily. If you're going to say that these guys are wrong and that I've got the truth, then you're putting yourself in the same position that the textbook writers are. They do not exist as a corrective, or as an antidote, or the right story to correct the wrong story. Their use

invites not a narrative, but the questions. It invites not the truth, but the admission that we are in search of the truth.

James' comments have reshaped my views on the importance of counter-hegemonic texts and I believe can offer other educators insight into their potential. Critical educators do not seek to provide the truth to their students. They attempt to promote their students' ability to examine narratives that claim they own the truth. By using counter-hegemonic texts, James has opened up those possibilities for his students because it invites questions. They invite students to question why textbooks ignore or present certain narratives in a marginalizing manner. They help students to understand that learning exists beyond schools because much of the learning that takes place within schools is not always the most valuable form of learning. They also invite students to question all histories because they all come from a bias.

While I applaud James' use of Zinn, I am even more impressed by his approach to Zinn and the manner in which he helps his students recognize that Zinn is not the "antidote" to the textbook. It is one perspective, just as the textbook is only one perspective. Other educators could learn from James' approach to counter-hegemonic texts because it opens the door to multiple possibilities. His usage acknowledges the cultural legacies of his students. He felt students in his classroom appreciated his approach because they felt the counter-hegemonic either texts represented their histories or that he at least attempted to honor as many histories as he possibly could. It also forced the students to reexamine their own histories and realize that they were active participants in history by investigating and living history.

Issue #5: Addressing Issues when Using Counter-Hegemonic Texts

I asked my participants if they faced any issues while using counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms. I wanted to know if there were any obstacles that they had to overcome or if the students, parents, coworkers, and administrators accepted their pedagogical approach. They all had varying levels of response that were indicative of the different cultural and political natures of their schools. For example, Paula responded that she had not received any pushback over the years from the administration. “I just did it and never looked back.” At the same time though, she has let me know in the past that she is extremely close to the principal and the previous head of the social studies department. It is difficult to determine if those relationships factored into her ability to utilize counter-hegemonic texts without facing any issues, but based on the conversations we had concerning how other teachers at her schools were treated, the administration was not always as *laissez faire* with other teachers. She said she “took the leap” and never looked back.

Her ability to form relationships with students has influenced her ability to try different things in her classroom. Whenever she attempts something new, the students are willing to take the leap with her because they feel comfortable and safe in her classroom. She deliberately establishes a relationship of trust with her students and she feels that those relationships break down the barriers to classroom participation and student interaction that may exist in other classrooms. Her approach creates a communal bond amongst the students where they take pride in being in her class. They are willing to confront their uneasiness about speaking in front of their peers because they respect and trust their classmates and her to accept that everyone is still learning

and progressing. They know that it is acceptable to not have the perfect final opinion, but that they are seeking to formalize their opinions through communal dialogue.

Her experience offers hope to other educators because it shows that educators can overcome potential barriers with students by fostering a counter-culture community of practice. Her classes have become small communities within her school where critical thought occurs. Similarly, I know when I taught that my students who were most comfortable with their classmates and I were willing to openly discuss their ideas. Sometimes it took time to get quieter students to share their perspectives, but once they did, it was extremely rewarding to see the class respond with appreciation and thoughtful consideration. When I shared these experiences with Paula, she said her experiences had been similar and that she placed students in small groups used the Socratic seminar method, and journaling strategies to help her students form their own opinions. Her methods increased the students' capacity to express their thoughts. They became more confident in their own analysis of texts by sharing that analysis with others and mutually evaluating the validity of the various perspectives, they read.

James felt that his issues when incorporating counter-hegemonic texts were rooted in the political views of the parents of his students while he received very little pushback from his principals. "Most administrators don't know enough about the TEKS to know when you're challenging them." His experience is that they walk in for five minutes and see a learning target on the board, students engaged with texts, and walk away not knowing what is really taking place in his classroom. "I don't ever get anybody coming to me and telling me that I'm not teaching the TEKS. The only way they're going to say that to me is if somebody doesn't pass the TAKS test." He does

not hide what is happening in his classroom, but they only seem to care about his scores on the TAKS exam, so they leave him alone. Parents, on the other hand, sometimes raise issues with his teaching style:

Most of the problems I've run into would be when something rubs a parent the wrong way politically. When you ask a student, for example, to evaluate the claims of the progressive movement in the United States. Once you start doing that, you're talking about public ownership of railroads, of food supply, the inflation of the money supply, and you're talking about things that are essentially socialist and a lot of people don't want that topic introduced at all. It doesn't matter if the student ends up not agreeing with it. Parents won't like the topic to be there.

The problems from parents are not surprising given that James teaches in a very conservative part of Houston. He says the parents who have the greatest issue are those who believe he may be attempting to preach to their children political views that are the opposite of theirs. He says in a twist of irony that he relies on the TEKS and shows parents where the state requires him to teach the progressive era. He also tries to inform them of his approach to controversial issues in his classroom. He lets them know that he attempts to incorporate as many viewpoints as possible and allow the students to analyze the multiple viewpoints and reach their own conclusions. After talking to them, the issues that most parents have subside. The few parents whose issues remain after speaking to James have never gone beyond letting James know of their frustrations.

The pushback from the parents is discouraging on one level, but his response in return is encouraging. Because James understands the theory behind his teaching practice, he is able to relate his pedagogical choices to parents and avoid any other major issues. He also responds calmly because he wants parents to be actively

involved in their child's education. It would be nice if the questions parents raised went beyond their political discomfort. Parents should be involved in their children's academic success. They should be asking teachers why they are making specific curricular choices. Teachers should not view those questions as combative. Teachers should be able to justify the choices they make in their classrooms. The best defense a teacher has against such questions is designing a curriculum based on their own educational philosophies that represent who they want to be as an educator. Educators that are as thoughtful about their curriculum as James can relate why they are making the choices they are making because it supports a long-term goal of critical thinking. Parents may not always understand why a specific topic is being taught in class, but if they understand the long-term goals of the teacher, there is a better chance they will be understanding of controversial topics being included in the classroom.

Clayton's experience was almost the opposite of James. In his experience, parents wanted teachers to challenge their children by engaging with multiple viewpoints. "Most parents want their kids to be engaged in rigorous coursework." He felt that maintaining a solid website that had a detailed calendar concerning what was happening in the classroom avoided most issues with parents:

I have found that my best defense in that regard, in regard to the curriculum is a very user friendly and data rich website. If I could direct students parents, and administrators to a website in which everything we've done in classes is PDFed and downloadable, that there's a calendar that lays out what's going to happen and when, what they missed when they were out, etc, then that obviates most of the complaints about not using the textbook.

They could go online and see where the class was heading and that addressed most issues from parents. They could see that there were larger conceptual objectives in

mind for each unit that he intentionally included on his website. He felt that this also helped with his students. They knew where he was trying to go with the class, so they were not concerned either. Administrators, on the other hand, seemed to cause Clayton a few more issues:

I truly believe that the idea of equity is going to kill education. Because if teacher A teaching say, world geography, is doing something different than teacher B, then there is undoubtedly a parent that is going to complain that one of the courses is more difficult than the other. So from an administrator's point of view, they want everybody to be marching in step so they have a justification for a parent who is pissed because their little Sally didn't do well and they're going to blame it on the rigor of the curriculum and the given teacher, especially if that curriculum plan is different than the teacher next door.

Clayton feels that most of his issues with administrators relate to their notion of child equity. He believes administrators attempt to avoid issues by mandating common teaching practices amongst teachers. He says it was one of the reasons he left his last school because he felt a greater imposition of his curriculum was on its way from the administration. He feels he most likely would have been able to continue teaching in his preferred style, but he did not want to continue having to justify himself to principals so when the opportunity came up to move to a school that offered him more autonomy, he could not turn it down.

This notion of equity that principals discussed with Clayton is a highly problematic argument. It has been my experience that few teachers are willing to step outside of the traditional style of teaching and incorporate counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms. By imposing even stricter regulations on what educators are able to do through a false sense of equity, it will even further stifle what educators are willing to do by reinforcing the belief that they should all teach identically. In reality, that

does not create equity amongst classrooms. The quality of teaching is still going to be vastly different amongst teachers and it only hampers the academic freedom of quality educators such as Clayton, Paula, and James. Furthermore, it limits what burgeoning educators are willing to attempt in the classroom by reinforcing to them that maintaining the status quo is more important than developing transformative curricula that has the power to empower students. As discussed above, the textbooks and standards do not promote student empowerment. Thus, relying on standards and textbooks that do not promote critical literacy and critical thinking will hamper a teacher's ability to engage students into meaningful education.

Clayton believed this played a part into why educators were unwilling to go beyond the textbook:

That's what you're forced to do if you're any kind of a good teacher. The problem is most teachers are not able or willing, usually willing, to do the work that that takes. It's much easier to work from the textbook chapter by chapter than it is to cobble together pieces of a curriculum. And I think, for me it's worth it because the secret of teaching is getting kids interested and you have to, each year, each student, each class it's different and you have to be ready to be sort of nimble on your feet when something catches fire in kids' minds you need to be able to address it and extend that into a deeper meaningful lesson set that they're ready to do, but most teachers won't do the work. For a variety of reasons. They're underpaid, undereducated, understaffed, they're overworked, they have too many students for the content. There's a lot of very good reasons why they don't do that, but good teaching is only going to happen if people move beyond the textbook.

Clayton is adamant that good teaching only happens when teachers move beyond the textbook; however, most teachers do not move beyond it because of a variety of factors including the relative ease with which they can teachers can strictly utilize the textbook in the classroom. There is a lot of underlying meaning in Clayton's words.

On the surface, he understands that there are constraints placed on teachers and that they are underpaid and overworked, but he does not use these as a excuses, but merely points out the flaws in the systems. Ultimately though, he believes quality educators can move beyond these limiting factors and fuel students' curiosity through counter-hegemonic texts. He knows the amount of work it takes to develop those kinds of lessons that require the teacher to spend hours searching for resources, but he also knows that is the only way he can justify teaching. He left a very decent paying job before teaching and he says did not become a teacher to fall in line with a "demobilizing curriculum that negates students' ability to learn" because of a false sense of equity. His confidence in teaching in a critical manner is because it has worked with his students. He has had students repeatedly tell him how his class transformed their outlook on education and what they believed was individually possible.

Issue #6: Critical Literacy and Student Empowerment

"[Students] like to think. They like to understand that they can have an opinion," Paula said to me. The ultimate goal that my participants want with their students is to get them to critically engage with texts. They want their students to understand that they have the ability to analyze and deconstruct perspectives found in a variety of texts. They are empowering their students by developing their critical literacy skills through the utilization of counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms. They were not shy in telling me that they use counter-hegemonic texts as a means to an end. They feel the inclusion of multiple perspectives was important because it

offered a broader representation of society, but it was equally, if not more important because it forced students to critically analyze the various viewpoints in the texts. Paula wants her students to discuss whose opinion they find more valid in the texts they read. “It’s good for them to have an opinion, but they have to support through the evidence at hand.” She pushes them to challenge her and challenge each other. She pushes them to take a stand on whether or not they agree with the counter-hegemonic texts they read. She refuses to allow her students to not formulate their own opinions. She believes that when they leave her classroom, they will constantly face alternating viewpoints that they have to be able to analyze.

Clayton similarly wants his students to develop the ability to create knowledge through analysis. By building up students’ confidence in themselves, the best teachers can succeed in empowering students. Students become empowered because “they know what it feels like to encounter something difficult, to work through the problem, and be successful.” He elaborated that students walk away with the confidence that comes from successfully evaluating the opinions of others in a rigorous fashion. He feels that they become better at it, and then embrace the challenge as it excites them to see what is going to happen next. Then, as his students become more involved in the classroom, they start to bring in either their own perspectives or other perspectives that they have found outside of class. Clayton believes that the development of students’ skills should be the goal of education:

We don’t go to a job and march our way through a step-by-step manual. We go to a job with a set of skills and we create as we go and education should mirror that. We should be creating curriculum and not consuming curriculum.

Clayton's use of "step-by-step manual" is a direct reference to the textbook. Teachers should not be consuming the curriculum of others by relying on the textbook. They should be creating their own curriculum with their students in order to help prepare them for lives beyond high school where they will need to be able to create their own knowledge. His students begin to accept that responsibility as creators of knowledge as the year progresses because he is constantly challenging them to dig deeper within themselves to foster their critical thinking skills. His students do not walk into his class with the ability to critically analyze counter-hegemonic texts, but through the constant development of their critical literacy skills, they learn to navigate through arguments, positions of power, and privilege by recognizing the bias and objectivity claims found in texts.

James addresses his students' critical literacy by beginning his courses with students developing their own narratives. He wants his students to feel as if they have a place in his classroom and in society. He facilitates their construction of their narratives that they then collectively connect to broader narratives of history. Through this process, students begin to recognize that they "participate, witness, and are an actor in history." They become engaged in his classroom because he provides space for their stories and their interests. He does not negate their cultural legacies by ignoring their lived experiences. Instead, he embraces their experiences and infuses them into his curriculum. His students begin to develop their critical consciousness by discovering their own identity. James tells me, "I begin my classes by having students write down their personal history so they can recognize their place in history." Their identity formation plays an important role in his classroom because he wants his

students to constantly consider how they fit into broader historical narratives. It helps them analyze the perspectives they encounter on a personal and societal level because they feel they have a perspective of their own that is as valuable as the perspectives they are learning. These new perspectives constantly reshape and reform their own identity by forcing them to reconceptualize their perspectives on history.

To develop critical literacy, James believes the teacher must engage the students in a critical analysis of their own history. He feels that his students must learn that we all have biases that influence the way we view our history and ourselves. He supports this new learning by extending the process through deconstructing a variety of counter-hegemonic texts where they all analyze them for bias and point of view. The process ultimately leads students to a point where they can embrace their critical literacy by analyzing texts without his prompting. They develop a critical consciousness by recognizing that texts and authors are not infallible and their own narratives are just as important as the narratives found in textbooks. Moreover, this self-awareness leads to students questioning why their narratives are not included in textbooks and becoming advocates for themselves and their communities.

James told me a story how two years ago, he and around twenty of his high school students went to Austin to protest the proposed budget cuts to education. The students were frustrated in his class with their lack of representation in schools. He believed that their analysis of the power relations of the SBOE and their utilization of the TEKS to maintain their privilege sparked levels of outrage in his students. They began to seek out ways they could challenge the educational status quo in the state and, as the state government was threatening to lay off thousands of teachers across

the state, they felt it was an appropriate time to voice their frustrations. They approached him to inquire if he would be willing to go with them to Austin because they wanted to bring along the teachers they were most afraid of losing. They felt his class had empowered them to critically challenge systems of power and they wanted to use him as an example for others while they protested. James and his students joined thousands of other teachers, students, parents, and community members at the Rainy Day Protest. Unfortunately, their protest fell on deaf ears and the budget cuts still passed. However, his students had moved beyond passive consumers of knowledge. They had recognized their place in society and felt they had a responsibility and the ability to challenge the state legislature. They were becoming active citizens whose obligations went far beyond voting and extended to changing the lived conditions of their communities. They no longer wanted to sit idly by as history happened around them. They wanted to become actors in history and create their own legacies that others could no longer ignore.

Summary

My participants' pedagogical approaches exemplify how educators can bridge the theoretical underpinnings of critical pedagogy by utilizing counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms. My participants were constantly emphasizing the importance of incorporating counter-hegemonic texts to develop students' abilities to challenge, critique, and analyze a diversity of viewpoints. They removed the infallibility of textbooks and standards by deconstructing them in their classrooms with their students. They did not hide behind standards as points of authority. Rather, they

challenged the hegemonic nature of authority by breaking down its ideology found in the TEKS. Students were not sitting in their classrooms and acting as receptacles of knowledge where they deposited information. They become actively involved in their classrooms by critically analyzing multiple perspectives. The development of their critical thinking skills promoted their critical literacy skills.

Critical literacy is the foundation of critical pedagogy. My participants' students began to recognize the marginalization and oppression of the standards and textbooks. They were able to deconstruct that marginalization by locating who benefitted by maintaining these forms of power. My participants were also very careful not to replace the ideology of the TEKS with their own ideology. They knew if they prescribed their own version of history, they would be removing their students' opportunity to critically engage in texts. By developing their students' critical literacy skills, they were able to facilitate their students' formulation of their own oppositional ideologies that challenged the ideology of the textbooks and standards. They helped their students deconstruct the TEKS and name the positions of power that the TEKS support. This is a lifelong skill that their students will continue to use as they seek out opportunities to challenge oppression in society.

My three participants are far from perfect educators, and their journeys are obviously not complete. This window into their journeys offers critical educators an opportunity to reconsider how they can utilize counter-hegemonic texts in the classroom. They have shown that in three different schools, working with vastly different populations, that getting students to question and challenge the prescribed doctrine of the state is possible. Moreover, they offer examples of how they went

through the process of developing their students' abilities to critically question and critically think. They accept their responsibility as teachers to use that authority to promote the critical consciousness of their students. For me, it has given me hope that if the development of social studies teachers transitioned away from the basic teaching of social studies to educators questioning how they can foster critical literacy amongst high school students, they could develop and implement a culturally relevant pedagogy across thousands of classrooms.

Chapter Five: Implications

Introduction

I set out on a journey to discover why and how three educators were utilizing counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms. I began this process because my own experiences incorporating counter-hegemonic texts in high school classrooms seemed so problematic. I was given textbooks based off standards written by the SBOE that I felt were marginalizing for my students because they deliberately ignored perspectives that challenged the promulgation of American exceptionalism in the TEKS. They did not require my students to critically analyze history because they offered a narrow, singular narrative. The ideology found within this singular narrative promoted a cultural hegemony of conservative, neoliberal norms. As I began to investigate textbooks and standards, I found that textbooks approached history from Eurocentric and Americentric vantage points (Loewen, 2007; Zinn, 2005; Kincheloe, 2001; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005). They largely ignored the rest of the world and negated the histories of minority populations in the West by only addressing them in relation to Western history, which was simply a code word for patriarchal White history. These neoliberal retellings of specific histories had inundated educators with poor resources and limited their ability to move beyond textbooks and standards. The SBOE required teachers to teach from the state-mandated objectives, which meant they had to teach these pointedly conservative views in their classrooms.

I knew there were educators who were addressing the state standards by questioning them in their classrooms. Through a transformative curriculum, they were asking their students to not simply learn the state objectives, but to deconstruct them by critically analyzing the version of history the SBOE valued and which perspectives they intentionally neglected to include. I wanted to know how these educators navigated a system that attempted to deprofessionalize and deskill teachers by removing curricular decisions from them and placing them in the hands of 15 board members who were far removed from the needs of their students. I wanted to know how they found cracks in the system to challenge and subvert it from within, and if there were any negative repercussions due to their subversion. Moreover, I wanted to know if they were aware of their subversion, if they believed educators should actively challenge the established system, and how they perceived their roles as critical educators. Before I could really delve into those questions, I needed to explore how and why other researchers and educators enacted change.

As I researched the literature, I began to investigate the need for critical pedagogy in schools. Critical pedagogy is the theoretical foundation for my study because it provided me the language to express my frustrations as a teacher and with the educational system as whole. It gave me access to a language that helped me recognize oppression in society by facilitating my deconstruction of that oppression. As I investigated how hegemony, ideology, power, and fear operated in schools and maintained privilege in society, I decided I wanted to research how educators, who were living within that system, challenged and subverted it through their teaching.

Most of the literature regarding critical pedagogy that highlighted classroom models used forms of counter-hegemonic texts. Researchers looking at student empowerment through culturally relevant teaching narrated most of those models. Their investigation of student empowerment was extremely important, but rarely did they analyze the texts educators were using in classrooms to facilitate students down a path towards empowerment. Thus, I decided that my research focus would be educators' perceptions of counter-hegemonic texts in an attempt to investigate how educators were using texts as part of their transformative practice.

Conclusions and Implications

As I finalized my research, I felt I had answered my research questions of how and why educators are using counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms, but those answers left me with more questions. Those questions will shape my future research, but the answers I discovered have also reshaped how I perceive what is possible through critical praxis. As I explored my participants' use of counter-hegemonic texts, I discovered commonalities that existed between the three of them. Those commonalities led me to consider what it meant when three educators in three separate schools were having similar experiences. I had to contextually consider the broader implications of my findings. Qualitative research is unique because the researcher is not focused on generalizability, but instead qualitative researchers focus on the personal narratives of the research participants in an attempt to capture a moment in time. A collection of these narratives can start to form the basis for

broader implications that must be considered even while still attempting to capture personal perspectives. As I worked through the critical hermeneutic process, the larger implication of my emergent themes in relation to education and society as a whole began to surface. I began to reconceptualize my emergent themes through critical pedagogy, cultural studies, and culturally relevant teaching. These theories helped me connect my themes to the broader context of education. It was only appropriate to reframe my findings through such a critical lens because these traditions laid the theoretical foundations for my study.

In this concluding chapter, I will revisit my emergent themes from chapter four and attempt to place them within the broader educational setting. These themes have broad implications for the future of the field. My participants' experiences obviously reflect their unique circumstances, but the politics of educational policy directly affects what takes place in their classrooms. I will explain my findings through the larger politically laden system of education. I will also relate my findings to other researcher's work in an attempt to explain what is happening in education and society across multiple research sites. Finally, I will close this dissertation with a discussion of what limitations I faced with this research and how I can address some of those limitations through future research. This study has left me with new questions that will take me years to investigate, but I look forward to continuing this journey of researching the way teachers and students challenge the hegemonic nature of society through education.

Revisiting Curricular Autonomy

As I investigated my participants' autonomy in the classroom, they all told me they experienced relative freedom in developing their own curricula. They believed the reason the administrators did not infringe upon their curricular decisions was in large part due to their students' high passing scores on standardized exams. Their students' high passing rates on these exams appeased their administration enough that they were left alone to utilize counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms. Other researchers have highlighted similar instances of school administrators focusing on student test scores more than classroom practice (McNeil et al., 2008; Gold, 2005; Perlstein, 2008; Ravitch, 2010).

These examples and my participants' experiences highlight a much larger context regarding which qualities policy-makers value in teachers. My participants felt that their high tests scores were what their principals valued more than any of their other qualities. Concurrently, the literature shows that achieving high test scores drives educational reform (Ravitch, 2010; Perlstein, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Lipman, 2011). The focus on high test scores leaves teachers such as Clayton, Paula, and James in compromising positions because they believe that if their test scores dropped, administrators would remove their curricular autonomy. They handle this pressure well by ignoring the high-stakes exams and addressing the standards in a critical manner. They do not succumb to the pressure to relegate their classrooms to drill and kill stations that are so frequently seen across the U.S. (Kozol, 2005; Ravitch, 2010). These teachers have all made themselves well established and teach

in schools where students test scores are regularly high compared to the average passing rate for the state. What happens to other educators who are not as established as these three? What happens to other educators who are quality teachers teaching in schools where achieving high test scores is extremely difficult? How are they able to navigate the high-stakes system? How do they address the push to standardize their curriculum and their own desire to empower their students? In addition, how do we honor and evaluate educators that are obtaining high tests scores while also engaging their students in a transformative pedagogy? These educators go unnoticed by the system. They are told they are doing a good job, but the mechanisms used to measure their quality ignore the true affect they are having on their students. These educators are almost intentionally having to fly under the radar, which negates the larger impact they could have because their approach moves away from a prescribed curriculum and challenges the established standards through critical analysis. By operating independently, they are devoid of support and the opportunity to improve the practice of the educators around them because their teaching style is not valued by the educational system.

This speaks to a much broader issue of what is the purpose of education. Are we educating students to be passive consumers of information without the ability to contextualize, critique, and conceptualize that information or are we empowering students to challenge the systems that marginalize them? High-stakes accountability does not compliment the critical literacy of students. It is antithetical to critical literacy because it negates the students' ability to deconstruct and create knowledge.

While my participants' students achieved high scores, their principals and coworkers ignored their classroom practices because they were not standardizing their classroom practice to match how other teachers in their schools were conducting their classrooms. Simultaneously, their high passing rates created enough space for them to operate independently of the system. The system works for them even if they are frustrated with it, but new teachers and teachers in underserved communities may not have the same luxury. As the literature shows, those educators regularly face stifling work environments where their freedom to move beyond an imposed curriculum is limited (Gold, 2005; McNeil et al., 2008; Perlstein, 2008).

High stakes accountability creates an unequal system where teachers who achieve high test scores are left alone to potentially improve or hinder their students' development, while teachers with low test scores are placed under extreme scrutiny. Yet, the literature shows that student test scores cannot show the value of an educator (Ravitch, 2010). The freedom my participants received was well deserved, but the system creates opportunities for teachers who may not be as deserving to be left alone entirely if their students come prepared to their classroom to already pass high-stakes tests. Conversely, my participants' live under the constant threat that principals could remove their freedom if their students' test scores ever dropped. A system that equally rewards strong and poor teachers, while disregarding the true impact that great educators can have on students, negates the value of educators by relegating them to implementers of standardized curriculum.

Revisiting Counter-Hegemonic Texts.

All of my participants expressed similar views on what they considered counter-hegemonic texts. They recognized that counter-hegemonic texts were texts that challenged the hegemony of those in power through their deconstruction of the standards. Where my definition of counter-hegemonic texts and theirs seemed to differ somewhat was on what constituted a text. When discussing their use of counter-hegemonic texts, they all initially referenced primary source documents and other written sources as kinds of counter-hegemonic texts they used in their classrooms. As we discussed them further, they began to include texts such as films, paintings, visuals, and music.

Most of their examples of the types of counter-hegemonic texts they used in the classroom were also written sources, such as primary and secondary sources of historical events. Clayton's examples were of him using monographs and primary source documents to include multiple viewpoints in his classroom. Paula said she incorporated primary source documents and academic articles to provide multiple perspectives from multiple sources. James also expanded on counter-hegemonic texts beyond written texts as he described his use of "visuals, recorded speeches, paintings, diaries, newspapers, films, journals, and novels." As I began to notice this theme emerge from the data, I wanted to investigate why they all referenced written sources before mentioning their use of other texts. I had observed them use multiple kinds of counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms so I knew it was not because they only used texts such as secondary and primary source documents. The issue

seemed to revolve around my usage of the term counter-hegemonic texts. To them, texts seemed to immediately refer to written documents, and then as I probed further about the other kinds of texts I had observed them using, they began to detail how they use those as well.

The issue seemed to stem from my usage of the word “texts” and the focus in the social studies on primary and secondary source documents. When I began the study, I considered using a variety of alternate terms to counter-hegemonic texts, but my dissertation committee and I agreed that it best represented what I was searching for in my research. The problem with the word ‘texts’ is my participants felt I was interested in written texts. As I explained my view of what could be considered a text, they were able to transition to non-written texts that they used in their classrooms, but the language barrier intrigued me.

Early on in my research, I considered replacing counter-hegemonic texts with counter-hegemonic resources, but I wanted to retain the term “texts” to represent texts in the critical pedagogy tradition where the world is a text that people must also learn how to read (Freire, 2008). Furthermore, I feel that art, music, and film can be read similarly to novels, poetry, and historical works. When only written works are viewed as texts though, educators may overlook the need to teach students how to read other texts. For students to be able to read the word and the world, the concept of texts needs to be reconceptualized to include other forms of texts (Freire, 2008). Being able to read non-written forms of texts can help students recognize and read other structures that represent how culture, identity, and community are all

intertwined. Similarly, students can also learn how to read symbols and images that are used to promote propaganda.

The second issue is that primary and secondary source documents are the most commonly used resources, outside of the textbook, in social studies classrooms. These documents can personalize and contextualize historical events for students. Using multiple sources, as is common in Document Based Questions (DBQs) on AP exams, can provide the opportunity for students to analyze an issue from a diversity of viewpoints. Hence, I would never advocate for educators not to use multiple sources because, as my participants showed, they can be used to empower students. The issue I see with the reliance on primary and secondary source documents is that there are multiple cultures where written language was not the primary form of cultural representation.

For example, only the Mayans fully developed a written language in the pre-Columbian Americas, whereas many other indigenous peoples of the Americas developed written languages based on symbols, pictograms, and logograms. These cultural representations cannot be easily captured through the English language and sometimes it is most appropriate to view the images and symbols to gain an appreciation and understanding of the cultural legacy of American Indians. These histories are often overlooked, intentionally ignored, or only referenced in relationship to interactions with European settlers. In addition, the lack of translations of non-English historical narratives can limit the availability of written perspectives. Many texts have not been translated yet into English and the only

opportunity to represent those cultures in the classroom is through non-written texts. Educators including more cultural representations that extend beyond written documents could partially address this issue. This means the reframing of texts needs to happen early on in the teacher training cycle. Courses designed around popular culture and media help to reframe counter-hegemonic texts, but I also think that idea needs to be pushed further, to the point where pre-service teachers develop their own critical media literacy skills to read alternative forms of texts.

Revisiting Textbooks and Standards

I have combined the two themes of textbooks and standards into one in this chapter because the influence they have on classroom practice is intertwined. The SBOE develops the standards. Textbook publishers then must curtail their textbooks to those standards. Consequently, they act in tandem to limit the opportunities educators have to move beyond the prescribed curriculum. All of my participants repeatedly stated that the standards and the textbooks did not eliminate their opportunities for critical literacy development in their classrooms. They knew they had to address the standards, but they used them to foster critical awareness and critical thinking amongst their students. They facilitated their students' critical awareness through the deconstruction of the standards by utilizing counter-hegemonic texts to challenge the traditional narratives found in the textbooks and standards. However, the textbooks and standards still maintained a position of power in their classrooms.

The mere fact that they had to start their curricular decision-making process by determining how they were going to challenge the hegemonic nature of the standards gave the standards a position of power in their classrooms. They had to address the normalizing influence of standards through their curricula. Power operates by those in power reinforcing their privilege through normalizing their positions of power. By requiring teachers in Texas to teach conservative standards, they are introducing their conservative viewpoints. This is a very limiting opportunity for educators, as it pushes them and their students to include other viewpoints. It has a limiting influence on the curricular choices of educators because they have to keep them in mind when selecting which texts they will use in their classrooms.

Even my participants, who felt the standards were poor, said they had to cover information in the standards that they felt was unnecessary and unethical. To address this, my participants' used counter-hegemonic texts to challenge the normalized viewpoint, but lamented that they wanted to move entirely beyond standards where they could focus on including a diversity of perspectives from a wide range of topics that the SBOE did not mandate. Their challenging of the standards is significant because they recognize the SBOE's attempt to indoctrinate high school students and deliberately counter that attempt. The fact that they have to counter indoctrination techniques shows the position of power that standards hold in classrooms because educators cannot overlook them. The SBOE forces educators to address the standards in some form because students taking the TAKS and STAAR

exams are the mechanisms the state uses to evaluate teachers and schools. Thus, teachers have to acquiesce to the SBOE and incorporate their standards. Otherwise, they risk leaving their students unprepared for standardized exams.

My participants attempted to move beyond this form of teacher control by subverting the TEKS. However, an individual educator challenging the standards does not entirely negate their impact on society. There needs to be a rewriting of standards that broadens the scope of the standards beyond simple rote memorization and low-level analysis. This rewrite needs to be removed from the partisan debate over the arbitrary inclusion of facts. The ideological squabbling over standards misses the point. The debate focuses myopically on which individuals are chosen to be included in objectives and who should be excluded. The dialogue about individual exclusion and inclusion overlooks the more significant consequences of standards.

Social studies standards must move beyond lists of individuals, dates, and events. They should engage the analytical purposes for exploring the social studies. Objectives should not be about the *what*; they should be about the *why*. Standards must move beyond facts to engage in the whys of history. Objectives should reflect the paradigmatic and epistemological contributions of the social studies. When standards focus on facts, students have little opportunity to interrogate such disciplinary inquiries. Students miss the interplay among multiple perspectives. Instead, they must prepare for meaningless standardized exams that do not assess students' critical literacy. We could assess students on their ability to critically

analyze information. However, narrow, fact-based standards do little to promote such meaningful assessment.

For instance, the TEKS rarely address the *whys* of the social studies. Why do we care about the causes of the Civil War? Why do we need to identify changing demographic patterns globally? Why should we understand the impact of religion and other influences on United States Constitutional development? These are important, engaging questions. We should care. Yet, the TEKS provide no possible contexts for these explorations. The objectives merely acknowledge the relationship of one immediate historical development to another.

Furthermore, as Clayton and Paula pointed out, the objectives of the TEKS no longer match up with textbooks. To teach the current objectives, educators will need to go beyond the textbooks and find resources that address the TEKS regardless of their use of counter-hegemonic texts. History textbooks will never be able to encapsulate all of history because they cannot catch up to the most recent portions of history. These recent segments of history have the greatest relevance for students because it is the history they are living. For example, James told me his current U.S. history textbook stops right after 9/11. He has no choice but to go beyond the textbook if he is going to address the last decade in his classroom. His students have no understanding of the Vietnam, Korean, or World Wars, but they understand the impact of war because of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, which the textbook ignores entirely. By utilizing counter-hegemonic texts, he is able to address the last decade and connect current events to past events so his students can contextually analyze

history. This is an important component of implementing a culturally relevant pedagogy infused with counter-hegemonic texts. Students are engaged by a variety of perspectives that coincide with their prior and cultural knowledge.

Revisiting Issues with Utilizing Counter-Hegemonic Texts

My participants related to me that, for the most part, they had few issues with utilizing counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms. The issues with using counter-hegemonic texts were not that great, but the conversations surrounding the little pushback they received were important because it highlighted some underlying issues. Standardizing curriculum and teaching has become the cornerstone of President Obama's educational policy (Obama, 2011; Duncan, 2011). The Common Core State Standards were the cornerstone to Obama's Race To The Top (RTTT) initiative (Obama, 2011, Duncan, 2011). Any state that applied for RTTT funds, had to adopt the Common Core State Standards. So far, 45 states have said they will implement the standards once the Department of Education finalizes them. President Obama believes that creating national curriculum standards will ensure that all of America's students are receiving an equal education. He believes that a number of districts and states are not holding their teachers and schools accountable. In his mind, national standards would set the expectations high enough that the schools and teachers who do not meet them would be failing their students.

The desire to standardize curriculum based on the concept of equity is highly problematic. I relayed my own narrative of how two of my colleagues advised me to

fall in line with my coworkers' curriculum. Clayton also related to me how the only issues he ever had with using counter-hegemonic texts in his classroom were from principals who were concerned that he was not on the same page as other teachers. This ardent belief that standardizing curriculum creates equity for students actually eliminates the equity of educators.

Educators have to work within their given circumstances. Educators' curriculum must meet the needs of their students and their communities. A standardized curriculum negates the freedom educators need in the classroom to develop a curriculum that is culturally relevant and empowering for students. Researchers have already shown how high-stakes accountability does not close the achievement gap in the United States (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ravitch, 2010). In fact, the achievement gap is widening (Ravitch, 2010). Instead of considering the wide-ranging evidence against high-stakes accountability, the response to NCLB failing America's youth from the Obama administration is to impose even stricter regulations on teachers and schools through the creation of national standards. Once again, students are still being left behind and teachers are still being blamed.

This administration, just like the previous, has entirely ignored the disparity of access to social services, job opportunities, decent housing, teacher pay between urban and suburban school districts, as well as the dilapidation of education infrastructure all across the nation because of unequal funding. In the meantime, the demoralization of teachers continues. Students, who are supposed to be the reason why we have schools, have absolutely no voice and are essentially ignored by all

parties. So, while we spiral down the rabbit hole of standardization, the only thing that is becoming standardized for them is testing, testing, and more testing. High stakes accountability can never factor for the needs of students who are entering school with different levels of preparation, resources, opportunities, and educational quality (Darling-Hammond, 2010). High stakes accountability will only continue to punish schools that need the most support while reinforcing schools that may or may not be bastions of quality education. The current system then does not reward educators who wish to develop a culturally relevant pedagogy. It actually punishes them for not complying with standardized curricula that ignores the needs of their students. The goal of education then should not be to further negate the role of the educator. Rather, it should be to embrace the critical praxis that can have the power to transform students' lives by liberating them from an oppressive system where their voice is nonexistent.

Final Discussion

As I conclude this dissertation, I am left with the feeling that much work still remains to be done. That is promising because it offers multiple future research opportunities. It is also somewhat harrowing because of the critical nature of the research. Students need educators who are willing to challenge the ideology found in schools (Giroux, 2007). They need educators who respect and honor their cultural legacies by incorporating them in classrooms (Gay, 2010). They need educators who know how to utilize counter-hegemonic texts to facilitate student empowerment. And

they need them now. They do not have the luxury of waiting for researchers and educators to coalesce and bridge theory and practice. They need critical hope in schools (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007).

This is what the other researchers say about students' needs. My research, on the other hand, was focused on teachers' perceptions. I did not include the perceptions of students. This limits the scope of my research by only focusing on one side of the relationships between students and teachers. I researched the perceptions of students through the work of others to inform my study. While I found their work extremely valuable, I believe the same gap that existed concerning educators' perceptions of counter-hegemonic similarly exists with students' perceptions. Many researchers have investigated student empowerment, but they have not explored students' perception of the texts educators use to facilitate the empowerment process. One avenue of future research is to capture the perception of students' engaging counter-hegemonic texts. I want to know how much of the increased level of engagement and critical awareness I observed and my teacher participants related to me was due the use of counter-hegemonic texts versus other factors. My current research could be extended to study the dynamic between students and educators when they are utilizing counter-hegemonic texts while also exploring students' perceptions of those texts.

The second limitation of my research is the established nature of my teacher participants. They had all been teaching for at least nine years. I did not intentionally look for established educators, but the nature of my sampling led me to select

teachers who I knew were utilizing counter-hegemonic texts in their classrooms. I believe the perceptions of beginning teachers may be quite different from teachers who have already developed their routines and procedures that allow them to incorporate multiple texts with relative ease. Beginning teachers may also face more hurdles than established teachers may. They may face administrators and parents who are more questioning of their pedagogical approach. My new position as an educator of pre-service teachers will allow me to develop relationships with these pre-service teachers. Through those relationships, I hope to gain access into their classrooms and investigate their perceptions of critical pedagogy, culturally relevant teaching, and counter-hegemonic texts. This would hopefully inform my future practice of working with pre-service teachers and it could also inform the broader educational community of the challenges that beginning teachers are facing upon entering the classroom.

Next, some might say that my relationships with my participants could be perceived as a limitation of my research. I would actually argue that it enriched my study. I believe the relationships of trust I developed with my participants created opportunities for them to share stories that they may not have otherwise. They were open with about their positive and negative experiences. They never seemed hesitant or unsure of their desire to share information. It also helped me with follow up conversations. They were willing to conduct member checks and maintain open lines of communication, even when they were out of the country. I honestly do not know

if I would have been willing to impose as much as I did with educators with whom I had not established relationships of trust.

While I do not view this as a limitation for the scope of this study, I believe researchers need investigate the language of standards. I conducted a small portion of that research in this study to strengthen my argument that standards in Texas had overt biases, but I also relied on the work of other researchers who analyzed the Texas state standards and standards nationally. None of these researchers conducted a true critical discourse analysis of these standards, which is what is needed to deconstruct the power relations that influence the creation of standards and the language those in power use to maintain their privilege. Fairclough's (2004) critical discourse analysis is a methodology that researchers could use to analyze standards. By investigating the standards, researchers could connect the them to educators' perceptions and classroom practice.

Finally, my personal biases offer the greatest limitations but they also offer the greatest possibilities for my research. I detest standards and standardized curricula. I believe they remove control over classrooms from the educators who are best positioned to know the needs of their students. If educators were removed from standards and textbooks, I believe educators would embrace their curricular autonomy by empowering their students through critical literacy development. Additionally, I abhor the way education is used in the state of Texas to impose a neoliberal worldview on Texas' students. The hegemony of the conservative SBOE has left teachers in this state with standards and textbooks that even the Fordham

Institute find embarrassing (Stern & Stern, 2011). They are robbing the students the opportunity of inquiry by removing critical thinking from the TEKS. Were it not for brave educators, such as my research participants, who are willing to challenge the SBOE's ideology, there may be no source of critical hope for the children in this state.

This is where I envision the greatest possibilities for my future research. I once heard Bill Ayers give a talk where he said that we have to be willing to name the moment. We have to be willing to recognize the injustices that surround us, name them, and confront them. I recognize the injustices imposed by this educational system. I am willing to name them. And I am willing to challenge them. I believe it is my responsibility to continue to use my research to unpack and deconstruct the oppression that those in positions of power in this state and society create. It is my role as a social educator to challenge the ideological misrepresentations that support cultural hegemony. I am now in a position to facilitate and support others who are attempting to do the same. Collectively, we can raise awareness, provide critical hope for students still stuck in marginalizing schools, and investigate the future needs of education through empowering research. I look forward to continuing this journey and thank you for sharing a part of it with me.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Topic Domain One: Teacher Efficacy in the Classroom

Lead-off question

How much of your curriculum is of your choosing?

Follow-up questions

What are the factors that increase or diminish your control over your curriculum?

Do you do the majority of your lesson planning by yourself or with your team?

How does that go?

Have there been any discussions concerning the new Social Studies TEKS and STARR exams?

Topic Domain Two: Counter-Hegemonic Texts

Lead-off question

What has been your experience with incorporating counter-hegemonic texts into your classroom?

Follow-up questions

What is your definition of counter-hegemonic texts?

Which kinds of texts have you used and how have you used them?

Have you received any pushback when attempting to go away from the traditional textbooks and resources provided for you by your school?

What would be your recommendation for another teacher who was considering using alternative texts in their classrooms?

Topic Domain Three: Disciplinary Power

Lead-off question

What has been your experience regarding high-stakes testing in the classroom?

Follow-up questions

How has the standardization of education affected what you do in the classroom?

How have you coped with this?

What is the current climate of your school? Is the morale high or low and what impacts that?

Topic Four: Countering Hegemony

Lead-off question

Do you feel there is a specific perspective presented in the textbook and TEKS?

What is your opinion on the historical perspectives presented in the textbooks and the TEKS?

Follow-up questions

How do you feel educators can use texts to counter the hegemony of the TEKS and textbooks?

Do you feel it is important to provide alternative perspectives to the one(s) found in the TEKS and textbooks?