Dialogue and hope in the classroom: a poetic inquiry into Freire's theories and their relationship to student activism

by

Nyk Robertson

B.A., Emporia State University, 2006
M.A., Simmons College, 2016

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Special Education, Counseling and Student Affairs
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2023

Abstract

Current studies focus on critical pedagogy in the classroom as a practice, but do not connect these practices to praxis outside of the classroom as it relates to identity-based student activism. The purpose of this research is to investigate students' experiences and development as identity-based student activists and the role of dialogue in the classroom on the development of civic identities at a Midwestern regional state institution through a lens of humanity as defined by Freire. This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do college students construct civic identities?

2. How do college students participate in civic engagement?

3. In what ways do identity-based student activists engage with Freire's concepts of dialogue and humanity?

Participants of the study consisted of seven students from a Midwestern regional 4-year state institution. The seven students ranged from 18-24 years of age. Participants were identified through a recruitment process. First, students were enrolled in at least one class with a curriculum that utilizes social justice pedagogy as illustrated through the syllabus, course description, and learning activities employed. Data was collected through two semi-structured interviews with each participant individually and two focus groups conducted with 3-4 participants each group.

Results are organized by five major clusters utilizing poetic inquiry. These clusters include critical pedagogy in the classroom, conflict, individual actions, collective influence, and barriers. These clusters offer suggestions that can be used in classrooms and across institutions as they focus on dialogue and civic engagement. These results can inform educators' strategies based on successful activities and structures professors have utilized within the classroom,

provide possibility models for curriculum and classroom design, and present suggestions on how

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Major Professor
Dr. Doris Carroll

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My academic journey would not have been possible without the support of my family, my queer kin, my mentors, my institution, and my dissertation committee.

This endeavor would not have been possible without the support and sacrifices of my family. My kids have endured many nights and weekends of me focused on completing this dissertation during family movie nights, family vacations, and between school activities. Robbie and Riley, thank you for always supporting me and reminding me that I am capable of achieving this goal.

To my queer kin, thank you for reminding me that I can do hard things. Your belief in me kept me going when circumstances, my positionality and identities, and state legislation made things seem impossible. Thank you for listening to me talk about my research and being interested enough to ask questions and giving me permission to take up space.

To my mentors, thank you for believing in me. Your guidance has been invaluable. Jason Rivera and Sha' Duncan Smith, you two gave me possibility models and examples of how to support students in a way that recognizes their humanity and agency. Without your encouragement and faith in me, I would not have pursued this degree and my current position at my institution.

My institution, including my team, my colleagues, and the President, have given me the time and endorsement to complete this research while working full-time. You all have encouraged me to continue my research and apply it to make our institution a more inclusive environment that serves our students better. Finally, thank you to my committee. Your knowledge and expertise have helped shape this research. I truly appreciate all of your advice in making this dissertation stronger than it would have been on my own.

Dedication

To my students: You have encouraged me to learn, grow, and do better in all that I do. Your dedication, passion, and critical lens have inspired me to lean into my resilience and continue to work to become a change agent in the spaces I occupy.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This research project began after my experience with student activism at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, PA. As a student affairs practitioner who worked with historically excluded students in the Intercultural Center and Womxn's Resource Center, I directly worked with students who led many of the student protests on campus. Through my position and work, I connected with many of these students on a personal level. As activism grew on campus, these students took actions to further their causes.

Some of these actions harmed my colleagues directly. One of these actions involved filming a student pushing their way into the President's Office while an administrator tried to prevent anyone from being physically hurt. The students planned an aggressive action to get into the President's Office but criticized the administrator for her actions.

Other actions lacked integrity and transparency. One student activist organization wanted to occupy a space on campus to organize a sit-in for their protest. To gain access to this building, they lied to a campus public safety officer. They told the officer a student had left their wallet in the space. Once the officer let the student into the space, the student knocked down the officer and ran to another door to let students in who had been waiting outside to gain access. Then, these students refused to leave and let in other students to occupy the space.

What brought me to this research is a deep passion for supporting folx in my life including students and colleagues. Through experiences in my career, I have connected with students in deep and meaningful ways. Due to my positions within the Intercultural Center and Womxn's Resource Center, both centers designed to support and advocate for specific affinity student groups, and the campus climate during the time that I held these positions, I built relationships with students that allowed them to be open, honest, and vulnerable. Clifton

Strengths is an online personality assessment that focuses on 34 themes that collectively form a person's personality (Gallup Inc, 2022). Connectedness is one of my top five Clifton Strengths, and empathy is in my top ten. These strengths affect the work I do as I center impact on others when considering what actions to take. Connectedness informs my practice and how I relate to colleagues and students. Empathy intensifies the impact activism has on my own experiences and the emotional labor needed to continue working on a campus rife with student protests.

While attempting to support students who interacted with the Intercultural Center and Womxn's Resource center at Swarthmore College, I also had to allow myself to have feelings about the harm that was being done in the pursuit of achieving a movement's goals. Colleagues who had supported students as they cried in their offices were being called appropriators and oppressors in student publications by the same students who had been in their offices crying. In such a progressive environment, I wondered how these students participated in critical thinking in classrooms without ever being urged to think critically about the impact of their activism. These incidents are what brought me to begin researching the topic of this project.

Background to Problem

Currently, the literature that exists around social justice pedagogy has not yet examined how it can contribute to student development and activism. However, there is literature that explores social justice pedagogy and the effect on the engagement of certain student populations. Mayhew and DeLuca Fernández (2007) conducted a quantitative study that examined social justice outcomes and course content. In this study, surveys were given to students participating in five courses that had some sort of social justice outcomes on the syllabi. The Measure of Classroom Moral Practices (Mayhew, 2005) was used as the tool for surveys. A total of 423 participants took the survey. Five variables were studied including collaborative work with peers,

opportunities for reflection, discussion about diversity, and negative interaction with diverse peers. While Mayhew and DeLuca Fernández (2007) produced a quantitative study on diversity components in the classroom, their study does not focus on participants' voices and stories in the same way a qualitative study has the potential to do.

Current literature that exists discussing critical pedagogy and social justice education focuses on theory primarily, and less on practices in the classroom or students' experiences with these practices. For example, a foundational book on social justice education, *Teaching for diversity and social justice,* provides directions on how to create a social justice curriculum and reviews social justice teaching practices (Adams et al., 2016). Whereas *Student development and social justice: critical learning, radical healing, and community engagement* looks at how diverse theoretical models such as critical pedagogy, asset-based community development, and healing justice can be used to create lessons promoting indigenous knowledge, decolonization, and mindfulness (Peterson, 2018). The book gives practical ways for how social justice pedagogy can be used in making curriculum and engaging students in critical thinking. Both of these books offer guidance to educators as they form social justice curriculum for their classrooms. However, neither book goes beyond the formation of curriculum to look at the impact of that curriculum on social justice practices on a campus.

Student activism has existed nearly as long as institutions of higher learning have existed (Boren, 2019). Students have participated in riots, protests, and demands for change at institutions throughout history (Boren, 2019). While student activists have not always been seen as productive members of the institution, recent scholarship has begun to examine the ways activists can make a positive impact on institutional change (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2020).

Student activism is part of many students' college journey (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, 2021).

In 2018, I experienced an influx of student activism on the college campus on which I worked. My experiences with student activists and campus activism inspired my pursuit to better understand student activism through a lens of humanity (Freire, 1972/2018). I wanted to investigate the possibility for ethical activism and what tools students may be given within higher education to inform ethical activism. As institutions continue to list civic engagement in their mission statements, it is imperative the curriculum and high-impact learning opportunities focus on how students are prepared to meet the institution's mission.

Nelson Mandela (1990) stated in a speech at Madison Park High School, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Students are participating in protests across the country to have their voices heard. In 2020, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), College Pulse, and RealClearEducation published the first-ever comprehensive student assessment of free speech on American college campuses titled the College Free Speech Rankings (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, 2021). This study showed that 41% of students felt it was acceptable to block other students from attending a campus speech on controversial topics, compared to 38% the previous year. Additionally, 66% of students felt it was acceptable to shout down speakers to prevent them from speaking, up from 62% the previous year (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, 2021). This study suggests that there is a significant number of students participating in activism and in a way that obstructs dialogue.

Student activism has existed on college campuses for hundreds of years (Boren, 2019; Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2020; Morgan, 2019). As the introduction to this chapter shows, students

are engaging in activism across the United States. This activism is often centered on bringing change to an institution. Student activism is not always linked to identities or the lived experiences of historically excluded populations. Identity-based student activism is student activism that is directly tied to disrupting power and advocating for themselves in relation to racism, sexism, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression linked to identity (Linder et al., 2020). In a 2022 study on civic behaviors, findings indicated that "participants from traditionally marginalized backgrounds were more likely to engage in system challenging forms of civic participation and community engagement than those from more privileged backgrounds" (Kornbluh et al., 2022). This type of activism is directly linked to the identities that student activists hold and to the liberation Freire (1972, 1993, 2005) focuses on in his works.

Through social media, student movements have become nationally visible (Soltysiak, 2020). Students are engaging in these movements in different ways. The classroom can be a space to encourage students to think critically about these movements. As bell hooks (2017), an African American author, educator, and social justice activist, whose scholarly work focused on race, class, and gender, states "the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy" (p. 12). When planning curricula and learning outcomes, it is imperative to meet students where they are while challenging them to think critically about how they will contribute to changes they wish to see.

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian philosopher, and educator, was a leader in the critical pedagogy movement. His 1972 book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, became pivotal in the development of critical pedagogy. Freire argued that critical thinking is about offering a way of thinking that goes beyond one's own experiences while encouraging critical dialogue with others to understand their experiences while simultaneously imagining a different future that goes beyond

those experiences (Freire, 1972/2018). Through critical dialogue, students develop a critical view of society and their own possibilities. This process can cause a shift of students' self-defined boundaries (Freire & Macedo, 2016). For Freire, the path to self-examination and development of critical thinking is directly linked to critical shared dialogue in the classroom. Institutions have the ability to provide space for students to participate in civic engagement and enhance consciousness-raising activities connected to civic identity development (Ballard et al., 2020; Flanagan & Bundick, 2011). By opening space for students and educators to communicate their own knowledge and share in the knowledge of others, students can begin to imagine a different reality than the one they currently inhabit. It is important to note that Freire calls for critical dialogue where knowledge is not only shared but examined.

To create space for students to learn from each other and share their own lived experiences while encouraging them to think critically, a mutual learning environment requires dialogue. Dialogical meaning making is the process of understanding the transformative process of evaluating assumptions through dialogue. This process relates to how one makes meaning of their own experiences as well as their process of knowing how and why things happen in the world (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981). Dialogical meaning making can be utilized to examine both power and knowledge production (Convertino, 2016). Effective dialogue must be what Murti (2010) defines as deliberative dialogue. "Deliberative dialogue involves thinking and reasoning together and working through conflicting possible choices with others in an effort to reach even a few common understandings and decisions about how to address and take action on an issue" (Murti, 2010, p. 196). Deliberative dialogue seeks to find common understanding. However, Murti is intentional in making it clear that common understanding is different than compromising.

Deliberative dialogue allows students to share their own knowledge and experiences and create space for diverse voices while learning from each other. Through dialogue that includes reflexive practices, students are able to better understand each other and share their own stories (Baxter Magolda & King, 2008). Murti's (2010) research project includes interviews with students who participated in a class titled, *To Veil or Not to Veil: Germany and Islam*. Murti (2010) describes the process used in the classroom to create a space for deliberative dialogue. Murti (2010) also explains how these sessions allowed for students to establish nuanced opinions and create suggestions and possible solutions that moved past the dichotomy of two opposing sides.

Student activism has become part of the college experience for many students currently attending institutions in the United States. Activism among students has increased at 52 percent of all secondary schools across the United States (Sutton, 2019). Students are entering into higher education with previous exposure to social justice movements. At the same time, social media has enhanced grassroots movement building. Therefore, it is essential that student affairs practitioners and faculty members explore their possible roles within the development of identity-based student activists.

Identity-based student activism is defined by Linder et al. (2020) as students involved in activism as it relates to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and other forms of oppression. For this study, identity-based student activism is designated as a form of civic engagement. Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes (Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi).

Problem Statement

This study attempts to fill the gap in research by focusing on the students' experience with social justice pedagogy, specifically focused on Freire's dialogue and the development of students' civic identities. While research exists around how critical pedagogy and social justice education is being utilized in the classroom (Adams et al., 2016; Bell, 2016; Darder, 1991; hooks, 2017; McLaren, 1994; Shor, 1992), as well as the relationship between these practices and student engagement with social justice practices (Adamian & Jayakumar, 2018; Ayers et al., 2009; Convertino, 2016; Mayhew & DeLuca Fernández, 2007), there is no literature specifically examining identity-based student activism and social justice education praxis. No literature currently exists that seeks to understand experiences of students who participated in identity-based student activism and connections to classroom frameworks and activities that create mutual learning environments that allow students to engage in deliberate critical dialogue.

Positionality

My experiences at Swarthmore College were discussed at the beginning of this chapter. However, my experiences with identity-based activism started prior to becoming a student affairs practitioner. I am a White, butch, queer, able-bodied, first-generation college student who was raised in a Southern Baptist home in Kansas. Some of these identities have been more salient than others during different periods in my life. All these identities inform the way I arrived at this current research.

Growing up in a Southern Baptist church, I was raised with certain values and beliefs. When I left for college, many of these beliefs were tested. Specifically, as a queer person living in the Bible Belt, I had to confront my family's values and beliefs and how my own identities conflicted with those values. During my undergraduate program, I struggled deeply with how my

sexuality and gender identity could exist within the value system in which I was raised. The main

support system I utilized during this time was the LGBTQ+ student organization on campus. I

found friendship, a chosen family, and others who had similar lived experiences and shared

identities. This period in my life impacts my research in three significant ways.

First, the LGBTQ+ student organization-initiated protests and activism on campus.

During my time at my undergraduate university between 2001-2005, we petitioned for gender

neutral bathrooms, adding gender identity to the discrimination policy, and pushing back for our

advisor who was not given tenure possibly because of his work with our group. I found my

identity as an identity-based student activist during this time in my life. My development as a

person standing up against inequalities, learning how to support other marginalized groups as an

advocate, as well as my academic development into the discipline of gender and culture studies

all started during these formative years. Considering my relationship to activism, personal

development, and professional career goals and how they relate with my undergraduate

experience, this influences the way I connect with student activists as a professional.

While I found connections within the LGBTQ+ community on campus, I was

simultaneously losing connections with my family and previous friends through my coming out

process. Coming out as queer to my family required me to feel confident in my own identity as

well as understand the queer community. These were requirements I did not possess in the

beginning of my coming out process. Coming to terms with my sexuality and gender identity

was extremely difficult for me. Going away to college allowed me to explore my identities with

more freedom than I had living with my family. Exploration also brought moral conflict,

questioning values, and understanding how I could exist as I was while still finding a place

within my Higher Power's love and acceptance. A few weeks into my first year of college, on

Sept. 13, 2001, I attempted to take my own life. At the time, I could not align my beliefs with my identities. If my residential assistant had not come to check on me, after a few concerned friends reached out to him, I would not have survived that night. In my work, I am guided by my understanding of the significance of students' sense of belonging as well as their knowledge of and access to resources. These experiences also guide my passion and motivation in doing the work I do in student affairs. My commitment to students' sense of belonging also influences the relationships I have built with student activists at Swarthmore College as my positions supported historically excluded students at an elite PWI. These students also often struggled with depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues (Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2014).

As I mentioned prior, coming out to my family required me to have confidence within my own identity as well as an understanding of the queer community. While the beginning of my coming out process was difficult for me, my identity development enabled me to think more critically about LGBTQ+ identities. By employing logical arguments to help my family understand who I am, I was able to connect my lived experiences with statistics, theological research, and others' stories. Through my desire to maintain relationships with my family members, I have learned to lean into their humanity even at times when it felt like they did not recognize mine. Seeing my family make connections to who they have always known and who I am holistically helped me acknowledge the power of stories.

It led me down the path of sharing my own experiences in LGBTQ+ trainings for faculty, staff, and students. I intentionally connect with my audience through my willingness to be vulnerable. I engage the participants through imagery, excitement, and transparency to build trust. This trust allows me to take them on a journey along which they have chosen to follow me. Without my belief in the humanity of all participants, I would not be able to engage in

conversations about my personal life or take every question as a learning opportunity. This journey is one I have spent many years on. My desire is to purposefully engage in research that creates spaces in classrooms that encourage students to begin their own journeys to telling their stories, but also to engage with others' stories.

During the time that this study was being conducted, another identity became central to my positionality as researcher and employee of the institution at which this study took place. I was promoted to a position that focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts across the campus. This not only placed me in a position that focused on the systematic and structural ways the institution can support historically excluded populations, but I also became a member of the President's cabinet. My position at the institution allows me to connect with students in numerous ways including events, programming, orientation, a summer transition program, and being the person who handles bias incidents if they are not connected to Title IX or Title VII reports. The tension between being an administrator and being the person pushing against oppressive systems within the institution has affected my work on campus and my relationships with students, staff, and faculty. Being the person at the table whose position is focused on dismantling oppressive systems at our institution has given me the access and privilege to make some changes that directly impacted students in this research project. Conversely, I am an administrator who served on a committee that took actions which were protested against by students, staff, faculty, and community members and will be examined during this study. My internal struggle to exist as both administrator and advocate is an important component of how I conducted this research and how this research showed up in my praxis at the institution.

Also, during the research process, an incident that affected students, staff, and faculty was the decision to terminate faculty and staff members including tenured faculty. This incident

incited protests, newspaper articles, and other avenues of critique across campus and nationally. This decision was connected to administrators, including my position, and brought upheaval to campus as positions were eliminated that were previously considered protected as tenured positions.

Research Purpose

This project is interested in understanding the development of civic identities and the role dialogue plays in their civic engagement through identity-based student activism. This study endeavors to create better understanding of these experiences and present practical actions that can be taken by educators to assist students in their development as activists who center humanity. This research endeavors to understand how to support identity-based student activists while creating space for them to reflect on their actions and on the systems against which they are fighting. This is a qualitative study in order to create more space for participants' voices and stories. There is no literature specifically examining connections between student activism and social justice education praxis. The purpose of this research is to investigate students' experiences and development as identity-based student activists and the role of dialogue in the classroom on the development of civic identities at a Midwestern regional state institution through a lens of humanity as defined by Freire.

Research Questions

1. How do college students construct civic identities?
2. How do college students participate in civic engagement?
3. In what ways do identity-based student activists engage with Freire's concepts of dialogue and humanity?

Defining Key Concepts

Conscientização

Often translated as critical consciousness, conscientização is the process of acquiring critical thinking skills by which one becomes conscious of social and political institutions of power that work to oppress and builds skills to act against these elements (Freire 1972/2018). Freire viewed conscientização as a process that required reflection, action, and dialogue. Conscientização, for the purposes of this study, will be linked to the development of civic identities on campus.

Dialogue

Dialogue has become a word that is used in many contexts in higher education and beyond. Unfortunately, the concept of dialogue has become diluted in some instances as communities work to create conversation among different constituents. As this research looks at dialogue in the classroom, it is important to define dialogue as it is being used in this project. For the purpose of this project, Freire's concept of dialogue will be investigated. Four components of Freire's (1972/2018) dialogue I will be looking at in this study include:

1. it cannot occur if some are denying others the right to speak or be heard

2. it unites reflection and action to transform and humanize the world

3. they also need to have a commitment to others

4. it must come from a place of love.

Dialogue "cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people… Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself" (p. 89). This definition of dialogue is what will be investigated through this research, and its impact on identity-based student activism.

Humanity

For Freire (1972/2018), humanity is tied to liberation. As we work to support our own liberation, and the liberation of others who are oppressed, we become more human. Education is a space for all participants to share in one another's humanity. According to Freire (1976), education is nothing less than becoming human, or the process of humanization. Through deeper knowledge and critical analysis of one's life, a person is able to connect on a deeper level to their humanness. This research will focus on understanding the humanity of others both through dialogue in the classroom and within the actions of identity-based student activism.

Praxis

While dialogue and conscientização are necessary for reflection, there must be a second part of this process to make change. That part is action. "Reflection is meaningless without action; if there is no action, there can be no praxis" (Freire, 2005, p. 88). Freire (1972/2018) defines praxis specifically as "the action and reflection of [people] upon their world in order to transform it" (p. 79). Praxis is the crux of this research. While dialogue allows for students to engage in reflection and critical consciousness raising, they do not, by themselves, make real change. Conversely, current identity-based student activism, if devoid of reflection, cannot offer a transformation that centers humanity of all. The combination of these two pieces, i.e., praxis, allows for transformation that centers liberation for the entire campus community.

(Re)presentation

The results of this study will be presented through found poetry created by using the words of participants. Faulkner (2020) describes the process of creating found poetry from interview transcripts as highlighting participants' precise words and language directly taken from interview transcripts. In Chapters two and three, I will describe in more depth what found poetry

is and how it will be utilized in this study. Throughout this study, when discussing the ways participants' stories will be represented, the term (re)presentation will be used. A researcher cannot represent a participant in their truest human form but can collaborate with the participant in a co-construction of findings. (Re)presentation is an intentional visual display of the interaction between researcher and participant in presenting the results of the study (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Civic Identity

This study seeks to understand how students develop civic identities. Throughout this study, civic identity is understood as a multipronged and nuanced concept of the self as relating to, belonging to, and being responsible for, community or communities (Atkins & Hart, 2003; Kirshner, 2009; Rubin, 2007). These identities are part of how a person understands themselves and their identities. Civic identity is "an identity status in its own right—one that can become as integral to individual identity as race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, or any other deeply claimed aspect of self (Knefelkamp, 2008, pp. 1-2). This study implores an interdisciplinary critical framework that recognizes the intersections between multiple identities as they relate to other social identities. Many demographic variables are important mediating factors in the development of aspects related to civic identity, including gender (Dugan, 2006; Gimpel et al., 2003; Lott, 2012), race (Cruce & Moore, 2007; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2007), and socioeconomic status (Abes & Jones, 2004; Jones & Hill, 2003).

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement can range in activities and motivation (Finlay et al., 2010; Metzger et al., 2019; Pancer et al., 2007). Traditionally, research on civic engagement has primarily focused on involvement in political structures (Ballard et al., 2020). Involvement in political structures

includes activities such as voting, membership in political clubs, connecting with elected representatives, and attending local community political meetings. These activities fall within systems and institutionalized structures and do not recognize civic engagement outside of traditional forms of participation (Ballard et al., 2020; Oosterhoff & Wray-Lake, 2019; Pancer et al., 2007). However, researchers have also begun to consider civic engagement outside of existing institutional structures (Ballard et al., 2020; Hope et al., 2019). Some examples of civic engagement outside of political structures include volunteering at community-based organizations, direct activism, involvement in social movements, protesting, and acts of civil disobedience that directly challenge institutional structures (Ballard et al., 2020; Oosterhoff & Wray-Lake, 2019; Pancer et al., 2007; Syvertsen et al., 2011). This study aims to capture multiple forms of civic engagement, which includes participation in political structures, community-based service, and activism that falls outside of defined political structures.

Methodological Framework

Poetic inquiry is the methodological framework being used in this study. Poetic inquiry is a methodology that focuses on concepts of honoring voice, redistribution of power, and redefining knowledge and knowers, through an interdisciplinary lens (Davis, 2019; Faulkner, 2017; Leavy, 2015; Richardson, 2001). Poetic inquiry permits the researcher to investigate social structures and social identities (Richardson, 2001). Using poetic inquiry as the methodological framework allows me as a researcher to center participants within this research. By utilizing an interdisciplinary lens, poetic inquiry allows for readers to connect to the findings in a way that moves beyond academic text. Poems are accessible to readers in a way that allows for actions to be taken and connects reflection to action. Poetic inquiry encourages readers to participate in praxis in a way for which other forms of academic text do not always allow.

Theoretical Framework

Critical theory is the theoretical framework used in this study. Critical theory creates a framework that critiques systems of oppression while creating space for understanding those systems better. Freire's (1972/2018) concepts of conscientização, dialogue, humanity and praxis are directly linked to critical theory. Critical theory is designed in a way that redistributes power and engages individuals in becoming social change agents (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007). Utilizing a critical theory framework permits centering the participants' voices while examining the researcher's role.

Limitations

While this research project endeavors to (re)present experiences of identity-based student activists in relation to social justice pedagogy in the most holistic and authentic way, I recognize that there are limitations to this project. These limitations include the combination of curricula throughout multiple courses and recruiting participants that represent different identities and experiences. These limitations are being acknowledged in order to provide transparency. Through utilizing tenets of trustworthiness and validity, this project strives to present accurate, rigorous research. However, it is important to recognize that this study, as with all studies, has some limitations.

Organization of Dissertation

Throughout this chapter, I have described the framework for this research study. I have discussed the increase in student activism on campus and narrowed my research to identity-based student activism. I have discussed Freire's critical shared dialogue in the classroom. The research purpose and questions were clearly defined as they relate to identity-based student activism and Freire's critical shared dialogue. I have given an overview of the current literature available

which looks at social justice pedagogy and its effect on student engagement and critical thinking and identified the gap in literature that investigates social justice pedagogy and its effect on identity-based student activism. I have also defined key terms that are important in framing this study.

In the next chapter, I present a literature review of critical theory, critical pedagogy, social justice pedagogy, student activism, and current research on how these pedagogies are being used in the classroom as it relates to dialogue, critical consciousness, and praxis. I will review literature around civic identities and social identity development as well as sense of belonging. I will review literature that positions my research within current studies already conducted. The literature reviewed looks at multiple facets of this study. Literature will be presented that investigates ways in which critical theory has been used and the tenets of critical theory that fit within the purpose of this study. Critical poetic inquiry literature will be reviewed to inform the research design and data (re)presentation. I will also conduct a review of studies that explore social justice education and critical pedagogy as well as utilizes poetic inquiry. Lastly, chapter two will discuss the gaps within the current literature that this study strives to fill.

In Chapter three, I describe the critical poetic inquiry as it is being utilized as the methodology for this research as well as present sources to support the validity of this study. I present critical reflection on my subjectivity and experiences and their potential effect on this study. I also parse out the details of the research design including selection of participants, data collection and analysis, and potential limitations of this design.

Chapter four details how the data was analyzed and provides (re)presentation of the data collected through found poems created by transcripts from participants. And lastly, Chapter five

includes an interpretation of results as well as an analysis of how these results fit into the existing

research and possibilities for further research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Vital to this study is situating it within current research as it pertains to civic identities and engagement, my theoretical framework, and studies conducted examining social justice pedagogy and student activism. Since there are multiple components to this study, there are several distinct sections into which this chapter has been divided. First, I will review literature that examines civic identities, social identity development and sense of belonging. Second, I will discuss literature focused on student activism and its impact. Next, I will introduce social justice pedagogy and its connection to student engagement. After this, literature will be presented around the critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework. Next, this chapter will look at the gaps that exist within current studies. These gaps include lack of qualitative data on social justice pedagogy and its effect on students' critical thinking, lack of research on social justice pedagogy and its effect on identity-based student activism, and lack of students' voices being (re)presented through poetic inquiry in research conducted on social justice pedagogy overall. Lastly, this chapter will describe how this research will help fill those gaps.

Civic Identities and Engagement

Civic engagement is an umbrella term that encompasses participating in political structures, social connection, volunteering, and community involvement (Berger, 2009). Civic engagement is the way in which civic identities connect to activities to participate in structures and movements. Institutions have the ability to affect civic identities and civic engagement. Higher education is a space that allows students to think critically, question authority and power, apply ideas of engaged citizenship, and grow their skills as change makers (Jacoby, 2009). Developing a civic identity, and participating in civic engagement opportunities, are shaped by social identity development and connections students are able to make that bring them a sense of

belonging. Sense of belonging has been linked to community service, civic engagement, and overall health of students in institutions of higher education (Hausmann et al., 2007).

Social Identity Development

Social identity development is often part of the experience on college and university campuses. Student identity development theories abound to aid in understanding the experiences of students and how those experiences connect to how student understand themselves and others (Patton et al., 2016). In recognizing the social identities participants in this research have, it is important to recognize that perceived and embraced social identities can affect the way students develop understanding of their other identities. Identity development and self-authorship are different for historically excluded populations including by race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and first-generation students (Abes & Jones, 2004; Chickering, 1969; Cross, 1971; Jehangir, 2008; Phinney, 1990; Tillapaugh, 2012; Torres & Hernández, 2007). As discussed, civic identities are one type of social identities a person understands about themselves. Civic identities influenced by conversations about and across differences (Hurtado, 2007). Utilizing dialogue and storytelling in the classroom can directly affect how students develop their own civic identities as these both aid in students conversing and connecting across differences (Bethman et al., 2019, p. 93).

Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging is a precondition for students' desire for understanding and self-actualization, motivates their behaviors, is of heightened importance in certain contexts, and is related to mattering (Baumeister & Leary, 2017; Clark, 1992; Goodenow, 1993; Maslow, 1962; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1979; Strayhorn, 2019). Social identities affect and intersect students' sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2013). As students develop understanding of their social

identities, including civic identities, this may directly affect students' ability to find a sense of belonging in the classroom and on their campuses. Finding community through shared identities aids in finding others who have shared goals, increases the ability to find social support, and empowers collective action (Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Ntontis et al., 2020). Finding a sense of belonging, therefore, can also affect how students are implementing praxis as they reflect on their own experiences and learning as well as others, and find spaces to make change.

Student Activism

Student activism has existed throughout the history of higher education institutions. For example, in Paris between 1229 to 1231, "the entire student body at the Sorbonne went on strike, until Pope Gregory IX (a Sorbonne alumnus) declared students were exempt from the city's jurisdiction" (Jason, 2018). The students at Sorbonne are a prime example of how students protest specific experiences they are having on their campus. Student activism is a chance for students to find their voices and develop their identities as activists. Because this process is often their first encounter with action beyond themselves, students connect with issues that are directly affecting them, or others in their network, often being executed by the institution itself (Ballard et al., 2020; Oosterhoff & Wray-Lake, 2019; Pancer et al., 2007). This is an important component of student activism that affects the way students develop their activism and the key to connecting with students in the classroom.

The history of student activism is a long one with multiple examples of uprising including Harvard's Bad Butter Rebellion, protests during the Civil Rights era and the Anti-Apartheid protests (Altbach, 1997). Most historians agree that the most significant student activism in the United States centered around the Vietnam War. "In the United States the peak of student protests can be traced back to the 1960's and the 1970's, years in which the country was

fighting a war in Vietnam and was dealing with the civil rights movement, perhaps the most significant and impactful movement in modern history." (acitarel, 2018). These protests were situated within a national debate and utilized media and technology to gain more national attention. "For a short period in the late 1960s, public opinion polls indicated that the most important concern of the American population was campus unrest" (Altbach, 1997, p. 775). Campuses became a place for opposition to the war and the actions being taken by the government, but also became a place of concern for the larger public. Attention of this magnitude was not seen again until the 1980s with the protests against apartheid. "The anti-apartheid protests in both the United States and South Africa captured the imagination of American undergraduates in spring 1985, sparking the largest student protests since the 1960s" (Altbach, 1997, p. 780). Student protests against governmental involvement and investments in wars continues to be a focus of current activism including the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement centered around the oppression of Palestinians (BDS Movement, 2021). Students have called upon their institutions to once again be intentional about the ways they invest and who they financially support similar to the call for divestment during the anti-apartheid protests (BDS Movement, 2021).

Student protests have a long history while the ways activism happens may vary and change. As students continue to learn from past movements, they will learn from the tactics and downfalls of movements that have come before theirs as Boren (2019) states

> Student resistance is a continually occurring, vital, and global social phenomenon with a long and complex past. The #blacklivesmatter movement is connected to the student unionization efforts at New York University in the 1990s, has similarities with the rise of

the nineteenth-century German *Burschenschaften* and to the first medieval student

collectives (p. 1).

It is important for students, faculty, and administrators to consider the history of activism on

campuses as they move forward into the future of what activism will become at higher education

institutions.

Impact of Student Activism

During the 1960s, along with protests centered around ending the war in Vietnam,

students were also focused on bringing awareness to the civil rights movements (Altbach,

1997). Students organized to create protests that not only brought national attention, but also

illustrated the racism happening all over the nation. One prime example of these protests is the

sit-ins organized by the Greensboro Four. These sit-ins happened in North Carolina at a

Woolworth. "Perhaps more than anything, the results of the Greensboro sit-ins showed the power

of a small group of students prepared to stand alone if necessary" (Astor, 2018). As with more

recent movements, such as Black Lives Matter, the impact of student activism on the larger

movement is evident.

Not only have student protests helped build on the impact of national movements, but

they have also created significant change on their own campuses. Students have made demands

of their institutions to increase diversity in hiring practices, recognize Indigenous Peoples Day

instead of Columbus Day, require the resignation of top administrators, and more (Morgan,

2019). Most of these demands have focused on the way an institution is supporting marginalized

students or making space for minoritized students and are often centered around institutional

practices. However, another significant impact students have made has been to their own

education and creating space within the curriculum. As Altbach (1997) states

Without student support, women's studies and minority studies programs would not have achieved their current level of success… The establishment and maintenance of these new fields has been one of the most significant influences of students on American higher education, perhaps in the past century (p. 785).

Student activism often focuses on how the institution can better support them through experiences on campuses (Morgan, 2019).

Defining Social Justice Pedagogy

With my research, I strive to generate conversation around centering activism through the lens of humanity. Through this conversation, I endeavor to add to the components and execution of social justice pedagogy. Denzin (2017) expresses the need for critical qualitative research that is pedagogical. Critical scholars have the task to bring the past and future into the present which allows for an engagement with pedagogies of hope (Denzin, 2017). It is important that this project utilizes culturally relevant methodology to center the experiences of those students being oppressed. Other possibilities for applications of this study could be in advancing student development theory or in curriculum design for courses incorporating social justice pedagogy.

Social justice pedagogy is a pedagogy founded in the ideas of social justice. To understand social justice pedagogy, it is important to first understand the components of social justice. For this paper, social justice is defined by Bell (2016) as "a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable, and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure" (p. 2). Much of social justice advocacy investigates systems that distribute resources unjustly and assists in the redistribution of these resources equally.

Much of the identity-based student activism on college campuses is positioned within this desire to distribute resources fairly while creating new spaces for marginalized students to feel safe and secure. By aligning curriculum with this definition of social justice, identity-based student activists will relate to the learning outcomes from such a curriculum. For the purpose of this study, curriculum is defined as educational expectations and structured activities used to promote student learning (Tharp & Moreano, 2020). Curriculum includes learning activities, content introduced in the classroom, and facilitated dialogue. The goals and objectives of the designed curriculum are developed within a theory framework and research along with professional experiences, and the changing needs of society (Parkay, 2006).

In order to align learning outcomes with social justice, a pedagogy of social justice must inform the structure of academic courses. When considering such a pedagogy, it is important to accept the intrinsically political nature of a pedagogy centered in social justice. Social justice pedagogy is distinctly political and must be acknowledged as such. Teachers and students participate in social change as change agents with a desire to transform current inequalities that exist within society (Ayers et al., 2009).

Education and knowledge dissemination may be seen as neutral and distanced from overtly political statements. However, the idea that knowledge has the ability to be objective and neutral is, in itself, a false premise (Ayers et al., 2009). By giving legitimacy to ways of knowing, it gives power to that knowledge. It is important to acknowledge the power dynamics within the classroom and redistribute that power.

Centering social justice in pedagogy is recentering knowledge through a marginalized lens. Social justice pedagogy redistributes power by identifying the knowledge students possess when they enter into the classroom and recognizes that knowledge as legitimate. In

contrast to what Freire defines as bank model education, where students have knowledge deposited into their minds by professors who hold the knowledge, social justice pedagogy allows knowledge to be defined differently where all members of the classroom are distinguished as knowledge producers.

Social justice pedagogy must be grounded in students' experiences and identities. A social justice classroom should incorporate a curriculum as well as classroom practices that are grounded in the lives of students, critical in its analysis of power and systems. These practices should promote social justice, support activism, possess academic rigor, while being culturally competent (Ayers et al., 2009). By centering the humanity of all participants of the classroom, students are able to engage with each other's stories while thinking critically about how those stories interact with one another and within larger structures. Adamian and Jayakumar (2018) describe their processes for creating space for students' voices and honoring those voices and lived experiences. "We engaged with methods rooted in critical consciousness, theory, and practice, while honoring our students' knowledge and voices and naming the spaces of tension that we worked in and through together" (Adamian & Jayakumar, 2018, p. 337). This process is important in honoring students' voices, but also in challenging who are knowers and knowledge producers in the classroom. Students need to "be encouraged to see the power in their lived experiences, their perspectives, and ultimately their voices" (Jenkins et al., 2017, p. 59).

Voice is a consideration which this research project spends a considerable amount of thought and intentionality. Poetic inquiry was chosen due to its ability to "come in through the backdoor with the feeling, the emotion, the experience. But if you start reflecting on that experience you can come back to the theory" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 263). The journey into this

pedagogy will be unique in its path through poetry to return back to the pedagogy and a social justice centered praxis.

Social Justice Education and Student Engagement

Literature currently exists that examines social justice education and student engagement. Lissovoy and Cook (2020) study the direct link between social justice learning outcomes in the classroom and student engagement. However, this study does not link student engagement to student activism. The ways they define student engagement does not directly look at activism on campus which is what my study investigates. Also, their study used quantitative methods which produced generalizable data but lost the specific stories of participants. By using critical poetic inquiry, my study aims to uplift voices and stories of participants in a way that Lissovoy and Cook (2020) did not.

Freire and Social Justice Education

While Ollis' (2015) study explores student activists' experiences with naïve activism and their growth through reflexive practices, this study does not consider how social justice pedagogy in the classroom did or did not play a part in the development of student activists' reflexive practices. Ollis (2015) examines personal stories of activists using qualitative methods that uplift the voices of participants. However, Ollis (2015) does not investigate how these activists came into their reflective practices and whether or not classroom curriculum affected these practices. My study aspires to fill this gap in the research to give a roadmap to educators on how they can affect activists' development through the use of social justice pedagogy.

Critical Pedagogy

Current literature that exists discussing critical pedagogy and social justice education focuses primarily on theory and less on practices in the classroom and the effects of these

practices on student development. This literature review is designed to present current literature while also critically analyzing the gaps within the current literature, specifically around praxis. The gap this research attempts to fill is understanding if a relationship exists between social justice education praxis and student activist development. While these articles illustrate research around how critical pedagogy and social justice education is being utilized in the classroom, as well as the relationship between these practices and student engagement with social justice practices, there is no literature specifically examining student activism and social justice education praxis. This gap has led to the creation of my research questions and the focus of this study.

Concepts of Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy originates from the theories of Paulo Freire (1972, 1976, 1985, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2005, 2018). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1972/2018) challenges the concept of the banking model of education, which entails an educator depositing their knowledge into a student's bank of knowledge through lecture and teaching. Education should include critically reflecting on social conditions and not just absorbing and reciting memorized facts (Woodson, 2006). Freire proposes methods of dialogue, reflection, and problem-posing. For Freire (1972/2018), the oppressed and oppressors can only find liberation through "a humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed" (p. 68). Freire's pedagogy is tied to humanization, students' participation in knowledge production, examining and redistributing power, developing conscientização through dialogue and reflection, and the necessity for a praxis that includes both reflection and action (Freire, 1976, 1985, 1993, 1998, 2005, 2018). Through dialogue and praxis, Freire posited

students could re-learn and name the world around them and therefore understand how to transform it.

Critical pedagogy became a discipline developed and expanded by multiple theorists. In *Culture and Power in the Classroom: A Critical Foundation for Bicultural Education,* Darder (1991) provides a critical theoretical perspective for teachers. This perspective offers ways for teachers to evaluate curriculum and practices and their effectiveness with what Darder names bicultural students. The framework offered by this book focuses on participation of students from historically excluded populations within the classroom. Darder (1991) begins to explore the ways classroom environment and incorporating cultural competence affects student learning.

Henry Armand Giroux is a critical scholar who developed critical pedagogy in the United States, building off of Freire's work. He described critical pedagogy as a "cultural resistance of previous radical educational theories. Such a pedagogy… redefines rationality by linking critical thought with social and political liberation, and individual freedom with social freedom" (Giroux, 2001, pp. 21-22). Connected to Freire's concepts of conscientização, Giroux posits that individual liberation is tied to the larger societal liberation and liberations of others.

Critical pedagogy not only looks critically at the liberation of students and the way it is tied to larger liberation but also how educators actively participate in this liberation. Critical educators recognize that "the problems of society are more than simply isolated events of individuals or deficiencies in the social structure" (McLaren, 1994, p. 131). These problems interact with one another and are inextricably interwoven "so that reference to one must by implication mean reference to the other" (McLaren, 1994, p. 131). A significant

component of critical pedagogy is the critical examination of how systems and personal experiences are interlocked.

Critical pedagogy goes beyond examining systems and their interactions with personal experiences but also interrogates the way power plays a role in oppression and inequality. "The goals of this pedagogy are to relate personal growth to public life by developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change" (Shor, 1992, pp. 15-16). Faculty utilizing critical pedagogy must create space to critically assess power structures, systems of oppression, and ways of knowing.

bell hooks' (2017) text *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* was in direct conversations with Freire. hooks (2017) argued that critical pedagogy must speak to the lived experience of marginalized groups. She posits that critical pedagogy comes to be about celebrating "the value and uniqueness of each voice" (hooks, 2017, p. 84). Voice and lived experience are important components to critical pedagogy and to this study. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2007) draw on these influential scholars when defining critical pedagogy as

> an approach to education that is rooted in the experiences of marginalized peoples; that is centered in a critique of structural, economic, and racial oppression; that is focused on dialogue instead of a one-way transmission of knowledge; and that is structured to empower individuals and collectives as agents of social change. (p. 183)

This literature review investigates these concepts of critical pedagogy and how they connect with the purpose of this research project.

Redistribution of Power

Examining power structures is central to the journey to critical consciousness, or conscientização. Understanding the power used by the oppressor as well as the power the oppressed hold is part of the journey to critical consciousness (Fanon, 2008; Freire, 1972/2018). The development of critical consciousness and engagement with self-reflective practices are the basis for conducting power-conscious work. However, examining power is not enough (Linder et al., 2020). Acknowledging power is part of creating change (McArthur, 2010). When the oppressed are able to understand the power they hold, they are able to believe they can create change. Conversely, the oppressors, or ones in positions of privilege, must use their power to give space for the voices of the historically excluded.

Reflection and dialogue both require a redistribution of power in the classroom where the teacher has authority to facilitate conversation without being an authoritarian (Baecker, 1998; Freire, 1972/2018). To engage in true dialogue, marginalized voices must have a space to share their lived experiences in a way that privileges those lived experiences as a form of legitimate knowledge. To create this space, all participants in the classroom must enter into a community agreement to work together collectively. The procedure "of questioning power needs to be a mutual project of collective action" (Kuecker, 2010, p. 52). This must be a deliberate process where power structures are examined within systems and societal structures but also the power dynamics within the classroom.

Knowledge Production

One specific way redistribution of power shows up in critical pedagogy is through the concept of what constitutes knowledge. Traditional definitions of knowledge correlate with the groups who have had the power to define legitimate knowledge. To examine power, and systems of oppression, it is imperative to question what is defined as knowledge and ways of knowing.

Within the classroom, part of the process of dialogue with students included questioning traditional knowledge (Convertino, 2016; Pendakur, 2016). Moving beyond examining traditional knowledge, within complex systems of language and knowledge production, it is necessary to acknowledge power structures within traditional knowledge in order to establish deliberate dialogue (Murti, 2010).

While questioning traditional knowledge is a significant component of critical consciousness, redistribution of power requires acknowledging new ways of knowing and the contributions of students' lived experiences as authentic knowledge. Placing educator and student as both knowledge producers and knowledge sharers creates a space where both "become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (Freire, 2005, p. 81). This shifts the power dynamic as students begin to understand their own contribution to the knowledge being shared in the classroom. This process can be seen in the processes described by Adamian and Jayakumar (2018) and Convertino (2016) in setting up classroom dynamics. Placing students as knowledge producers allows them to connect in the classroom differently. This reframing of who has knowledge and who is there to gain knowledge, and allowing those spaces to cross, redistributes the power in the classroom. Understanding of who has the authority to teach others in the classroom is inverted in a way that creates space for students to participate differently (Freire, 2018).

Dialogue

The term dialogue is used frequently with multiple interpretations. For the purposes of this study, dialogue is being framed through a Freirean lens. Dialogue moves beyond modes of communication, and distinctly falls outside of debate (Freire, 1972/2018). Freire's concept of dialogue, incorporating components of critical pedagogy, acknowledges power structures and

privilege held by those he would define as oppressors. "Dialogue cannot occur between those who… deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied to them" (p. 88). To create space in the classroom for dialogue, students cannot be silencing other students, specifically students from historically excluded populations.

Freire also ties dialogue to his concept of praxis. Praxis requires both reflection and action. For Freire (1972/2018), dialogue is tied to liberation and humanizing ourselves. Therefore, it must be a mutual exchange as opposed to a one-way transaction.

> Since dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world, which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the discussants (p. 89)

Dialogue, in this way, connects to Freire's concept of the banking model of education where the person in authority, usually the professor, is the only knowledge producer and deposits their knowledge into the students in a one-way transaction. Therefore, dialogue breaks down power structures while also placing all participants in the classroom as knowledge producers.

Lastly, for Freire (1972/2018), dialogue must be connected to love. "Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people… love is commitment to others… and this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical" (p. 89). A classroom environment utilizing critical pedagogy, and Freire's dialogue, requires an environment framed in love and committed to everyone in the mutual learning environment.

To create space for students to learn from each other, and share their own lived experiences, a mutual learning environment requires dialogue. By utilizing dialogue, it is possible to examine both power and knowledge production (Convertino, 2016). Dialogue is more

than discussion. It must be critical, is political, examines power, should include a reflective component, and encourages direct action. Critical dialogue is "the indispensable enactment of intersubjectivity within the context of the project of social emancipation" (Lissovoy & Cook, 2020, p. 94). Dialogue is distinctly different from discussion in that it acknowledges power dynamics and redistributes power to ensure marginalized voices are seen as valid. Lissovoy and Cook (2020) examine the conversion from critical dialogue to a liberal dialogue that attempts to be apolitical and equal. They posit that this transformation is an attempt to allow equal platforms for all involved in the discussion. This attempt is contradictory to the purpose of dialogue which is to examine power and give voice to historically excluded voices. Giving equal power and space to all voices, including those who hold privilege, silences historically excluded voices in a similar way as they have been silenced outside of the classroom. Framing dialogue as tolerance is a version of dialogue that focuses on free speech but not power dynamics (Lissovoy & Cook, 2020).

Collaborative projects and small group work create space for organic discussion. When setting up community agreements in the classroom, it is important to establish what dialogue is and how to allow space for deliberative dialogue through collaborative projects. Mayhew and DeLuca Fernández (2007) conducted a quantitative study that examined social justice outcomes and course content. The results of the study showed that collaborative work with peers was the most statistically significant factor in students meeting social justice outcomes. By creating space for deliberative dialogue and opportunities for students to share their lived experiences, students were able to achieve outcomes.

To create a space for authentic, deliberative, critical dialogue, an instructor must construct a mutual learning environment that challenges students to engage in this work

intentionally. This mutual learning environment requires historically excluded students to feel empowered to share their lived experiences and view themselves as valid knowledge producers while challenging students who hold privileged identities to examine their privilege and encourage them to hold space for other voices. Creating a learning environment for dialogue that encourages historically excluded populations to take up space requires pedagogical framework, dialogue structures, community guidelines, and activities that encourage conversation (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2020). Freire (1972/2018) states that dialogue cannot occur between those who have access to speak and those who have had that right denied to them. Navigating such a learning environment to foster authentic dialogue can be one of the most challenging elements of a social justice pedagogy. This will be an area I will spend time analyzing in my research project.

Reflection and Action as Praxis

Dialogue is an important element of critical pedagogy. However, to learn from this dialogue, and gain critical consciousness, it is essential to build in activities for reflection (Freire, 1976; Jobin-Leeds & AgitArte, 2016; Lissovoy & Cook, 2020; Pendakur, 2016). Reflection allows students to do work internally and understand how the larger concepts they are learning, as well as the ways they are connecting these concepts to lived experiences of their classmates, fits into their own lived experiences and their own understanding of these larger concepts (King & Kitchener, 1994; McAllister et al., 2006). Reflective activities can assist in students' journey to conscientização. Through reflection, activists "revise and remake their practices" (Ollis, 2015, p. 524). In the Mayhew and DeLuca Fernández (2007) study, reflection is the second most statistically significant factor in students achieving social justice outcomes. This is crucial to know for two reasons. First, it is important to understand that students not only need to be

exposed to different ideas and experiences, but they need space to think through how this new knowledge fits into their own understanding. Second, and something that is a key component of critical theory, students need to do more than just reflect. Without authentic dialogue, and a call to action, reflection cannot transform into praxis and the students cannot become change agents.

Action

It is not enough to understand how systems of oppression work both structurally and interpersonally. For social justice education to be effective, and for these systems to change, it is imperative that this critical consciousness translates into agency and action. "Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection" (Freire, 1972/2018, p. 88). Freire writes extensively on the need for the oppressed to feel empowered through their new understanding of systematic oppression and their new understanding of their own power, to take action and make change. As McArthur (2010) describes it, critical pedagogy can bridge the gap between critique and change. This is an area I will also be emphasizing in my research as I investigate how critical pedagogy and social justice education has affected participants' actions and the way they instigate change.

In *Mutual Engagement in Spaces of Tension: Moving from Dialogue Toward Action Across Multiple Contexts*, Adamian and Jayakumar (2018) discuss spaces in which they have utilized critical pedagogy in the classroom and the impact this made on their students' actions. Adamian and Jayakumar (2018) examine the impact on her seventh-grade science classroom. In this course, she asked her students to consider a problem they were facing and challenged them to discuss possible solutions. The students "collectively problematized their lack of access to fresh and organic foods and health education" (p. 341). She reviews how the students went about critically engaging with this problem including looking at lack of curricular practices that could

educate students on how to grow their own foods, lack of land to grow gardens, and lack of understanding on how to eat healthier from the foods to which they had access. In this description, Adamian and Jayakumar (2018) states, "students therefore named themselves as the change agents" (p. 341). Students were able to see themselves as agents of change due to the way the class was structured and the "beloved community" that was built within this classroom. This has a different impact than students who are told they can be change agents when little work is done to help them understand their true power. These students were challenged to take action and they did. While critical thinking is a step in the journey of making change, it is not the destination. "Reflection is meaningless without action; if there is no action, there can be no praxis" (Freire, 2005, p. 88). It is in Freire's concept of praxis that we find the crux of critical pedagogy.

Praxis

Reflection is necessary for students to critically think about larger concepts and relate systems to their own experiences (Freire, 1972/2018; King & Kitchener, 1994; McAllister et al., 2006; Pendakur, 2016). However, if it is the only component then transformation does not happen. Action is necessary to make real change to the structures and systems that are currently the sites of oppression. Action cannot be taken without reflection, or it will lack intentionality and leads to what Freire termed "naïve activism." "This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism but must include serious reflection; only then will it be praxis" (Freire, 1972/2018, p.1) Professors cannot lecture and write about theory without taking actions that relate to those theories (Kuecker, 2010; Pendakur, 2016). Praxis requires both practice and theory to be the most effective in creating sustainable, genuine change.

When designing her course, Writing for Social Change, Wright (2010) describes her process of spending time allowing students to write and reflect, while also assigning time for collaborative service-learning projects. She describes the second half of the course as a time where students can "bridge divisions… between educational institutions and community organizations… armed with theory, research, self-knowledge, and experience, students take practical steps to create change" (p. 189). While the course is a writing course, Wright (2010) recognizes the need for collaborative projects that move past reflection into action and change. This is an example of how praxis can show up in courses utilizing critical pedagogy.

Dialogue and Activism

Reflection and theory cannot create change without action and practice. In a study conducted around activism, interviews were conducted with Australian activists who reflect on their own activism and how it has changed through reflection (Ollis, 2015). In concluding this research, Ollis (2015) states, "even the most well-intentioned activism without careful reflection can go dangerously wrong" (p. 526). This research project attempts to decrease the gap in understanding how this shows up in student activism. Activists feel the "urgency of activism and the desire for significant social change [which] often prevents a critical space for reflection to occur" (Ollis, 2015, p. 518). While Ollis' work investigates Freire and a critical reflective activism in Australian social activists, this research project will attempt to expand current research by examining student activists in an American context and examine how social justice pedagogy affects identity-based student activism. The danger of activism without reflection, as Ollis discusses, is the possibility for naïve activism.

Naïve activism

Freire's concept of naïve activism is specifically applicable to this study as it addresses activism without reflection. By implementing critical pedagogy in the classroom, space is created for reflection in a time when students are engaging in activism on their campuses. A panel of activist-students at a symposium at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada gave insight into their practices, and how theory has impacted those practices (Chovanec et al., 2007). One activist, Colin Piquette, reflects on their past activism prior to incorporating theory into their praxis.

> Previously I worked without the benefit of theory and without realizing the importance of critical reflection or praxis… I recognize that lacking a clearly articulated theory or even a clear purpose to our work had negative effects on the outcomes of the actions themselves, but especially on our own sustainability as social activists (p. 5).

The activist-students on this panel were adults involved in adult education. The panelists reflected on their reflexive practices and how they transformed their practices. While this is an important beginning to the conversation, my hope is to further the conversation by looking at current students who have not yet had the opportunity to reflect on their past but are currently navigating their activism as they are participating in a classroom utilizing critical pedagogy.

Identity-Based Student Activism

Dialogue is paramount to conducting activism that results in significant change. To participate in inclusive identity-based student activism, consistent and difficult dialogues are imperative (Bethman et al., 2019). Dialogue allows activists to gain understanding of the needs and goals of all those involved in a cause. Interviews conducted with seven politically active Mexican American women students found that participants' ability to engage in activism and create sustainable change included dialogue seeking common goals among various student

organizations (Hernández, 2012). For student activism to create goals and understand their purpose, it is necessary to construct "organizational and contextual boundaries to invite shared understanding and commitment to action" (Owen, 2016, p. 45). In Owen's (2016) study, student activists struggled to move outside of individual experiences into an understanding of and ability to address larger systemic inequities. The lack of critical dialogue and ability to hold space for other students' humanity deterred their ability to progress in making substantive change.

Consciousness-raising dialogue is a mechanism that allows activists to gain awareness while also being a means through which to organize, strategize, and act (Keating, 2005). Through dialogue, organizers are able to better understand what activists need and how to move forward to meet the most needs for the most people. "To impact change, it is imperative that we figure out how to engage in messy and difficult dialogues across differences" (Bethman et al., 2019, p. 93). Without dialogue, activists risk harming others through their actions.

Honoring Voice

Voice is a consideration which this research project spends a considerable amount of thought and intentionality. hooks (1989) hopes her classroom "will become a space where [students] can come to voice" (p. 53) Through her works, hooks enters into a conversation with Freire's concept of the banking model of education. She explores her educational practices and her students' experiences as she centers the voices of historically excluded students.

Deliberative dialogue allows students to find their voices while critically thinking about whose voices have been silenced (Adams et al., 2016; Bell, 2016; Murti, 2010). Wright (2010) advances this argument through her purposeful structure of her writing course to uplift voices that are not always valued in academia. She encourages students to write in their own voice without thought to grammar or dominant forms of academic writing. As hooks (2017) describes,

writing can be a "site of resistance" and "space for alternate cultural production" (pp. 170-171). Wright (2010) discusses the way first-generation students and students with learning disabilities are often impacted and even silenced when academic writing structure takes precedence over students' voices.

Critical Pedagogy in the Classroom

The elements of critical pedagogy, as listed above, intentionally create an environment that encourages dialogue, reflection, and action. These are foundational to critical pedagogy and are purposefully focused on when creating the classroom environment (Darder, 1991; Freire, 1972/2018; Sulik & Keys, 2013; Wright, 2010). However, constructing this environment requires creating space for student engagement as well as building bridges across differences (Zúñiga, 2003). While these are not explicit elements of critical pedagogy, they are essential to the learning that happens within the classroom (Lissovoy & Cook, 2020). These are components that require a framework to be built into the classroom atmosphere to develop an environment suitable for critical pedagogy elements.

Student Engagement

Active participation in creating mutual learning environments, including a commitment to co-create space dedicated to liberation, is essential to Freire's concept of dialogue. This dialogue must engage participants beyond themselves and recognize the humanity in others (Lissovoy & Cook, 2020). To create a space for productive dialogue, Lissovoy and Cook (2020) argue the classroom framework can invite students to engage in difference and investigate their own experiences as well as those of other students, both privileged and marginalized. Without an environment that encourages student engagement, the learning and conscientização crucial to critical pedagogy is almost impossible.

Building Bridges

Through using dialogue, specifically intergroup dialogue, students are able to connect with each other's stories and build bridges across differences (Adams et al., 2016; Maxwell et al., 2011; Storms, 2012; Zúñiga, 2003). Intergroup dialogue exposes students to other experiences and cultures while allowing them to take part in the sharing of their own stories. Contact between members of different groups can reduce prejudice, reduce discrimination, decrease intergroup conflict, and improve social relations (Allport et al., 2015; Dixon et al., 2007; Pettigrew, 1998; Van Laar et al., 2005; Vonofakou et al., 2007).

In Storms (2012) research, the study focused on students enrolled in an undergraduate social justice education course. This study found that intergroup dialogue created space for students to find connections with one another. Social justice education courses need to focus on praxis (Skubikowski et al., 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Storms, 2012). While research has emphasized the need for praxis, and connect praxis to bridges built across differences, no studies have focused on how that praxis is conducted, including looking at what actions are taken by students who have been part of social justice education courses.

Syllabus Analysis

Sulik and Keys (2013) examined the way syllabi play a role in constructing the classroom environment and integration of sociological concepts. This research examined how classroom norms were established as well as what types of learning environments were cultivated through the syllabi. Sulik and Keys (2013) looked specifically at the learning environment created but did not extend to understanding how these learning environments specifically affected the learning of students.

Another study that will be utilized to guide my analysis of syllabi is one conducted by Baecker (1998). This study examines syllabi from teaching assistants and instructors of English composition. Baecker (1998) uses Freirean pedagogy in an institutional setting and examines how power and authority in the classroom is constructed through syllabi. This research specifically looks at the use of pronouns (e.g., you, I, we) in the deliberate construction of a mutual learning environment.

Lastly, to inform my analysis of syllabi, I will draw from a study conducted by Harnish and Bridges (2011). In this study, the effect of language and tone in syllabi had on students' impressions of the professors was examined. Most participants in the study were first-year students. This study investigated students' assessment of a professor's approachability, motivation, difficulty, and competence. All these factors could create barriers or aid in creating a mutual learning environment in the classroom. In their study, Harnish and Bridges (2011) create a framework to analyze syllabi and their effect on the effectiveness of critical and social justice pedagogy in the classroom.

Mindfulness

Critical pedagogy can establish an environment that allows for mutual learning, consciousness raising, and building bridges across differences. However, there can be negative impacts to critical pedagogy if it is not conducted in a way that practices mindfulness. Negative impacts include encouraging students to participate in naïve activism, possible negative impact from dialogue, and harm that can be done by those in power. This section will explore the risk of utilizing critical pedagogy and possible arguments against using critical pedagogy.

Naïve Activism

Naïve activism is activism without reflection. On college campuses specifically, students have a minimal time to make changes. Their journey at their institution is meant to be a transition to a new journey. This adds to a feeling of urgency to their activism (Ollis, 2015). This urgency and lack of reflection can create an atmosphere of naïve activism. Ollis (2015) investigates the possible harm of student activism without reflection. This study looks at the need to engage students in reflection within the classroom through a critically reflexive pedagogy. Studying Ollis' (2015) research helps guide those practicing critical pedagogy and encourages being mindful of reflexive practices and assignments in the classroom. Critical pedagogy in the classroom can help mitigate incidents of naïve activism on campus (Freire, 2018; Ollis, 2015).

Dialogue's Negative Impact

Deliberate dialogue for the sake of understanding is imperative to students sharing their stories in a way that increases critical consciousness. Setting up community guidelines can assist in creating this environment (Baecker, 1998; Love & Guthrie, 1999; Mayhew & DeLuca Fernández, 2007; Murti, 2010). However, as Mayhew and DeLuca Fernández (2007) found in their research, increased opportunities for interactions with people from diverse backgrounds also increased opportunities for negative experiences. Utilizing Murti's (2010) concept of deliberate dialogue and adhering to community guidelines around dialogue can mitigate these negative experiences but only if the instructor is being mindful of this possibility.

Harm by Those in Power

Critical theory disrupts power in multiple ways, including who are the knowledge producers and who are the learners in a classroom. In Baecker's (1998) assessment of syllabi, specific attention was paid to how power and authority are constructed through the language in

the syllabi. The syllabus begins to create the environment of the classroom. While critical theory challenges traditional power structures in the classroom, as Baecker (1998) discusses, there is still a need for some authority to help students adhere to community guidelines, and to navigate other power structures that may emerge among students. It is vital for instructors to mindfully navigate authority while disrupting power. Instructors have an inherent authority that could add more significance to what the instructor presents in contrast to what students in the classroom contribute. Lissovoy and Cook (2020) discuss the harm that can be done when uncritical dialogue is used in the classroom and presented as safe or neutral when it actually extends the dominant discourse in a way that asserts it as Truth. A factor in disrupting power is acknowledging that dialogue is not neutral (Ayers et al., 2009; Murti, 2010; Pendakur, 2016). Therefore, it is important to apply a critical lens to dialogue being conducted in the classroom to not further marginalize students whose experiences may differ from the instructor's.

Critical Pedagogy as Elitist

A key critique of critical pedagogy lies within the scholars of critical theory. The language used to discuss critical consciousness and ways of knowing is a barrier to understanding critical theory concepts. Critical pedagogy continues to struggle with making real change in the world or engage with genuine dialogue (McArthur, 2010). As Murti (2010) describes, dialogue has become a concept that has been misconstrued as being associated with neutrality which does not consider power structures and does not bring genuine change. Critical pedagogy has become so entrenched in academic language it has created a barrier of discursive elitism. Now, a pedagogy that sought to give voice has begun to silence those most marginalized (McArthur, 2010). Educators will need to clearly define deliberate dialogue and uphold community guidelines that allow for continued focus on deliberate dialogue in order to give

voice to the most marginalized students. Without this deliberate mindfulness, the journey to conscientização will be more difficult.

Summary

Social justice pedagogy can be utilized in the classroom to create space for students to share their lived experience and participate in the sharing of knowledge. Freire's critical pedagogy and concept of dialogue for knowledge sharing can inform these practices in the classroom. However, as social justice educators, we must be intentional in how these spaces are created and for whom they are being created. Freire's concept of dialogue can be a starting point for engaging with students in conversations of diversity and social justice. Yet, as we continue to better understand the emotional labor connected to sharing lived experiences, we must think more critically about how this work is done and how to engage students in a way that helps them embrace discomfort while understanding who we are asking to embrace it more while understanding how sense of belonging and social identity development connects to mutual learning environments.

Through a redistribution of power, positioning students as knowledge producers, and honoring their voices and experiences, critical pedagogy can assist students in their journey to conscientização. While there is ample literature around how critical pedagogy is being used in the classroom, as well as how Freire's reflection has been utilized by activists, there is a gap in the literature around how these two groups are connected. The goal of this research project is to fill this gap by better understanding the direct impact critical pedagogy may have on student activists within higher education institutions.

Through reviewing current research studies, I was able to find studies that looked at partial components of my study. However, none of these studies conducted a qualitative study

investigating critical pedagogy using a poetic inquiry methodology. The design of this study allows me to properly answer my research questions and to create a study that provides guidance to educators wanting to focus on providing tools to students developing their identity-based activism.

In chapter three, I will present my research design and methodology for conducting this study. The literature review and previous studies will inform how this methodology frames the research design and data (re)presentation. Critical poetic inquiry will be discussed more including how it is being used in this study. Both the theoretical and methodological framework will be connected to the research design including how data is gathered, analyzed, and presented. Evidence will be presented as to why qualitative research fits this study and how critical theory and critical poetic inquiry incorporate the desired outcomes of honoring voice and redistributing power.

Chapter 3 - Methodology and Research Design

This study seeks to uncover the potential connection between critical social justice pedagogy and identity-based student activism. The purpose of this research is to investigate students' experiences and development as identity-based student activists and the role of dialogue in the classroom on the development of civic identities at a Midwestern regional state institution through a lens of humanity as defined by Freire. Throughout this chapter, I explore the use of methodology that sits within a critical theoretical framework and utilizes critical poetic inquiry as well as the ways this methodology fits within the purpose of this research study. Within this chapter, I investigate the tenets of critical theory through a Freirean lens and use this framework to inform the methodology by which I conducted my research with participants. I will explain my research design including participant selection, data gathering, data analysis, and (re)presentation of data. I also describe how the research design connects to the theoretical and methodological frameworks. This research focuses on answering three research questions:

1. How do college students construct civic identities?
2. How do college students participate in civic engagement?
3. In what ways do identity-based student activists engage with Freire's concepts of dialogue and humanity?

As identified in chapter two, there is a gap in relevant literature about the relationship between identity-based student activism and critical dialogue in the classroom. Using a critical theory framework and critical poetic inquiry as my research methodology, this study sought to fill that gap, with the specific outcome of informing future pedagogical practices and future research. In this chapter, I detail the specific methodology and methods that framed this study.

Qualitative Research

When investigating ways to conduct and present this research, qualitative research was chosen due to its focus on understanding in-depth social phenomena. Qualitative research is a systematic process of learning that ethically applies research methods in a way that ensures trustworthiness and practical use (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Qualitative research allows space for participants to tell their own stories and for those stories to be represented in a nuanced way that connects readers to participants (Bhattacharya, 2013). Specifically, critical theory challenges normalized social constructs while using participants' lived experiences to develop new approaches to thinking in a more critical way (Lather, 1986). Critical theory interrogates traditional social structures involved with oppression, inequality, and power (Bhattacharya, 2017). One emphasis of this research was to focus on inequities and power as it relates to Freire's concepts of dialogue and conscientização (Freire, 1972/2018). These components are why critical theory was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study.

Critical poetic inquiry uses tenets of qualitative research through a critical theoretical lens in a way that focuses intentionally on participants' voices and connection with the reader (Richardson, 2001). This study focuses on storytelling and civic identities. Critical poetic inquiry fits this purpose most effectively.

Theoretical Framework: Freire and Critical Theory

Exploring qualitative inquiry, theories, methodologies, and methods have helped to guide me to utilizing critical theory and poetic inquiry in my research project. Critical theory enlists a lens that critiques structural, material, and racial oppression. It focuses on dialogue and knowledge sharing. Critical theory is structured in a way that empowers individuals and communities as social change agents (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007). This lens gives a

framework that aids in centering the participants' voices while examining my role as researcher. Poetic inquiry will represent participants' voices through a means to say what might not otherwise be said (Eisner, 1997; Richardson, 2000). Poets bring visibility to the world in new and different ways that are not allowed in traditional social science writing. The poet is both present and accessible in the writing in a way that is discouraged in traditional academic writing (Denzin, 2014).

Humanization is a significant theme throughout Freire's work. The process of humanization through education is in direct contrast to the dehumanization that comes with lack of engaging in one's own liberation. Freire (1972/2018) argues that "critical consciousness is the only way for people to participate in their own [liberation]" (p. 33). By raising critical consciousness through critical dialogue, students can embrace their power and partake in their own liberation. Creating space in the classroom for this critical consciousness raising not only allows knowledge creation to be a shared process but empowers students to take active roles in gaining freedom from their oppressors.

Critical theory fits with my research as my research is centered in social justice activism and pedagogy. Critical social theory offers a historical framework that both challenges the theoretical or ideological underpinnings of everyday practice and uses students' perspectives of and experiences with those practices to develop new ways of conceiving of meaning and purpose (Lather, 1986). As this project aimed to join theory to praxis, critical theory helped frame my research through a critical lens. Critical social theorists link theory and practice and explore how they are both joined in praxis. Critical social theory posits that human actions are based on their theoretical experience of the world (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). By fusing theory and practice, this theory centers the critical lens that I desired in my research to ensure the end

project had actionable steps that tie into theory. As shown in Figure 3.1, this is also why I paired

critical theory as a theoretical framework with the methodological framework of poetic inquiry.
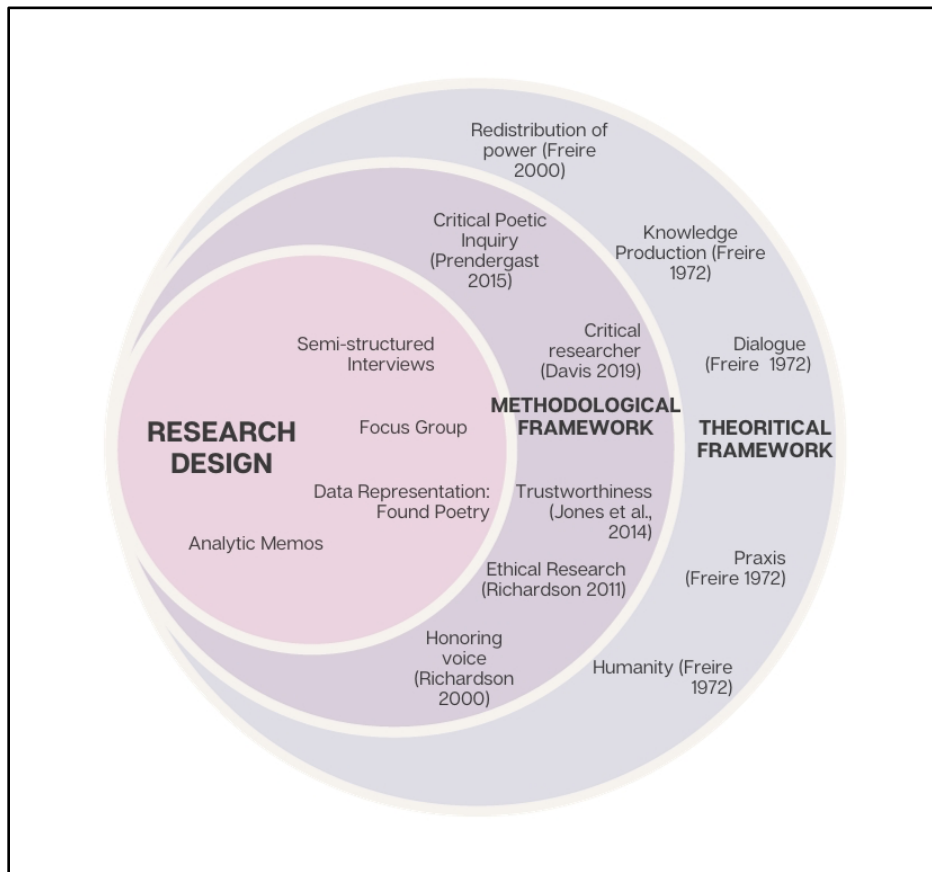
Figure 3. 1. Framework Guiding Inquiry

   The principles of critical theory pair well with the aspiration of my research project. The

principles of critical theory, as taken from Freire's (1972/2018) formative work *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed, are conscientização, dialogue, honoring voice, humanity, knowledge production,

praxis, and redistribution of power. These principles informed my methodological framework as

well as the way I executed my methods of data collection and (re)presentation. The ways I

created questions for semi-structured interviews, and how I interacted with participants were

both informed by the ways I understood the principles of critical theory.

With Freire's focus on dialogue, and centering of humanity, his work relates directly to the focus of my research and emphasis on activism through a lens of humanity. For Freire (2005), the bedrock for critical pedagogy was dialogue. Freire believed that true dialogue centers love of people and the world, humanity, faith in humankind, and hope for positive change. Love is both a commitment to each other and to the cause of liberation (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). Freire's concept of true dialogue and commitment to love were concepts with which I strove to align my research. Honoring the voice of participants connects with recognizing their humanity. Dialogue in the classroom connects to conscientização as students learn from one another allowing for a redistribution of power and how knowledge production is defined. All of these components lead to students building a praxis that incorporates reflection of what is learned in the classroom and tools to act and make change within their identity-based student activism.

Methodology

When designing this study, it was important to find a methodology that fit within the framework of critical theory. Poetic inquiry takes the elements of critical theory and incorporates them into the methodology with which this study was conducted. In the following section, I explore how the above-mentioned concept of critical theory, specifically honoring voice, and redistribution of power, are connected to poetic inquiry as a methodology.

Arts-Based Methods

Arts-based methods address complex ideas in a way that can examine subtle interactions and make them more noticeable (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Arts-based methods allow researchers to explore nuances within the human condition and present research in ways that "readers and viewers [can] vicariously reexperience significant dimensions of human affairs through the use of aesthetic design elements" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 23). This attribute connects directly to

Freire's concepts of humanity and dialogue as being linked directly to the humanization of others. An arts-based method was chosen for this study because these methods connect directly to a critical theoretical framework informed by Freire.

Part of Freire's framework includes placing all participants in the classroom as knowledge producers. "When art is used as a tool of social activism, it ceases to be mere entertainment. It becomes an important piece of knowledge production" (Jenkins, et al., 2017. p. 14). An arts-based method "makes it possible for us to empathize with the experience of others. We believe that such empathy is a necessary condition for deep forms of meaning in human life" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 3). Building on Freire's (1972/2018) argument that dialogue humanizes those involved in the process of seeking to understand each other, and on Bell's (2020) work on storytelling as social justice practice, arts-based methods create a space for researcher, participants, and readers to engage in empathetic connection to each other. Storytelling can be therapeutic for historically excluded groups both as tellers as listeners and can help with healing, mental health, and liberation while also disrupting the dominant narrative (Delgado, 1989).

Poetic Inquiry

Poetic inquiry as a methodology was formally recognized at *the International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry* in 2007 (Sameshima et al., 2017). Poetic inquiry allows the researcher to focus on understanding social structures and identity of self. It is practical and powerful, permitting the researcher to present stories and experiences in a way that has the rigor to be seen in the research community as valid knowledge (Richardson, 2001). Poetic inquiry is interdisciplinary and creative, not prescriptive (Davis, 2019). It focuses on preserving voices while redistributing the power of who are the knowledge producers (Faulkner, 2017; Leavy, 2015; Richardson, 2001).

These characteristics make poetic inquiry a methodology that established a framework to assist in creating a research design that upheld the purpose of this research study.

Poetic inquiry includes a rigorous inductive research process (Faulkner, 2018). Arts-based methods have embraced notions of criticality to deepen the analysis and usefulness of arts-based methods to identify and call out injustices in society (Burford, 2018; Davis, 2019; Denzin, 2017; Faulkner, 2018). Connecting Freire's exploration of humanity and social justice framework, qualitative research, specifically poetic inquiry, allowed me to analyze data in an intentional way through a social justice lens. Critical poetic inquiry permits researchers to engage as an active witness and stand beside participants as they search for justice, healing, and acknowledgment (Prendergast, 2015). Poetry allows scholars to build a close relationship with data gathered (Faulkner, 2020). Faulkner (2020) found that poetry allowed her to talk about identity and communication in a more nuanced way that allowed for her to pay specific attention to the physicality and emotionality of conducting research. The use of poetic inquiry builds on the social justice framework and Freire's concept of humanity while allowing for connections and relationships between participants' shared experiences in a unique way.

Preservation of Voice

Writing participants' stories in poetic form allows for a more genuine representation of voice including the raw pauses through line breaks, spaces between lines and stanzas, and the silence between words (Richardson, 2001). Poetic representation allows the researcher to write in ways that honor participants' speech styles, words, rhythms, and syntax while ensuring participants' voices are respected (Butler-Kisber, 2022; Richardson, 2001). Richardson (2001) posits the process of constructing poems from participants' transcripts allows the researcher to think more critically about who they are (re)presenting and offers the possibility for the

researcher to explore and examine preconceptions and possible biases. Davis (2019) argues that critical poetic inquiry, specifically, allows the researcher and participants to "become more fully human… [and] build more full versions of ourselves" (p. 2). Critical analysis of the research and how it is being presented allows the researcher to ask questions around whose voice is dominant, missing, and being maintained (Davis, 2019). The process of engaging in critical poetic inquiry centers participants' voices and allows space for a more nuanced (re)presentation of data gathered.

Redistribution of Power

Another component of critical theory that poetic inquiry centers is a redistribution of power while conducting research. Traditional forms of qualitative research do not always adequately reflect the complexity of human experiences (Butler-Kisber, 2002). There is an inherent invisible power in the adoption of conventional writing (Richardson, 2001). Poetic inquiry moves outside of traditional forms of research to make space for participants' voices to be centered without the same structural rules as conventional writing.

Critical Researcher

Critical poetic inquiry combines poetic inquiry, critical qualitative research, and culturally relevant pedagogy in a way that allows the researcher to use a culturally responsive methodology while being a method appropriate for studying present and future protest movements (Davis, 2019). This study focused on bringing a deeper understanding of students' experiences as identity-based activists. Critical poetic inquiry allows for this understanding in a way that incorporates participants' lived experiences and social identities.

Connection with Data

Poetic representation brings the researcher closer to the data in different and possibly unusual ways that allows for new and important insights (Butler-Kisber, 2002). Part of being critical with the data gathered, data (re)presentation, and the stories told through this study, was to be connected to the data itself. When creating found poetry, it was necessary to connect with the data on multiple levels, as will be described in the research design section.

Poetic Inquiry and Critical Pedagogy

Critical poetic inquiry draws from Freire's concepts of dialogue, reflection, and action to create a form of research that amplifies marginalized voices of both researchers and participants and serves as an act of protest (Davis, 2019). The ways critical poetic inquiry and critical theory are in concert with each other is why they were chosen to create the framework for this study. "Critical poetic inquiry… is the process of using poetic devices to critically analyze a research inquiry to advance movement toward relevant forms of justice and produces research poetry as a product" (Davis, 2019, p. 3). Critical pedagogy and poetic inquiry permit the production of research that can increase understanding and provide possible actions for educators.

Poetic inquiry is "a form of qualitative research in the social sciences that incorporates poetry in some way as a component of an investigation" (Prendergast et al., 2009, p. xxxv). Poetic inquiry was used during the data analysis and (re)presentation processes. Poetic inquiry can be used as a way of data analysis to help understand or get a new understanding of the data (Richardson, 1997). Poetic inquiry can also be used as a form of data representation to help "readers resonate and connect with findings; new ways of revealing deep understandings of human experience … and new ways of working with people in vulnerable situations to name what it is like" (Prendergast, 2015, p. 160). By using poetic inquiry when analyzing and (re)presenting experiences shared from participants, I strove to achieve a product that connected

readers to participants' experiences in a way that could be relatable to readers that connects them to participants' stories while also connected to something within themselves. My goal was to use "personal experience and research to create something from the particular, which becomes universal when the audience relates to, embodies, and/or experiences the work as if it were their own" (Faulkner, 2017, p. 210). The data was presented in a way that connected the reader and embodied the experiences of the participants.

Traditional academic writing focuses on perceived objectivity. The process of writing in what has been considered a neutral style has, sometimes in the past, done harm to marginalized stories by attempting to make them universal or to make them fit a form of writing that is scientific and objective (Darmer, 2006). As Darmer (2006) writes "the academic form and language creates a form of reality, which is emotion-free. Thereby, making it difficult to express and write about emotions" (p. 554). Poetry should be considered as a way of writing alongside other academic writing styles to delineate how emotions are implicated in organizational contexts and marginalizing experiences.

When searching for an innovative method of data representation, the voice of participants, authenticity, and connection between readers, researcher, and participants were criteria that led me to poetic inquiry. Poetic inquiry can unsettle stereotypes, challenge dominant ideologies, and include marginalized voices and perspectives through empathy and by disorienting people into looking at things differently (Leavy, 2015). At the same time, poetic inquiry allows for the richness of the story, unlike traditional research, where participants' voices have been fragmented, appropriated, misrepresented, or even silenced (Prendergast & Galvin, 2012). As a researcher, I strove to (re)present the stories of participants in a way that did not

appropriate their stories but gave space to the voices in a context that impacted readers and positively impacted praxis.

Critical Poetic Inquiry

By combining critical theory and poetic inquiry, this project utilized critical poetic inquiry as the framework for collecting interviews, analytical memos by the researcher, as well as the data (re)presentation in poetic form. Davis (2019) argues that critical poetic inquiry is distinct from poetry as literature or poetic inquiry as a method because the process of critical poetic inquiry utilizes poetic devices to critically analyze a research inquiry towards the progress of social justice movements. In this process, poetry is produced as a product. By critically analyzing the data, the experiences described in the interviews, my interpretations of these experiences, as well as my (re)presenting of those experiences, I believe critical poetic inquiry as a methodology assists in focusing on forms of justice that are inclusive of the knowledge and meaning making of those to whom injustice is being done. I am interested in "the power of poetry because of its ability to present embodied experience… and to be a tool for social justice" (Faulkner, 2020, p. 11). The embodiment of experiences is important to the goals of this project and the values of this researcher. To truly have an impact on praxis, connection and embodiment are significant objectives.

Subjectivity Statement

This subjectivity statement was provided in order to examine related experiences and relevant identities of the researcher in a transparent and exploratory way. This process allowed critical examination of the trustworthiness of the research as well as the way the research was presented. The intention of exploring the positionality of the researcher was to enhance the validity of the research and data presented. By participating in reflexive practices, the researcher

hoped to have a deeper understanding of how their positionality and experiences influence the work they are doing in this project.

As this research involves student activism and identity development, as well as the active role faculty play within this development, it is important I address my own subjectivity within this study. My lived experiences as an identity-based student activist, an administrator in negotiation with identity-based student activists, and the privileged and marginalized identities I hold are all elements I was conscious of as I conducted my research. (Re)presenting the data gathered in the most authentic way that honors the voices of participants informs the research design, methodological, and theoretical framework that was selected.

The identities I hold as the person conducting this research also limit this project. As a White, middle-aged American, my experiences as it relates to oppression and marginality are limited. This affects the way I make meaning of the students' experiences and how I (re)present these experiences. As mentioned prior, critical poetic inquiry is being used to minimize these effects, but I must still recognize the limitations my lived experiences have had on this research.

Throughout this research project, I reflected on my experiences and positionality and how these affected the meaning-making process I engaged in with my data. Recognizing my own positionality and privileges, I endeavored to ethically represent participants' experiences. As Ward (2011) explains, poetic transcription "is a way to ethically (re)present participants stories and answer research questions in a method that 'involved crafting transcripts in a caring and relational manner to foreground… stories, create verisimilitude and focus on the essence of the experiences'" (p.355). Recognizing my subjectivity and lived experiences was imperative as I (re)presented data gathered through this research.

Research Design

Participants and Recruitment

Participants consisted of seven students from a Midwestern regional 4-year state institution. The seven students ranged from 18-24 years of age. Participants were identified through a recruitment process. First, students were enrolled in at least one class with a curriculum that utilizes social justice pedagogy as illustrated through the syllabus, course description, and learning activities employed.

Participants were enrolled in at least one of the following classes: Issues of Ethnic and Gender Studies, Social Stratification, and Social Movements. Each of these classes has been identified through their syllabi and learning outcomes to have a specific focus on dialogue, critical thinking, and sharing knowledge between peers and instructors. Criteria for analyzing syllabi include construction of classroom environment (Sulik & Keys, 2013), construction of power and authority (Baecker, 1998), and language and tone (Harnish & Bridges, 2011). Each syllabi includes a statement with expectations of faculty and students to respect differences and demonstrate diligence in understanding how other people's perspectives may differ from their own.

All seven students had participated in identity-based student activism on campus. Students were selected based on who filled out the survey and how active these students surveyed had been in campus activism on campus. I used purposive sampling, in which participants were selected based on the classes they enrolled in and their participation in identify-based student activism on campus. Participants were either active in social justice action groups on campus, registered student organizations, or other leadership roles that have provided them experience with identity-based activism on campus. When selecting participants,

the researcher made every attempt to find participants who vary in racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, SES identities, as well as ability statuses. The researcher had a desire to uplift as many stories as possible and give a space for multiple voices. To better understand student experiences, it was important for this researcher to be intentional on whom space is being given to and who often does not have space for their voices to be heard.

Given that this research study aims to answer questions on students' construction of civic identities and the relationship between dialogue and identity-based student activism, the research design was guided by meaning-making through a critically theoretical lens. The research design examined students' civic identity development and how their experiences shaped their meaning-making. The data collection, analysis, and (re) presentation were informed by a critical theory framework that incorporates Freirean dialogical practices and recognized shared knowledge production as participants shared their stories and experiences.

Figure 3. 2. Participants Names and Identities

Name*	Identify As**	Pronouns	Classification	Degree Seeking	Groups Involved In
Andi	Queer, Nonbinary, Autistic	They/them	Senior	BS-Psychology	American Sign Language Club, Psi Chi Honors Society
Grace	White, straight, a reader	She/her	First-Year	BA-English	Building Relationships, Inclusion, Diversity, and Global Equity participant
Julia	Cisgender woman, intersectional feminist, white, ally	She/her	Senior	BID-Ethnic, Gender, Identity Studies	Diversity Ambassador

Lemon	Black, Native American, Nonbinary, first-generation student	They/them	Senior	BID-Interdisciplinary Studies	Black Student Union, P.R.I.D.E., Inclusive Excellence Fellow, TRIO
Marisol	International student, first-generation student, Hispanic, Latina, from South America	She/her	Junior	BA-Crime and Delinquency	Hispanic American Leadership Organization, Spanish Club, Associated Student Government
Micah	Woman, white, Bisexual, Theater kid	She/her	First-Year	BS-Psychology	Chi Omega
Sawyer	Member of the Honors College, English Tutor, Lesbian, Christian	She/her	Sophomore	BSE-English Education	University Activities Council, Honors College

*Names are pseudonyms
**Participants were invited to share as much as they were comfortable disclosing; identifying information is written as they disclosed it

Research Site

This study was conducted at a regional 4-year institution in the Midwest. This institution is a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) with 13% students of color, 7% international students, 33% Pell-Eligible students, 41% first-generation students with a 52% graduation rate. This institution serves an average of 5,500 students with about 3,000 students on campus.

Membership role

My connection to the research site and to participants directly influences the ways I conducted this research and (re)presented participants' stories. Being at a regional institution, I am able to connect with students directly through programming, events, and other student

engagement activities. My first position at the institution allowed me to advise first-generation and Pell-eligible students. I served as a former advisor to one of the participants. My current position within the institution's administration affects the way participants have access to me. My position serves as the administrative position whose purpose is to advocate for historically excluded populations on campus. My work at the institution is linked directly to the identity-based activism that has taken place on campus. It was important for me to understand my access to and participation in administrative spaces while also focusing on my position's purpose to serve students and other members of campus and create inclusive, equitable environments and how this positionality and purpose affected my decisions in this research.

Data Collection and Analysis

Two semi-structured interviews with each of the seven participants and two focus groups with four participants in one focus group and three in the other focus group were conducted. The two focus groups allowed participants to share their experiences with each other. This process created space for reflection and action through participants' conversations with each other while participants were able to engage with each other's process of humanization through education and understanding.

During the individual interviews, the semi-structured questions allowed me to exchange ideas with participants in dialogue that was complex and beyond consuming their experiences for the purpose of simply recording them. This dialogue was committed to recording the participants' experiences, and their voices. These interviews came from a place of care and love for these experiences and the voices of those telling them.

The following figure shows the timeline of data collection. This timeline includes time between interviews for transcribing and coding. By coding during the interview process, this helped guide questions for the second interview and the two focus groups.

Figure 3. 3. Data Collection Timeline

Week 1	Pre-Interview Meeting with 7 students
Weeks 2-5	Interview I with 7 students; Transcribe interviews
Week 6 - 8	Member checking of transcribed data
Week 9-10	Begin transcriptions for clusters and patterns
Weeks 11-12	Conduct 2 focus groups with 3-4 participants in each group
Weeks 13-14	Transcribe focus group transcripts
Week 15-16	Member checking of transcribed data
Week 17-18	Interview II with 7 students
Week 19-20	Transcribe Interview II transcripts
Week 21-22	Member checking of transcribed data
Week 23-26	Chunk data from both interviews and focus group and code for clusters and patterns
Weeks 27-30	Develop found poems based on clusters, patterns, and coding process

By structuring time in between each interview to transcribe, it allowed me to ask for clarification or more details in the subsequent interview.

To have a successful interview, it was important to build rapport and trust with the students prior to beginning the interview. Paris and Winn (2014) present the need for a

humanizing approach to qualitative research that involves "building relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness raising for researchers and participants" (p. xvi).

I conducted a pre-interview session to allow participants to get to know me outside of an interview setting where we could share stories with one another. Spending time talking about their experiences helped connect the participants with the researcher in a different way than the first interview allowed for.

Each Interview I took place at the beginning of the Spring semester. These interviews consisted of participants meeting with the researcher individually. Participants were given the option to meet in the researcher's office, a student diversity study lounge, or another place of their choice. Four participants chose to meet in the lounge while three chose to meet in the lounge. The interview utilized questions formulated prior to the interview which are attached as Appendix B. While these questions helped begin the conversation, subsequent questions were asked as the conversation continued between participant and researcher. Each initial interview took between 45-80 minutes. On average, the initial interviews took 62 minutes. At the end of these interviews, participants were given a timeline for the focus groups and second interviews so they could plan for these in their schedules.

Following the first round of interviews, two focus groups were scheduled. The times selected for these focus groups were based on a poll sent out to participants to find times that worked best to allow for at least 3 participants at each focus group. Unfortunately, based on a participant's schedule change, one focus group consisted of 5 participants while the other only had 2 participants. These focus groups both took place in the student diversity study lounge and took 90 minutes. Questions used for these groups can be found attached to this study as

Appendix C. These questions were based on similarities found when coding the set of initial interviews.

The last individual interviews took place 15 weeks after the initial individual interviews. These interviews took place near the end of the Spring semester. The researcher created different questions for each participant based on their previous interview and responses in the focus group. Due to the timeframe between interviews, participants were asked about classes they were enrolled in during the Spring and if any of these courses focused on dialogue and social justice pedagogy. This was the only question that was asked of all 7 participants in the second individual interview. These interviews took between 35-60 minutes with an average time of 48 minutes.

While (re)presenting participants' stories, I incorporated Freire's (1972/2018) dialogical practices of engaging in conversations that position student participants as experts in their own lives. Freire (1972/2018) argues one cannot enter into a conversation about liberation and oppression without acknowledging the student holistically. One must hold space for the students' humanity and treat them with respect and dignity while recognizing their lived experiences to inform them where they currently are in their learning process and understanding.

As a researcher, I entered into the interviews with a mutual respect for the knowledge students bring into the space. To build an environment that fosters authentic dialogue and critical thinking, students need to feel heard and discover their own agency. Student participants need to be positioned as authorities of their own stories and lived experiences.

Data Analysis

A series of coding processes were used to organize data gathered, analyze the data, and categorize findings. Qualitative research lends itself to coding due to the nature of storytelling and transcription. While working closely with collected data, patterns emerged, which informed the clusters identified. These patterns helped guide the researcher and reader through a more in-depth understanding of research questions and purpose (Bhattacharya, 2017). The following sections describe this process of analyzing data through a qualitative data method that includes coding, and analytical memos, while applying a poetic inquiry framework.

Coding Process

The coding process and data analysis was done using NVivo software. NVivo an electronic coding program that allows for the maintenance of coding lists and space to define codes (Saldaña, 2016). While attempting to identify coding methods for my research, I tested multiple processes to experiment with which process worked best to represent the type of data that would be gathered. As Saldaña (2016) suggests developing a new or hybrid coding method may be necessary to fit the needs of a specific study. Structural coding and In Vivo coding were combined to produce substantive representation of the stories and transcriptions that were collected from participants.

Structural Coding. Utilizing structural coding allowed me to intentionally search for the relationships between participants' experiences as well as note the experiences that specifically speak to this project's research questions. Structural coding is content-based and directly relates data to a specific research question (MacQueen et al., 2008). It becomes a device for labeling and indexing, which allows researchers to access data in a quick and relevant way. This process enables the researcher to conduct specific analysis from a larger data set (Namey et al., 2008).

By viewing interview transcriptions through a lens of structural coding, I was able to focus on how the participants' stories connect to one another. Within the process of structural coding, sub coding was employed in order to organize the codes that emerged. Creating a hierarchy of codes through the structural coding process while utilizing subcodes enabled me to keep these codes linked while creating a distinction between them which assisted in noticing how they were interrelated and connected back to the parent code.

In Vivo Coding. This project employed data representation through found poetry, utilizing interview transcripts. In order to find the words and phrases used to create these found poems, In Vivo coding was used. In Vivo coding entails using participants' own words and phrases in the coding process. In Vivo coding is most appropriate for studies that aim to honor and give precedence to participants' voices (Saldaña, 2016). In Vivo coding allows the researcher to focus on codes that are inspired by participants as opposed to generated by the researcher (Saldaña, 2016). Representing participants' voices is a central focus to the data representation methods in this project.

While In Vivo coding was used to code for the found poetry representations of data, other coding methods were used to further connect the data to participants' voices. To discover clusters that connect to the research questions, it was necessary to also use structural coding. With In Vivo coding, an emphasis is placed on the words and voice of the participants. This is a component of critical poetic inquiry that is important to the (re)presentation of participants' stories. However, In Vivo coding does not allow for analysis and emerging clusters to become as visible without the use of structural coding. Saldana suggests mixing In Vivo coding with other forms of coding because "sometimes the researcher says it best; sometimes the participant does. Be prepared and willing to mix and match coding methods" (Saldaña, 2016). The combination of

these coding methods allowed me to connect with the data and analyze it in a way that added depth to the analysis. It also allowed me to investigate connections and relationships within the participants' stories while honoring the voice of the participants.

Data Representation

Freire (1972/2018) argues that education and meaning making through dialogue, reflection, and action is a process toward liberation as well as to becoming more fully human. Poetry [is] a way to be and become in the world (Leggo, 2005). In contrast to other forms of data representation, critical poetic inquiry creates a space for participants to be (re)presented in a way that recognizes their humanity through the shared experience of gathering participants' stories and (re)presenting those stories in a form that connects readers, researcher, and participants. Poetry creates spaces that enable new ways of knowing and becoming in the world (Leggo, 2008). It presents, and is also a catalyst for, a window into the heart of human experience (McCulliss, 2013). Poetry invites and (re)presents the complexity of the human experience. It creates space for the researcher to concentrate data to explore new ways of knowing and links the head and heart (Leggo, 2008).

Found poetry can be a way to (re)present the voices of participants and experiences that may be silenced through the academic gaze (Bhattacharya, 2013). To fully explore relationships and connections, I coded certain statements in words both in structural codes and as In Vivo codes. This allowed me to utilize In Vivo codes when (re)presenting data through found poetry. Found poetry takes essential elements from the transcript to reveal the essence of participants' lived experiences. By using participants' words to directly (re)present the data, this allowed for participants' voices to be honored in a way different from other forms of (re)presentation. While critical theory gives a theoretical framework to research design, found poetry moves from a

space of intentionality within data gathering to intentional (re)presentation of lived experiences and stories of participants.

Once each transcript was coded both through structural coding and In Vivo coding, similar codes were grouped into clusters. Next, I printed each cluster of poems together to allow for the transcripts to be highlighted, blacked out, and connected. Once this initial highlighting and blacking out took place, transcripts were recoded in a second round of structural and In Vivo coding. The process of highlighting and blacking out was repeated with the new formed coded clusters. This second round of highlighting and blacking out formed poems from participants' own words. Some direct quotes from the transcripts were not substantive enough to form their own poem. These shorter quotes were combined together to create the collective poems that will be presented in the Findings section.

Summary of Research Design

This section has described the multiple facets of the design of this research study. The theoretical and methodological frameworks were employed to create the illustrated design. This design focuses on dialogical processes within data gathering, utilizing a critical lens throughout data analysis, and data (re)presentation through found poetry that centers participants' voices and experiences. Multiple coding methods were described, as well as the use of analytical memos, and were used in order to fully analyze the data in a way that meets the purpose of this study. The research design is one distinction this study utilizes to fill a gap in current literature.

One of the most significant components of this research design, as described above, is the use of poetic inquiry to (re)present participants' stories. As discussed throughout this section, this research strives to maintain participants' voices within the process of

(re)presenting gathered data. This section described the ways in which this was done through use of coding methods and poetic inquiry as a methodology.

Validity

Validity has been redefined by qualitative researchers to ensure trustworthiness of a project without linking it to a Universal Truth. Glesne (2011) notes that if researchers believe that concepts are socially constructed then they cannot create criteria for True or accurate results. This reconceptualizing of validity opened new possibilities, as well as new responsibilities, for how rigorous and ethical research can be designed. Part of this validity includes trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is determined by the credibility and quality of the study (Glesne, 2011; Jones et al., 2014).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness criteria included honoring participants' voices, capturing the complexity of lived experiences and social contexts, and creating a reciprocal connection between participants and the researcher (Jones et al., 2014; Lincoln, 1995). To better design the rigor and trustworthiness of my data, I looked to Lather (1986) and her focus on face validity and catalytic validity.

I utilized Lather's (1986) concept of face validity, which is scrutinizing data in a way that explicitly looks at the validity of the data at face value. I furthered this practice by utilizing Guba and Lincoln's (1981) concept of member checking, which will include allowing participants to read over transcripts and data (re)presentation to ensure their stories are being (re)presented accurately. Member checking required me to connect with participants throughout the data analysis process with initial inferences. Then, I adjusted based on participants' responses. Participants were also sent the final found poems created from their transcripts as part of the

member checking process. This process helped guide me as I (re)present the data gathered in a way that allows participants to be part of that process. This step was taken to ensure the interpretation and (re)presentation created through the poems I crafted does not take away from the participant's original narrative. The use of member checking helped ensure (re)presentation is in congruence with participants' perspective on their own lived experiences.

As a White, American person, I recognize that I hold certain privileges that are not given to some participants whose stories and involvement in student protests are connected to the oppression of their marginalized identities. It will be important for me to reflect on these differences in experiences as I conduct my research. Focusing on critical poetic inquiry aids in my desire to do ethically responsible research (Ward, 2011) that enables marginalized voices to be centered in my research. Therefore, critical poetic inquiry fits with the purpose of this project because it allows me to use poetry to explore, record, and (re)present participants' experiences. The process of poetic inquiry is reflexive in that the researcher and the participants become interconnected and their responses to the process inform the process itself (Prendergast, 2015). Critical poetic inquiry is a humanizing process for participants and the researcher that allows space for full human dignity throughout the research process (Davis, 2019). Being a White researcher, poetic inquiry enables me to relate to participants' experiences in a more reflexive, responsive, and ethical way (McCulliss, 2013, p. 131). Through the coding process, utilizing analytic memos, and understanding my subjectivity and how I enter into this work, I endeavored to be aware of the ways my own lived experiences affect the research and representation of stories of my participants. Poetic inquiry is the method used to support this reflexive work.

Catalytic Validity

Another layer of validity that was utilized in this project was catalytic validity.

Catalytic validity "refers to the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses, and energizes participants... to gain self-understanding and, ideally, self-determination" (Lather, 1986, p. 67). Catalytic validity recognizes the transformation possible through conducting this research project and the "reality-altering impact" the research process can have itself. Through member checks, and the (re)presentation of participants' stories through found poetry, participants engaged in the process of critically looking at their own stories. They saw a (re)presentation of their interviews and their experiences in a new form, found poems, and through the lens of this research purpose, which potentially transformed their understanding of their own experiences. A reframing of their own experiences could have happened in the ways these experiences were presented to them through the constructed found poems.

Analytical Memos

The coding methods described above helped to organize interview transcripts while emphasizing clusters and similarities within the stories shared by participants. However, to analyze data and my interpretation of the data as I was analyzing it, I utilized analytical memos. These memos were written throughout the data analysis process, including directly after the interviews were complete, while transcribing interviews, and during the coding process. Codes and categories are found throughout interview notes and margins but can also be found embedded within analytic memos (Saldaña, 2016). Analytic memos allowed me to process the data I have collected in an intentional and prompt way following interviews. These memos allowed me to not only document initial thoughts but also served in the data analysis process to discover possible bias or misinterpretations of the data based on my role as the researcher and my own lived experiences.

These memos were recorded in two different ways. Directly after the interview, and during transcription of interviews, these memos were written down in a notebook being used for notes for this project. While coding, analytical memos were typed into the memo section of NVivo.

Depth was brought to data analysis by reflecting on these components of analytical memos. Understanding these components allowed me to reflect on my perception of participants' roles, rules that participants may interrogate or rules I may have prescribed to participants, and the relationship between those perceptions of roles and rules.

Ethical Considerations

To reduce harm being done to participants, this study has been developed through the guidance of a committee of graduate faculty. This study was approved by IRB at Kansas State University as well as by the institution where the study took place. The institution where research was conducted and the students participating in the study were given pseudonyms. These actions were to conduct research that was ethical and least harmful to human participants.

Poetic inquiry creates a layer of ethics within this study. Poetic inquiry is used in pursuit of an ethical practice of representation of data. Poetic inquiry allows the researcher to create ethical, caring, and empathetic work (Galvin & Prendergast, 2016). Richardson (2001) poses that poetic representation is a practice that allows for researchers to construct themselves as ethical subjects engaged in ethical research. The focus on participants' voices within poetic inquiry allows researchers to represent gathered data in a way that centers the participant. Critical poetic inquiry centers voices in a way that challenges dominant, Eurocentric epistemologies, and research texts (Davis, 2019). Specifically, poetic transcription, which involves creating poetry from data gathered similar to the found poetry process used in this project, has been used by

researchers to "address ethical concerns of representing participants' stories" (Faulkner, 2020, p. 63). Poetic inquiry, specifically found poetry, was used due to its relationship to social justice, embodiment, and a critical theoretical lens, but also due to its ability to address ethical dilemmas specific to representing marginalized voices in an authentic and caring way.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented an overview of the methodology that frames the study. This study is informed by critical pedagogical theory while utilizing critical poetic inquiry as the methodology to conduct the study and to construct the research design. Data analysis processes were developed using critical poetic inquiry and previous literature reviewed. Qualitative research, specifically critical poetic inquiry, has been utilized in this research in order to achieve desired outcomes of honoring participants' voices, capturing the intricacies of lived experiences, and creating connection between researcher, participant, and reader.

In the next chapter, I present the findings from the data analysis described in this chapter. I discuss participants' identities and stories, as well as present clusters found through the coding process. Lastly, direct quotes from participants' transcripts were utilized along with the clusters that emerged to present found poems created directly from participants' interviews.

Chapter 4 - Findings

In this chapter, found poems will be presented as created by transcripts from interviews with participants. These found poems are organized into five clusters to address research questions and connect with the principles of critical pedagogy listed in chapter three. In this study I posed the following questions: (1) How do college students construct civic identities? (2) How do college students participate in civic engagement? (3) In what ways do identity-based student activists engage with Freire's concepts of dialogue and humanity? Using poetic inquiry, the aim of this study was to understand the perspectives and experiences of student identity-based activists and their interactions with Freire's dialogue and humanity.

Qualitative data in the form of transcripts from interviews and focus groups were collected, analyzed, and presented. From each participant's interviews and focus groups, I created found poems (Glesne, 1997) and received feedback on their poems. The focus group transcripts were used to create group poems that represent the collective voice of the group (Faulkner, 2020; Lahnman & Richard, 2014). Poems were organized into poetic clusters based on commonalities found within the poems (Butler-Kisber & Stewart, 2009) which connect to the critical pedagogy framework being used in this study. These five main clusters include the classroom, conflict, the role of the individual, collective influence, and barriers to dialogue and honoring humanity.

The first section, critical pedagogy in the classroom, is a collection of poems related to critical pedagogy in the classroom. Poems in this cluster speak to the role professors, classroom environment, and curriculum connect to key principles of critical pedagogy including dialogue, humanity, and conscientização.

The second section, conflict, is a group of poems related to conflict and explores the concept of good conflict as well as the lack of opportunities to build skills around good conflict. This section examines key principles including dialogue and humanity of others.

The third section, the role of the individual, is a collection of poems related to individuals, praxis, and how their identities, families, culture, and individual actions affect their civic identity development and their experiences with civic engagement.

The fourth section, collective influence, is a series of poems related to collective influence and effect on students' individual development and actions. These poems examine the roles of community, storytelling, honoring voice, and space play in dialogue and recognizing humanity. This section examines key principles of critical pedagogy including praxis, conscientização, civic engagement, and civic identity development.

Lastly, the fifth section of my findings, barriers, investigates the barriers to dialogue and honoring humanity. These poems assess access, safety, institutional harm, activists' harm, and technology and the ways these components create barriers to students' ability to engage in critical dialogue. Based on the interviews and focus groups, the largest barrier to critical dialogue is access. The collection of poems around access includes analyzing access to administrators, access to classroom learning, agreements among participants engaging in dialogue, and varied cultures of participants. In chapter five, I will expand on further research specifically centered around these barriers.

Cluster 1: Critical Pedagogy in the Classroom

The first cluster of poems examines ways critical pedagogy has been used in participants' classrooms. These poems are organized in sections including mutual learning environments, the professors' role in creating space for dialogue, identities effect on learning in the classroom, and

what role curriculum plays in utilizing critical pedagogy in the classroom. These poems explore critical pedagogy concepts of praxis, dialogue, knowledge production, and conscientização.

Professors' Role

The theme that came up most often in participant interviews and focus groups was the role the professor plays in creating a classroom environment that encourages centering humanity and critical dialogue. Participants shared stories of professors who intentionally set up mutual learning classroom environments as well as professors who did not. Some intentional ways professors co-constructed these environments included building trust, setting expectations, bringing in different perspectives, modeling skills of good conflict, setting the tone, and practicing care focused ethics. Participants described classroom environments that encouraged dialogue as spaces that were open, non-judgmental, and respectful. Much of their stories also focused on the professor building trust.

Perspectives and Possibilities

Bringing in other perspectives can help students engage as this encourages critical dialogue around what is being said and what might be currently unsaid (Keating, 2005). Participants spoke about examples from the professor which helped in their ability to understand and think more critically about the content. Professors facilitating conversation and bringing other perspectives in can promote an environment for critical dialogue. Whereas lack of perspectives and examples can impede creating this type of classroom environment.

Andi describes the role they view the professor plays in allowing for different perspectives.

<u>Different Perspectives</u>
The professor really sets the tone for conversation
It may be a lack of acknowledgment from the professors

to address those other perspectives

that could have been lacking in that moment

The instructor kind of leads the conversation

to look at a different perspective

even if it isn't the most common perspective

You don't have to change your mind

because of every new perspective that you hear

But being willing to at least talk about the different perspectives

is probably a big thing across the board

Critical dialogue focuses on seeking to understand others. Andi makes a distinction between hearing others and changing others' minds. For Andi, the professor plays a role in leading discussions in ways that promote dialogue and not debate.

While Andi discussed professors as leaders in setting the tone, setting of tone can be difficult if the professor has not built trust within the classroom. For Sawyer, a lack of trust in the professor affected her willingness to engage in critical dialogue.

What's the Professor Going to Do?

I didn't want the professor to be like

**** you

and flunk me for the rest of the class

Like I was really worried about that fall back

Which is why people don't want to get into conflict

They're like,

What's the professor going to do?

Sawyer's lack of understanding of how the professor would facilitate conflict directly affected her decision to not engage in it.

Participants described their inability to engage in dialogue sometimes based on their lack of understanding of the content. They expressed a desire to participate but their inability to do so based on needing more information from the professor. The following poem is a group poem about the use of examples within the classroom.

<u>Examples</u>

If there's a silence
just ask the question in another way
We sometimes just don't understand

      Give an example
      Examples help me a lot

            Just makes it hard to want to engage
            when it's like you're not even feeling pushed
            or challenged in any way

      Marisol describes how examples have helped her in the classroom and her desire to participate.

<u>More Examples</u>

When the professor felt that silence
then the professor usually tries to explain it
in a better way or give an example
I've noticed that
when the professor gave an example
it was easier to understand

I feel like, if it weren't for examples
sometimes it was going to be harder to address them
Sometimes they just ask a question

and it's just everyone stays in silence

and it's just awkward

It depends on how much patience

or what approach they take

and if like they also contribute with more examples

It's just silence then nobody wants to like ask

Can you ask it again?

I would like to participate

If I knew what to say

but I really don't

  While examples can aid in students engaging in dialogue, another factor participants

discussed in their desire to engage in critical dialogue is their lack of understanding of what good

conflict looks like. Multiple participants talked about their lack of experience with good conflict

and desire to build skills around good conflict. Modeling good conflict techniques to students

could affect their ability and confidence in engaging in critical dialogue. For Grace, having

examples of good conflict shows her possibilities.

That Kind of Conflict

That'd be interesting to see

More professors have that kind of conflict

to kinda show an example to students

This is possible

You can have this

  Lemon, when conversing with Grace in a focus group, added their support of having

access to models of good conflict from professors.

Positive Conflict

It'd be interesting to see more professors in positive, or not negative, conflict

to understand what that looks like

Even though my professors have very different views,

they can still have a conversation about that

without it devolving into personal attacks

or arguing or yelling

about someone's personal identity

rather than the ideas that they're trying to perpetuate

Initial set-up for mutual learning classroom environments requires students to understand and connect to multiple perspectives around the content while having possibility models for how to engage in critical deliberate dialogue through good conflict.

Setting the Tone

As Andi's poem illustrated in the last section, professors set the tone of the classroom. The ways they create open, respectful environments help set expectations of how others in the classroom engage, as well as builds trust with students. Professors handling disrespectful conflict and harm in the classroom also builds trust and helps students understand the perimeters of engagement and dialogue. Conversely, a professor expressing fear of critical dialogue can create a barrier to students engaging with it.

Julia spoke frequently about a course she took that incorporated both biology majors and sociology majors and looked at the biology of gender. While describing the professor's participation and framing of the environment, she referenced Freire's banking model and how this course differed from that model.

Open Dialogue

I learned so much from that class

From how those two professors not only talked to each other

or brought the class together

but also how they talk to students

and how it became more of that open dialogue

as opposed to like

we're giving you information

Write it down

practice it for the test

It was very interesting to see

how the professors were in the conversation

Not as professors

but as colleagues

      While Julia spoke specifically about open dialogue in her class, Marisol discussed more

broadly intentional conversations around the classroom being an open and respectful

environment. She also talked about professors naming the difficulty of some topics and their

support for students who may need to leave the classroom during these discussions.

<u>Open and Respectful</u>

Overall

professors really say like we're going to touch a sensitive content

If you feel at any point that you want to leave

you can leave

That's something that I am first experiencing

because in my country there's not a lot of that awareness

of how people might feel

if it's a touchy subject

It's just like

of course

hard to talk about

It's also necessary to talk about the topics

We talk about it because that's what we're getting into

Be open

Present yourself as open

I've had some professors who are like

yes contact me if you need anything

I really want to respond to email

or even in their syllabus

They seem very open

and very respectful

When you reach out to them or something

they're really very understanding

and they seem interested to find a solution

with you

you kinda start trusting this professor

When I got here

I got to experience how professors can really connect with you

That's one of the things I really like

Grace expands on the idea of open and respect and discusses how non-judgmental spaces

affect her ability to engage in the classroom.

<u>No Judgment</u>

She was very open

Very open and expressive

She talks with inflection and volume

and made it feel very open

Everyone in that class

kinda talked and joked around with each other

Which is really fun

I love environments like that

They're just open

They're just not judgey

They don't pressure you about things

I think that's the big thing

there's a lot of pressure in some classes

but some professors are just down to earth

She actually performed it

both through action and what she said

Which is important

because if you just say that

you know,

it's gonna be an open classroom

that doesn't mean it will be

for sure

They create trust within their classroom

and their students respect them

Grace mentions trust at the end of her poem. Both Marisol and Grace discuss environments that create trust with the professor overall. One specific way to build trust with students is in handling potentially harmful incidents in a way that honors the students' humanity while addressing the harm that has been done. Lemon describes their experience with a professor addressing the possibility for harm.

Possible Disagreements

Expect to have possible disagreements

about our ideas in class

The professor would acknowledge that some of the things that we will be discussing in class

can be heavy or might be uncomfortable for some

Explained how even though we're not going to agree

it's still important to discuss

and learn from or pull ideas from

Julia talks about her experiences with a professor handling potentially harmful situations

while still leaving room for critical dialogue.

<u>She Handles It Well</u>

The way that she engages students

She handles it really well

as just being like

well I understand

that you may not like this

I just think that she handles it

very well

She says

This is what I think

Now, just because I'm your professor

does not mean you need to think like me

I'm just putting out another perspective

usually students will respond

I think that's a really good way to do dialogue

because we are online

and it's like discussion boards

she comments

then that person comments back

She's very quickly to be like

I'm so glad that you brought in this perspective

and whatever

but we're gonna move on to our next topic

I will be closing this discussion board
from further comments
Like literally shuts it down

I'm sure she doesn't realize
how much she's really helped me
because we don't have a lot of face-to-face interaction

As Lissovoy and Cook (2020) discuss, with deliberate dialogue, there is potential for harm by those in power. This power can be in the form of authority, such as the professor, but it can also come with being part of a group doing harm. Julia's experience examines how the professor stepped in with her authority to shut down discussions being conducted by students who were saying harmful things in the discussion board to address the power differential between students being harmed and students doing harm. Lemon adds to the discussion on harm within the classroom and a professor handling this harm while respecting all students involved.

<u>Handling Harm</u>
If a student did say something that could be interpreted as harmful
like the professor acknowledged how there is possibly better language to use
or other ways to phrase it

A professor talked about a story where they had a student make a comment
like that was very normal for them
because of the way they had been raised
but it was very like
not okay

They didn't want to embarrass a student
but they acknowledged that like that sort of language
was harmful
But there was no shaming involved

just because it was an understanding that the language

that was inappropriate

even though it was language

they had heard their whole life

Knowing my professor handled situations like that

and have handled them like appropriately

in a way that is like learning

for not only the student

but for the class

the class is able to learn how to handle situations like that

Knowing how the professor handles that situation

makes it easier

to go into having uncomfortable conversations

Since we know that we're all learning here

in that everyone's at a different point

In their learning journey

We need to take a step back

not only to be understanding

but try not to react to like

negative statements

as to not create harmful

Or a tense environment in the classroom

Lemon's experience illustrates the ability professors have to monitor classroom environments but also to give examples to students on how to manage conflict and harm in the future in a productive way that honors humanity. Conversely, a professor not addressing harm can negatively affect students' feelings of inclusion and belonging. During a focus group, a participant told a story about a professor ignoring a student's homophobic and transphobic

comments in the classroom. Julia pushes back on the idea that the professor should have let it go without addressing it.

Not In a Safe Space

I have a differing opinion on that
what the professor should have done
because I feel like
anyone in that class who is part of the LGBTQIA+ community is gonna be like
I feel attacked right now
I feel like I'm not in a safe space
And the professor is just saying
okay
is like saying
they don't care that I was just like verbally attacked

While addressing harm in a way that attacks a student can damage the mutual learning classroom environment, not addressing it at all can also do damage. The professor's role in addressing this harm is significant.

Setting the tone is not only connected to actions professors take in the moment, but also to classroom norms and students' perceptions of those norms coming into the classroom. As an international student, Marisol spoke about classroom norms in her South American country and how they compare to classroom environments at her current institution.

Invisible Thin Wall

In my country
there's like that barrier
that Professors are just seen as something
very professional and above
There's just like invisible thin wall
between us and them

When I got here

I got to experience how professors can really connect with you here

In my country,

I wouldn't feel comfortable sharing anything

about LGBT issues

or personal issues

or like anxiety

or depression

ADHD

Like, they don't even know what ADHD is

I learned about that here

For Marisol, connections to professors have been affected by classroom and cultural norms. The tone of the classroom was affected directly by outside factors. This can be useful to understand when thinking about how explicit to be around expectations and community agreements within the classroom.

Previous poems illustrated participants' experiences with classroom environments being curated in ways to encourage critical dialogue. A professor has a vital role in setting up these environments. However, a professor's actions and language can also hinder space for critical dialogue. In one of Micah's classrooms, her professor expressed fear around engaging in critical dialogue about various cultures. Micah discusses how this affected her willingness to engage in conversations about cultural differences.

Please Don't Get Me Fired

He had us write down questions that we had about other cultures

The amount of stuff that we just do not know about other cultures is huge

We've been conditioned that asking is disrespectful

I'm genuinely curious

I really like other perspectives

In that class, we would have those conversations
Something that stood out to me
was that every time he started the conversation
he'd be like
Please don't get me fired
We're just talking about this
It felt very
He would tell stories of professors that had talked about it then been fired

I think that having your professor or someone that you're supposed to be learning from
Having that attitude just encourages and increases the amount of
Don't talk about this
This is a weird thing to talk about
We shouldn't be talking about this
This is a scary topic or a risky topic

And it's not
It's literally just talking about other cultures.
They exist
They are present in the people around us
Why would we not take the time to learn about them?

   Co-creating a mutual learning environment requires intentionality. Part of this creation is understanding how a professor's actions both prior to and during harmful incidents directly affect students' trust in engaging in critical dialogue. Open, respectful, non-judgmental environments also require managing and addressing harm.

Care Focused Ethics

Open, honest, respectful conversation is key to creating environments in which students feel comfortable engaging in critical dialogue. In addition, participants told stories of professors who not only were respectful but participated in care focused ethics with their students. Participants expressed added levels of trust and sense of belonging through feelings that their professors cared about them holistically. Sawyer reflects on her experience in a class after faculty members were terminated.

<u>She Was There</u>
When all the layoffs happened
we talked about that in class
We took a whole class period to talk about it
That wasn't very controversial
because we were all pretty against it
There was probably a lot of emotion though
It's pretty emotional
Dr. [Professor] was just trying to answer our questions
I knew that she wasn't going to let all hell break loose
She was there
She was making sure everything was going okay

Sawyer's experience illustrates the importance of creating space for students to discuss current issues and events that are directly affecting them. Sawyer expresses the trust she had in the professor to manage potential conflict while allowing students to discuss how they were feeling and ask questions about what was happening on campus.

While Sawyer's story is an example of how care focused ethics showed up in her classroom, Micah speaks about her professor explicitly stating her care for students.

<u>Cares About You</u>
Dr. [Professor] was really clear about her expectations
She made it very clear that she cared about you

as an individual

she kept that consistent throughout the entire semester

She made it very clear that she cared about you

as a student

and cared about what was going on in your life

Critical pedagogy in the classroom requires professors to intentionally frame classroom environments. By building trust with students, offering varying perspectives, and co-constructing an open and respectful classroom while centering humanity with care focused ethics, space is created for critical deliberate dialogue. As participants discussed, professors set the tone of the classroom and create the framework for mutual learning environments.

Classroom Environment

Mutual learning environments require space for students to feel safe, comfortable, and heard. Freire (1972/2018) argues that dialogue cannot take place among those who speak but deny others space to speak. These environments can be created through openness, respect, clear expectations, and community agreements. Mutual learning environments can be jeopardized when students feel shut down, fear not knowing answers, or do not hear other voices and perspectives. These factors connect directly with the above section and ways professors affect mutual learning environments. The first poem looks at Julia's experiences with mutual learning environments.

Learning Environment

It's very open

friendly

non-judgmental

It just feels like you're talking amongst friends

Like this is what I think on this

Then someone else will come in

and it's very conversations

and at ease

Especially like what makes the environment so great for learning is

because we feel at ease to ask questions

and like maybe say something that we're not so sure

if it's relevant or whatever

       Grace expands on components of a mutual learning classroom environment. She

discusses the diversity of identities within the learning space and how the different experiences

of her peers affected their learning.

<u>There Wasn't Any Judgment</u>

We talked a lot about our lives

Everyone just kind of shared stuff

There wasn't any judgment or drama

A lot of the discussions were the kind of discussions that I have with my friends

it was just interesting to see how many different perspectives people had

One of the girls

there would be something that was brought up

about inclusion with different identities

they literally were just like *Why?*

I was like

what do you mean why?

They were like

Well I just don't understand

Because people need to be included

It was odd

It was just interesting

because there were a lot of different perspectives

from a lot of different people

Mutual learning environments are essential for students to engage in dialogue and center humanity. Students having clear expectations and a mutual understanding of how they will be engaging with each other can help co-construct mutual learning environments.

Community Agreements

Co-creating agreements to how all members of the classroom will engage with each other is crucial to building trust and creating an environment for critical deliberate dialogue. Clear expectations and community agreements help students feel comfortable and confident to engage in dialogue (Shindler, 2010). Setting up community agreements helps students understand what is expected of them and what to expect from the course. Lemon talks about their experiences with professors setting expectations and discussing support for students.

The Class Has an Understanding

The professor would acknowledge that some of the things that we will be discussing in class
can be heavy or might be uncomfortable for some
like they always wanted to make a point that
if you need to step out of the class at any point
feel free to do so
There's nothing wrong with stepping out
if you need to
Everyone handles things differently

So just acknowledging that
everyone has different levels of tolerance
Some people might have to leave that knowing that it's okay to do that
because it said to the entire class
and the entire class has an understanding

I feel like if I had to do it

I wouldn't feel embarrassed or uncomfortable

   Lemon's experiences illustrate the way expectations and being explicit about support can

help students feel more comfortable when engaging in potentially difficult topics. Micah talks

about her experiences with expectations in a classroom that is constructed for dialogue on hard

topics.

Clear Expectations

There were very clear expectations

Just knowing that I wasn't going to get in trouble

it was gonna be okay

was really nice

That class is set up for discussions

about harder topics

and kind of how to talk about them

and how to look at them

The whole class was like friends

We all talked

Everybody contributed to the discussion

We had to stand all in the middle

and they would read the prompt

we'd have to go to the side of the room that we agreed with

We had to defend our opinions

and be respectful

There were definitely like moments

where it got heated and uncomfortable

but it was really interesting

They were all heavy questions

like very polarizing topics

but I've never had a class that had done that

Presenting over hard topics

and having the hard conversation

in classroom is really important

       Micah reflects on expectations of respect while discussing hard topics.

Techniques for Encouraging Dialogue

       Several techniques were mentioned during participants' interviews that helped them

engage in dialogue. These techniques include the way the classroom space is set up, the

intentional naming of hot topics by the professor, and having access to material prior to class

discussions. These are all techniques that can be utilized to begin to set up mutual learning

environments. For Marisol, a mutual learning environment begins with how the classroom space

is constructed.

<u>We're Seeing Our Faces</u>

How we do discussions is

we sit in a circle

That has helped a lot

because now we're seeing our faces

then we can all contribute

So now it's actually like

we take the full-time to make the conversation

Also I feel like I'm listening more to my other classmates

       Space is connected to feelings of safety, belonging, and trust. Constructing physical space

in the classroom that promotes dialogue can begin the process of building a mutual learning

environment.

In Sawyer's course, she talks about the professor setting up clear expectations around tension in the classroom and the discussion-based component of the course.

Raising the Heat

In honors composition

we do a lot of discussion too

and that's more of sharing our experiences with the class

Just sitting there in silence isn't really doing anybody any favors

In Dr. [Professor]'s class it was kinda understood

from the get-go

that it was discussion-based

She heavily moderated hot topics

She would do things like

raising the heat

like raising the tension in the room

to create more ideas

For Andi, having access to material before the class session aids them in their ability to engage in dialogue.

Put Together a Thought

Sometimes

I like to know the material ahead of time

just so I can have the time to kinda put together a thought

knowing where they're going to focus on

helps me know where to focus

Having that ability to kind of like pre-prepare

I'd be more invested in the in-person dialogue

because I'd actually be able to have time to make thoughts

because sometimes I have thoughts

but sometimes it takes a little longer to form them

than others

    While not all these techniques will work in every classroom, being intentional about how

the classroom is constructed can influence the mutual learning environment.

Struggles in Classroom Environment

    Participants shared their stories within mutual learning environments and ways those

environments were shaped. However, participants also discussed ways they have struggled with

engaging in learning environments. Some of these experiences included a professor not taking

the lead in facilitating conversation, a classroom where louder voices were privileged over other

voices, and an environment with a less engaging physical space and a lack of trust with others in

the class. By better understanding participants' struggles with mutual learning environments,

professors can be aware of what to avoid when setting up their classroom environments.

    Lemon shares a story about a class where students did not engage in dialogue and the

professor did not lead the conversation in a way to engage students.

Silence Just Hangs

It is kind of awkward
because it's very clear
that some people have a hard time opening up
myself included

I'm getting used to the professor being like
what was in this paper that you feel like we need to know about
then like
silence just kinda hangs over the class
It's definitely something to get used to
It feels like he wants us to talk
not just him

When reflecting about classroom environments, Andi compares two of their classes. In one class, Andi felt they had space to speak. In the other, they discussed feeling "like a minority" and not safe to engage in dialogue.

I Could Speak

The classes that are designed for conversation
I really try to bring up those added perspectives
when we're addressing various topics

I felt like I could speak on my own issues
without feeling like there was going to be backlash

Everybody can have their own opinion as long as they weren't attacking others
Open discussion

Whereas, I felt like in the communications course
it was more whoever's voice is the loudest in the room
was the conversation that was held
even if that wasn't a perspective that I personally agree with
or I felt it alluded to the lack of other perspectives

It made me feel more like a minority
or less surrounded by people who felt safe
which made it harder at times
to want to talk about my issues
when I felt like I was the only one
having that issue or seeing that perspective

When you're in honors classes
the idea to look at other perspectives
is ingrained within you

The last poem (re)presenting struggles within classroom environments is from an interview with Micah. For Micah, the way the physical space was set up and the lack of trust with her classmates and professor were factors in her choosing not to ask questions and broaden her understanding of other cultures, despite her desire to know more.

<u>Fear of Just Asking</u>

It made me very nervous to be like
oh, like, *I think this or I think this*

Very hard to have a class discussion
Everybody sits really far away
And I don't think many people knew each other in the class
I think that is part of the problem
Comfort level
There's a fear of just asking questions
because you don't want to look stupid
Especially about cultures
because you're not supposed to talk about it
You're also supposed to know about it already

Micah expresses concern with looking stupid and fear of asking questions that could be seen as something people are not supposed to ask about. These concerns are similar to concerns shared by other participants. With this in consideration, setting up a mutual learning environment might also include being explicit with students about the importance of critical dialogue within an environment of trust and respect. Participants expressed their fear of discussing topics that could cause conflict, as well as topics that they felt they are supposed to know about already. Managing those fears can help students engage in critical deliberate dialogue.

Classroom Size. One attribute of the classroom environment that multiple participants

spoke about was the size of the class. Sawyer discusses her preference for smaller classes and

how they affect relationships with peers and professors.

<u>Building Connection</u>

I think in those smaller classes

you can't really hide

you're going to have to talk eventually

In those bigger classes,

you can sit in the back

and just kinda coast

When we have smaller classes

You get to know your professor better

Your professor knows you

There's just more opportunities to get to know each other

I'm a big fan of small classes

More smaller classes

More discussion-based

Rather than just staring at the board taking notes

In my experience,

that's what helps engage students

and that's what helps me learn

That's what helps students learn

Through the intentional design of classroom environment and the size of the classroom,

Sawyer suggests students are able to connect more with their peers and with their professor. As

the previous section illustrates, building connections can directly affect the comfort in engaging in critical dialogue.

Even if classrooms need to be larger, professors can utilize activities, such as small group discussions, to allow for increased comfort. Lemon describes their concern with gathering their thoughts and being clear about those thoughts, as well as how small working groups assist them work through their thought processes.

<u>Good Idea</u>
It's like
I know I won't get judged
But it's like because I know
I have a hard time articulating
My thoughts
the first time
or articulating what I want

I'm worried what I say is going to be interpreted different
from what I mean
And then having to interrupt
or like speak again
and be like
Wait, this isn't actually what I meant
So just kinda I guess
that fear of being embarrassed
or looking stupid

I definitely think small groups work
I know that I'm more likely to talk out about something
if I'm in a small group of students

having peers acknowledge that

oh, that was a good idea

makes it easier to want to share it

Because if these peers think

it's good enough to share

like my other peers might also want to hear it

As is evident in the previous section, creating space to minimize feelings of judgment can help students engage in dialogue. Building spaces for students to support each other and see themselves as knowledge producers can help build their confidence and willingness to participate.

How Identities Affect Learning

While some components of the classroom environment can be intentionally designed, there are some components that are more complicated to control. One of these components is the identities of students and the professor leading the class. Lemon examines their experience in a course about the history of Black music and place and how the identities held by the professor affected their experience learning in the course.

Personally, in My Community

A lot of people that helped me change my perspective

are people that have more understanding on a subject than I do

It's usually like my professor

or even just, even if they are my peers

they just have a better understanding

of the topic than I do

Maybe they study it

or maybe they're just interested in it more than I am

I definitely pick and choose who I let

who I want to influence how I see things

Because I know that like certain people

aren't going to have the same views as me

or the same thoughts and ideas on things

Just because of the identities that they have

the person that I'm learning from

even if they are like someone who has more knowledge on a subject than I do

that identity they hold can like

mold the perception

that they have

the ideas

which can be harmful to someone of my multiple identities

I had a class with a professor that was a cis het white man

A lot of the things that we talked about in that course were surrounded in the black community

it definitely like not just changed, but kind of like made me think a little bit more

about my perception

That course being taught by someone that wasn't Black was very interesting

Just because he had a lot of knowledge on a lot of Black history

You could tell he was passionate about it

I knew that the information he was telling me wasn't to like

be harmful

in any way

Like he wasn't telling me

misinformation

in any way

But

I felt weird

like I'm learning information from this guy

it's weird processing this information

because it's like the experiences that he's talking about

obviously like he could never experience

as a white person

But like I know they're important to learn about

for me

personally

in my community

I did enjoy it

I felt like I learned a lot

It just creates this interesting like

internal, like

kind of like

how do I internalize this information

and take this information to help me

learn and grow

Not only as a student,

but also in my identity

       Lemon's experience illustrates the need for increased representation in the classroom. In cluster three, more poems will be presented looking at how identities affect both dialogue in the classroom and civic engagement. Understanding the nuances of experiences and identities students bring to the classroom can assist in addressing these nuances by naming them and intentionally exploring how they affect students' connection to materials and discussions.

Curriculum's Role

       Designing classroom environments and activities to create space for critical dialogue can be accomplished across academia. However, participants discussed the part curriculum plays in their assumptions around dialogue and what type of classroom environment would be created.

Recognizing that specific disciplines are more easily connected to dialogue and discussion-based activities can assist professors in these disciplines in designing their classroom environments. Perceptions of disciplines being less conducive to dialogue can also assist in being more deliberate about discussions in the classroom on how space can be made for dialogue. For instance, Andi discusses their psychology classes.

What the Research Says
Psychology is based around understanding the mind
It's hard to have dialogue without it becoming
very ablelistic
when you're looking to understand more personal experiences
it can make it more difficult to have that dialogue
beyond just,
this is what the research says
This is what scientists say
In the psychology department, we try to not have dialogue one way or the other
It's more just kinda shove the material into your brain and move on

While Andi's experiences in their psychology courses suggest a lack of dialogue, Julia talks about the framework of interdisciplinary courses created for her, and others, to learn and engage in dialogue.

Connect the Dots
My ethnic and gender identity studies
They're really great about environment
I just wish that we could take those frameworks
and be like,
I know that you're a different discipline
but I want you to watch the way that she teaches

Definitely depends on the class, especially depends on the discipline

I mean, obviously in my ethnic gender identities

Great job of doing dialogue

It's very much like based on that

Sociology and biology of Sex and Gender

That's a really good dialogue class

We had a lot of biology students,

very science-based, very research-based

And we had a lot of sociology students

who were like, okay, but, you know,

identity wise

Because of those Interdisciplinary Studies courses

What I enjoyed the most was then taking my interdisciplinary stuff

and using that information throughout other classes

I think that's what really helped me connect those dots

Like Julia, other participants mentioned their interdisciplinary courses as a space for

critical dialogue. Similar to interdisciplinary courses, honors courses are cross disciplinary.

Many participants discussed their honors courses as spaces for dialogue and conscientização.

Sawyer compares her honors courses to her mass communication course.

<u>Sitting in Silence</u>

When you're in honors classes and everything,

the idea to look at other perspectives is ingrained within you

There's a big difference between honors classes and non-honors classes

So like in honors seminar

everybody's pretty engaged

almost everybody speaks

There isn't a whole lot of people sitting in silence

But in mass communication

I took last semester

That was a lot of silence

The capacity for Honors courses and Interdisciplinary Studies courses to work across disciplines, as well as the framework to these courses being conducive to deliberative dialogue within classroom environments, place them in a unique position to build more intentional spaces for dialogue, conscientização, and students to be positioned as producers of knowledge.

This cluster of poems has explored the ways participants have experienced critical pedagogy in the classroom. These stories bring further understanding to how critical pedagogy can help build mutual learning environments and space for critical deliberate dialogue. Participants shared both positive experiences with critical pedagogy components as well as negative experiences. As professors are co-constructing their classrooms utilizing a critical pedagogy framework, participants' stories can help offer examples of effective techniques and potentially harmful actions.

Cluster 2: Conflict

Critical dialogue often requires conflict. In this next cluster of poems, I explore students' experiences with conflict and understanding of conflict as good, bad, or neutral. Through these poems, participants' experiences suggest the need to incorporate learning and practice of good conflict to engage in authentic critical dialogue. For Lemon, participation in conflict is dependent on others also engaging in conflict.

<u>The Only Person</u>

I don't want to feel

like

I'm going to be

the only person

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creating

the conflict

For Grace, conflict is difficult because it goes against her tendency to keep the peace. During her interview, Grace discussed her experiences as a child in a home where harmony was important to avoiding bad conflict. She shared that these experiences still show up in how she still avoids conflict.

<u>At All Costs</u>
I like to keep the peace
I love peace
I love harmony
I don't like anything super intense
I don't like argument
Or conflict
Yeah
I just don't like it

I hate conflict
Hate conflict, right?
So much that I avoid it at all costs

Participants expressed their reluctancy to engage in conflict for multiple reasons tied to environment, the predicted reaction from their peers, and the negative connotations they have had with conflict. As Lemon and Grace articulated, this reluctancy often relates to what tension might be created by engaging in conflict.

Good Conflict

Creating space for critical dialogue requires students to lean into good conflict in a way that is productive. By reflecting on the concept of good conflict, and demonstrating good conflict, students may be able to engage with good conflict easier. Participants discuss

parameters that they felt could aid in building skills around good conflict as well as the need for good conflict skills to be built into the classroom.

Grace, whose poem in the last section expresses her desire to keep harmony, talks about her intentionality around keeping an open mind and hearing the other person.

I Heard You

You need to open a conversation

Be willing to listen

Regardless of whether I agree or disagree

I always start with acknowledging what they say

Okay, I heard what you said

I understand why you feel the way you do

I think the best approach is to have an open mind

I think it can help a lot

with the person that has a different point of view than you

Grace spoke a lot about her focus on hearing the other person, or other people, in the conversation and understanding where they're coming from. Julia takes this concept a step further and discusses her tactic to name out loud that she is not attacking the other person.

New Concept

This is a conversation

A respectful conversation

I need to make sure that they understand that

I'm not attacking them

Even if they were attacking me

This is chill

It's fine

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It's pretty new concept to have good conflict

especially in academic areas

        Julia mentions good conflict as a new concept within academic spaces. Micah continues

this exploration of good conflict within the classroom.

<u>Designed for That</u>

I think

even from an early age

it's important to teach conflict

that it's okay to have conflict

and how to do it healthily

I kinda wish that we did more conflictual discussions in class

I don't know that a whole bunch of my classes are designed for that

Presenting over hard topics and having the hard conversations in classrooms is really important

There's also ways of handling conflict without being confrontational

That's also a really important distinction

to make

when you're trying to handle situations

so then you're not feeling

really uncomfortable

        Micah mentions the lack of classes that incorporate good conflict. When looking at

classroom design, and classroom activities, integrating space for practicing good conflict can

assist students in practicing critical dialogue.

        This cluster examines participants' experiences with conflict and good conflict. These

poems present ways participants engage with good conflict and their discomfort with conflict. By

modeling good conflict to students and creating spaces for them to engage in conflict more

safely, more opportunities are created for students to engage with critical deliberate dialogue.

Cluster 3: The Role of the Individual

Constructing a classroom environment and leading the classroom as a professor are vital components for applying critical pedagogy. However, the students also play a role in the impact of critical pedagogy. The following cluster of poems investigates how the participants view themselves being active in the process of learning, listening, and critical thought. These poems explore the effect individual action, social identities, and families have on participants' development of civic identities and civic engagement.

Social Identities

Participants focused a significant amount of time in interviews and focus groups discussing their social identities and how these identities affect their ability to be seen and feel connected, both in the classroom and at the institution. As students described their civic identities and their connection to communities, a major theme that emerged was the understanding and acceptance of their social identities. Below, Marisol expresses her frustration with misunderstandings about her identity as a South American international student.

Doesn't Include Everyone

People tend to connect the Hispanic identity to Mexican
or some countries from Central America a lot
Which means
Oh you're Hispanic. You must like burritos, tacos, enchiladas

Those are some of the assumptions that exist
And just general culture
like we all like the same kind of music
Or we all want the green card
It's just some assumptions they have

When they say

when they call something Hispanic or Latine

But it's really more just focused on Mexico and those countries

So it doesn't include everyone

or it's just more focused on those who were born here

and have the heritage

which is also like their identity

but it's not mine

Marisol describes her difficulty with assumptions around her Latina and international identities. A conflict is created between what is perceived to be Latine and how Marisol understands her identities. The perceived conflict between identities is also evident in stories that Sawyer shared around her being a Christian and a lesbian.

<u>Those Two Exist at the Same Time</u>

I identify as lesbian

So it makes it kind of

makes it harder

People will be like,

I'll casually mentioned it

and they're like,

oh really

you wear a cross necklace

but yes,

those two exist at the same time

So I don't really mention it

I don't feel the need to

Lemon touches on another conflict with their social identities. For them, the conflict lies in the acceptance of their identities, and even the acknowledgement that their nonbinary identity exists.

<u>Who I Am as a Person</u>
My identity goes against their moral grounds
which makes it harder
I don't even want to call it a debate
because at that point,
I feel like I've now put my identity in this
abstract universe
where like I can debate with you that
who I am as a person
Is something that I just so happen to like
stumble upon

It's like the fact that
my existence
just like
is unmoral
to you
is like
well
then you can just not say anything
at all
to me
about it

While participants expressed concerns with how their own social identities affected their ability to engage in dialogue, social identities of others were also a concern with participants. In the cluster of poems about the classroom, Lemon described their difficulty in learning about their

Black culture from a cisgender white straight man. Other participants, including Andi and Julia,

also reflected on how their own identities, as well as the identities of others in the classroom,

affect their ability to openly learn from their peers and professors. Both Andi and Julia mention

actions taken by individuals as contributing factors in their openness and their desire to remain

open despite exclusionary actions. Andi states,

Cancel Level

I tend to make judgments on people or judgments about people
based on what they talk about when they introduce themselves
Someone saying something
cancel level

Sometimes I have my very strong opinions
but it's not always something that I wish to discuss
I try to be very open

Julia adds to the discussion of remaining open, saying,

I've Been Trying

I will admit that I do have
like a prejudice
like when men argue with me
specifically, like men who are like
Oh I don't do the pronoun game
Then when they speak
I very much have a hard time being open-minded
and being like
you might have a point that makes sense

As opposed to
someone who's not a cisgender white man

I understand that about myself

I've been trying

Especially through my college experience

To be more open and more inviting

and try to keep those conversations open

Because if I just shut down

No progress is being made

No need to be like outright confrontational

unless it's very clearly,

like, you know,

denying someone's existence

       While Julia and Andi both express interest in remaining open, they both describe difficulty doing this with people who have displayed exclusionary practices, especially when these acts deny someone's existence. It is important to acknowledge the harm that can be done when entering into critical dialogue, specifically for those with historically excluded identities (Linder et al., 2020). The danger of harm within critical pedagogy was discussed in Chapter two. I will explore this in more detail in the cluster of poems around barriers.

Individual Action

       Each participant in this study was a member of at least one student organization, institutional organization, and/or part of a protest at the institution. While each of the participants expressed interest in making change through these different activities and organizations, many of them also discussed difficulty in finding productive ways to participate in making change. The following collection consists of three poems from participants discussing this frustration. One participant, when describing this feeling, uses the word "powerless."

       Julia focuses on the classroom environment and her uncertainty about what role she should play in addressing harm being done.

The Whole Purpose

It's kind of like pros and cons

of should I engage this?

Because the pro is also I'm making sure that everyone else understands

That that's not okay

But also now we're getting off track

Now we're not learning

and that's the whole purpose

of why we're here

Julia's experiences relate to the earlier clusters of this chapter. It is important to consider what role the professor plays in encouraging students' engagement. The professor could have addressed the issue themselves or constructed an environment to encourage Julia to speak up and address harmful incidents.

For Sawyer, the harmful incident she wanted to address was the termination of faculty members at the institution. Sawyer engaged in protests in an attempt to change the decisions made.

Any Difference at All

My main motivation was I was just upset

So I was like this is my chance to show that I'm upset

I didn't think it was going to make a difference

but maybe

Students are here

maybe this will make a difference

Part of it was like showing respect

for the teachers who did lose their jobs

Like we are for you

We're here for you

We understand

I am happy that I participated
but I am not sure that it did anything
to change
the decision
because I mean,
honestly,
there decision was already made
and I don't think anything would change it

I don't think it made a big difference
or any difference at all
I think it did show the staff that their students care
about them

Sawyer's experience of being upset and feeling that protests did not make a difference are similar to other participants in this study. In a later cluster on barriers, there will be more poems centering the actions taken by the institution, the protests by students, and the feelings of lack of access to people in power to change the decisions made. Like Sawyer, Micah also discusses her desire to engage in activism, but her uncertainty on how to effectively make change.

Feels Really Powerless
It's hard to know what to do
In terms of activism
It feels really
It feels really powerless
A lot of times
It does feel very stuck
like I don't feel like I often know what to do

Micah, Sawyer, and Julia all express interest in making change. However, they also all articulate lack of clarity on how to make the change they desire. Praxis is both reflection and action. Creating space for dialogue and conscientização is a segment of critical pedagogy. However, without giving students avenues to put these reflections into action, students cannot participate in praxis of social justice and critical pedagogy.

Family

One space all participants discussed entering in to dialogue in an attempt to make change was with their families. All seven participants expressed difficulty engaging in good conflict with their families, but also expressed a desire to engage in more dialogue. Through participants' stories of these difficulties, a group poem was created.

I don't talk to my family a ton about my own difficult conversations
I see my friends as closer than a majority of my family
I feel like it goes back to where I come from

There's no space for discussion you just have to stick to the rules
Growing up I was very good at being very quiet and not having an opinion
which made me very good at not taking someone else's opinion to heart

While family can be a place to build good conflict skills, for participants, they were environments of difficulty having critical dialogue. Each participant had members of their family with whom they were more willing to engage in dialogue. Mostly, these were family members who did not have direct power over them. Many of the participants are also first-generation college students. Those participants also expressed a barrier in critical dialogue based on their families not having exposure to similar discussions and knowledge.

Critical pedagogy, and Freire's concepts of dialogue and conscientização, recognizes the significant role students play in their own learning journey. This cluster of poems examined how

participants see themselves as being a part of their own development. These poems have presented participants' stories in reference to their own actions, their social identities, and their families' influences on their civic identities and civic engagement development.

Cluster 4: Collective Influence

The fourth major theme that emerged was around how the collective influences the experiences of individuals. The search for community, sharing our stories and honoring our voices, and creating space for people to exist within their social identities and find community, were all discussed as components to conscientização and creating social change. Building community and participating in storytelling are two ways to assist students in moving from reflection to praxis (Jobin-Leeds & AgitArte, 2016).

Community

Andi talks about their experience finding community as a transfer student from a community college.

<u>Where You Fit</u>
Having moved in as a transfer student
I feel like there's a bit of a different shift
You're still trying to figure out where you fit

As Andi discussed finding community, they shared that only having two years at the university, and being placed immediately into upper-level courses, became barriers to finding community. Even as part of the honors college, they found it difficult to find connections as most of the other juniors and seniors had already formed connections before Andi arrived at the institution.

Finding a community can also be difficult when there are distinct differences within a larger community. For instance, Marisol describes her experience searching for community within the Hispanic community as an international student from South America.

It's Just Kinda Confusing

I'm not Mexican
I'm not part of those countries
I don't have what they call heritage here either
I'm just an international student
who came straight from Latin America
I don't find my place here
because when they call something Hispanic or Latino
it's not really something that I could identity with a lot

Sometimes you do get lost when it's not really like
You can't really identify with
you do but you really don't
So it's just kinda confusing
So I really haven't been able to get into community

While Marisol shares some similar experiences to others within the Hispanic and Latine communities on campus, her experiences are distinct. Her stories and identities differ from much of the Hispanic and Latine communities present at the institution. Marisol's experiences illustrate the importance of acknowledging the nuances within identity-based communities as well as the differing needs that may exist within those nuances.

Lemon talks about their social identities and how they were able to find a community that they felt supports them wholly, as they are. For Lemon, the institution made concerted efforts to support them and encourage them to be a part of the larger student body.

Just As You Are

I definitely feel like I'm part of the student body

like how everything is structured towards students

and how active the university tries to reach out to students

about going to things

like

hey, you're a student, we want you to be involved on campus,

just as you are

*just as much as you are in your own academic journe*y

I'm starting to try to do more

Becoming more a part of the student resource groups

Like Black Student Union and P.R.I.D.E.

I feel like those are helpful in acclimation

and wanting to find my own smaller, tight-knit communities

here on campus

Sawyer reflects on finding community at the protests against the institution's decision to terminate a number of faculty members. Sawyer discusses how coming together for a collective cause created community across students, staff, faculty, and community members.

We Did Have Community

I feel like in that moment, we did have a community

because we weren't all just students

it was people from the community

from [the city] who were like

That is not okay

This needs to change

I think it did show the staff that their students care about them

As presented in chapter one, community engagement is a component of identity-based student activism. Community is linked to civic engagement and social justice. Community is an

important piece of student development as well. Examining the ways these participants have found community, or had difficulty finding it, can assist in understanding how intentional activities and education can aid students in finding community at institutions.

Storytelling

Storytelling is a significant element of social justice movements. Stories help us build a bridge between sociological and abstract experiences and individual and personal lived experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Stories provide possibility models (Bell, 2020). Storytelling is a vital component of dialogue in the classroom, creating community, and building empathy among students with different experiences. Participants discuss the importance of storytelling in their own learning, and in their ability to share their own experiences and identities.

Grace, whose previous poem examined how to see another person's point of view, talks about how lack of exposure can affect students' lack of understanding.

Exposure
Because of the places they come from
they might have literally just never been exposed
So you need to expose it to them
in a way that's not condescending

When discussing anti-LGBTQ+ laws being passed in their state and other states, Andi spoke about the importance of sharing their story in combating these laws.

Our Own Stories
We have to be comfortable with our own stories
Working through
And accepting my own story
And whatever path I was on

The greatest act of defiance that we can have

is to simply be ourselves

And keep being ourselves

to be out there

to let ourselves

be known

in safe ways

Just trying to live

Andi's poem illustrates the significance of sharing stories in acts of identity-based

activism. Marisol also talks about the importance of sharing stories in creating change on an

interpersonal level.

Stories Are Powerful

I feel like stories are powerful

As we share stories

And people listen to them

they can realize

having spaces

where people can share their stories

because stories are powerful

how can we get these stories to others

to that person who needs to hear this

and to listen to it

Hopefully

after hearing the story

listening

listening to this person

I'm seeing something I didn't see before

Micah reiterates the impact stories have on increasing understanding of those telling their stories as well as those listening to them.

<u>Hearing Stories</u>

Hearing other people's stories
and hearing other people's experiences
how other people feel about things
It helped me understand what I believe

While participants expressed the influence storytelling can have on beliefs and understanding of other people's experiences (Adams, et al., 2016), two participants talked about specific events related to storytelling. Marisol told a story about her friend whom she, at one point, referred to as a No Sabo Kid. Micah reflected on her experience taking part in a musical at the institution that received pushback based on what protestors felt was a racist portrayal of a Native American princess.

Marisol discusses how her culture influenced the way she discussed her friend's experience of being a Hispanic person who did not speak Spanish. She recalls how listening to stories through social media helped her better understand the impact of her words.

<u>No Sabo Kids</u>

I feel like I've opened myself more since I came here

Something that I've been learning with the Honors College is
we all have multiple interpretations
about situations
and that can change a lot of things

I just always was like
it's a joke
Don't worry

It's just a joke

This person was like
Yeah, but I would really like to learn Spanish
but it wasn't my decision and everything

It's not like we're trying to harm you
Just how we call people who are like that
the No Sabo kid term

Then I started to watch videos about it
and learn
I started watching TikTok
people who are being called this
Then I started thinking that my friend
It wasn't really their decision
At the end
They're feeling represented by the Hispanic and Latino culture in some way

After that reflection
I was like Okay I went to my friend
I was like
Hey sorry, I know it affected you
It's just something we say
you don't speak Spanish
then we call them No Sabo kid

But now I understand what it means
This term means to you
from your contexts, from your point of view
From our point of view,

this term like never really intended to harm

I didn't even know what it really meant

When I really did the research and what I was saying

I was like, okay, I won't use that anymore

I wasn't being a good friend if I would just ignore that

During her interviews, Micah spoke a lot about her experience taking part in a musical that received a lot of attention during her first semester at the institution. In the next cluster of poems, when discussing harm done both by the institution and by peers, more of Micah's experiences will be examined. Many protesters of the musical made suggestions to cut out the problematic scene altogether. The following poem, though, illustrates Micah's concern with deleting or censoring stories.

<u>We Never Talk About It</u>

That worries me

because that's how it starts

You start taking out small pieces of information

Eventually we don't talk about that at all

Right?

History is going to repeat itself

we have to keep mentioning and talking about these things

Because if we just stop

if we're not allowed to talk about them

Or if you do

We're going to brand you as a racist

This cycle continues

Hopefully when there is something controversial or hard

instead of releasing an article

It could have been a conversation

it could have been used for change

used for good

and coming into it with understanding

But if we just completely stop talking about that

and we're like

oh, well,

it doesn't matter

We never talk about it

It's just going to keep happening

there needs to just be a structured conversation

We react out of emotions and from a good place

usually

I try to believe that

all of this was well-intentioned and misguided

That happens sometimes

Definitely having the conversation

I think is probably

the most important thing

and some people are not willing to have that conversation

Some people are not ready to have that conversation

Meeting people where they're at too

You can't go up to somebody who is truly a racist

And say *Stop being racist*

So it's going to have to be small pieces

I guess also believing people are capable of change

If you are predetermined that this person is going to stay this way

You're not going to get anywhere

Micah's experience with the musical is an example of the dangers of lack of dialogue. Activism without reflection can be harmful as will be discussed in an upcoming section about activists' harm. Having critical dialogue incorporates storytelling and community.

Space

In order to create an environment that fosters critical dialogue, space must also be given. Physical space is important, but so is metaphorical space for people to feel accepted and seen. The following poems investigate both types of spaces. A key finding in these poems is that students inhabit multiple spaces both within the institution and within the larger community. Understanding how to influence inclusive spaces outside of the institution may directly impact students' experiences of acceptance and inclusion.

Andi reflects on their experience in the city within which the institution resides, and the feelings they and their friend experienced in that space.

<u>Targeted Identities</u>

Growing up with trauma

You get really good at identifying safe spaces

and who is not as safe

We walked in and immediately we saw

they had a blue stripe flag

up on their wall

We just had to turn around

and leave because

they didn't feel safe

for either one of us

She's Black

I'm Queer

When you're growing up with potentially targeted identities

You get really good at recognizing where your safe spaces are

As was discussed in the first cluster of poems, the classroom environment is an important component of creating space for dialogue. Julia considers how her ethnic gender studies professor created a respectful space for learning and supporting students as they sit in the space of their learning edge.

<u>The Key Is Respect</u>

She introduces it as this is a safe space

I know that some of you may be uncomfortable

with the idea of a safe space

that might not be part of your repertoire

a part of your ideas of university

and what we should be discussing right now

But that's what this is

When we do talk about stuff

there are gonna be people that have different opinions from you

that's okay

If you hear an opinion that doesn't match up with yours

it may not necessarily be wrong

you are in this safe space

in this respectful space

you are more than welcome to argue your point

respectfully

I will be here

I read all the discussion boards

I watch all the videos

I promise, I'm back here

I'm watching and I will be commenting as well,

stepping up.

The key thing is to be respectful

  The last poem in this section is a group poem focused on creating metaphorical space for

themselves and others. This poem connects space to empathy and openness which directly links

space to the collective support of community in creating social change and creating inclusive

environments.

<u>Create Space</u>

I try to be willing to listen and try to commiserate or have empathy for the situation

> *When I create space for other people*
> *I try to find space of shared empathy*

> > *Taking your own space*
> > *Holding that space for people*

> > > *The openness and that space is really important*

  Collective influences are significant pieces to individual experiences with critical

pedagogy. To help students grow in their conscientização and build praxis, it is important for

them to find community and space. To honor voices in their praxis, it is essential they share their

stories and are in spaces where they can listen to others' stories.

Cluster 5: Barriers

  The last cluster of poems focuses on barriers to civic engagement and critical pedagogy

including dialogue, praxis, conscientização, and centering humanity. These barriers include

access, safety, institutional harm, activists' harm, and technology. Access directly relates to

redistribution of power. Safety connects to the concept of centering humanity. Institutional harm

is an example of harm being done by those in power. Activists' harm is related to naïve activism. All these barriers are associated with risks discussed in the mindfulness section of chapter two. These barriers will be discussed in the following sections with the intent to affect future research as well as aid educators in intentionally designing more space for critical pedagogy in praxis.

Access

The barrier that was mentioned most during interviews and focus groups was access. I have broken down access into four sections. These sections include lack of access to administrators, to classrooms, to collective community agreements, and to shared cultural understandings. These access points become barriers to students accessing understanding as well as accessing their power to make change. Andi speaks about the overall system where these barriers exist and the inability to progress without working within systems.

Failing Us

The system is obviously failing us
But we have to continue to use the system
until it completely falls apart
Unfortunately

The following sections will investigate these points of lack of access and how participants navigate these barriers.

Access to Administrators

As was discussed in the storytelling section, hearing others' experiences help create empathy and bridge gaps between systems and individuals. While administrators hold power over policies, procedures, and structures within the institution, they often do not have direct contact with many students. Even when students want to speak with administrators about their thoughts and their experiences, they do not always have a space to have that dialogue. To prevent students from feeling the need to engage in protests in order to be heard, there must be avenues

for students to engage in dialogue with administrators. Marisol discusses her lack of awareness

of resources until she began serving on the Associated Student Government. She also talks about

the need to have students at the table when decisions are being made that directly affect them.

<u>At the Table</u>

I didn't know the way I wasn't fully aware of resources on campus

I don't think I would have gone to administrators

I think I've gotten lucky to know more administrators and people

Just for my position

where I'm at

I've gotten to know all these things are available

now I have more places to go

If a policy is being passed

It is very important to just think about who is affecting that too

maybe invite some of those people to the table

to the conversation

Invite more students to the table

Sawyer reflects on the actions she took after the decision to terminate faculty came down

from the administrators. She discusses her desire to talk with people in power but her lack of

access to them.

<u>An Appropriate Avenue</u>

As far as talking to people who could actually influence it

I'm not sure if there is an appropriate avenue

If I walked up to like [VP of Student Success]

just showed up in her office

and started talking to her

like we know each other

She would be like

what do you want

I also don't know what your name is

As far as talking to people

who could actually influence things

I'm not sure if there is an appropriate avenue

These stories suggest the need for intentional transparent ways for students to communicate with administrators and others who hold power. Without these clearly defined avenues for dialogue, the probability of institutional harm occurring increases.

Access to Learning in Classrooms

Multiple participants discussed the impact their honors courses and interdisciplinary studies courses have had on their learning as well as how they have served as spaces for dialogue. Currently, the institution has one faculty member teaching core honors courses, and one faculty member teaching core interdisciplinary studies as well as ethnic and gender studies courses. Limited staffing limits the availability of courses within these disciplines. For example, an ethnic and gender studies course meets a general education requirement. This course fills up within the first two days of enrollment opening. With staggered enrollment based on classifications of students, students who are in their first or second year at the institution often are unable to get enrolled in the course. Julia speaks about this experience.

I Have Been Trying

I wish there was a way to be like

everyone has to take at least one

Interdisciplinary course

One of the options

for general education requirements

is the issues in ethnic gender studies

And I know

like from online forums and boards

and even like just talking to students

they're like

I have been trying to get into that class for three years

Like I want to take that class

Students who want to engage in dialogue face a barrier in attempting to get into courses that focus on dialogue.

Access to Collective Community Agreements

The first cluster of poems included discussion on community agreements and their influence on classroom environments. When speaking with participants, they spoke about the lack of shared community agreements as a barrier in engaging in dialogue. These experiences were both inside and outside of the classroom. To create space for authentic critical dialogue, having clear expectations and agreements on how those involved will engage with each other can be impactful. Sawyer discusses a class that was not set up for dialogue and how this affected her when something harmful was said in the classroom.

Just Doing Notes

I have strong opinions about

strong opposite opinions about that

But that wasn't the place to call it out

Like we were just doing notes

It was just a lecture

We weren't having a discussion

We weren't having a debate

He just felt the need to say it at the point

It's like

If I engaged in conflict with him

it'd be bad conflict

Community guidelines help students understand what is acceptable within the classroom while also understanding what support the professor will provide (Love & Guthrie, 1999). They also create a mutual agreement between all learners in the classroom as to how they will engage with each other. However, without these guidelines, it can be difficult to navigate specific topics and trust the others involved will be open-minded during the discussion. Grace talks about her discomfort with this type of possible conflict.

<u>Point of Conflict</u>

I think that's what people are afraid of

Yeah

It is joining in on the conflict

and then the other person isn't open-minded

Thinking that they aren't open-minded

That can just come from body language

It can also come from

if you're talking about a particular topic that is in the media

and has been a point of conflict

like a lot of bad conflict

for a lot of people

It can just feel like regardless of the person's body language

you're like,

I just don't want to get into that

Without having shared community agreements, dialogue is difficult. This barrier suggests it could be impactful for creating space for dialogue to create shared community agreements in classrooms and at institutional events focusing on dialogue.

Access to Shared Cultural Understandings

Dialogue and understood ways to engage in conversation are connected to cultures. Literature has considered how cultural competency in professors can create a more inclusive environment (Ayers et al., 2009; Darder, 1991). However, literature has not looked at how peers in the classroom being culturally competent can affect these environments. With students from different cultures, a gap in understanding can be created. Participants discussed the difficulties they had in dialogue and understanding based on language barriers, their cultural practices, and social contracts that exist within those cultures.

Marisol talks about her experiences with not understanding examples being given in classrooms specifically when those examples are centered in American culture.

Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich

When the conversation is going on something culturally based

That only people who lived here would know
me as an international student comes here
then they start talking about
I don't know, something
What's something I learned
Peanut butter and jelly sandwich
or something

While the example Marisol uses does not directly link to dialogue on difficult topics, it does speak to the feeling of not being included in the classroom. For her, this experience was one that affected her feelings of being included within the classroom environment. Marisol goes on to discuss the barrier created when wanting to contribute in class discussions. Because her first language is Spanish, she sometimes needs more time to think through her contribution to the conversation, but she is not always given the opportunity to add to the conversation before the professor moves on.

Small Barrier

Because since my English is not my first language

sometimes it just takes a minute for me to coordinate my ideas

Or if I have something to say

it represents a small barrier

Barriers to just like

communicate as fast as I would do normally

While Marisol's experiences are directly related to being an international student whose

first language is Spanish, Julia explains how Kansas culture directly affects the ways she has

learned to engage in conflict and dialogue.

Kansas Nice

I definitely think that the whole Kansas nice thing

has something to do with why we still don't have good conflict in classrooms

because we were all brought up in that way

To be like, well that's their opinion

Even though it completely attacks me

Like doesn't give me any sense of existence whatsoever

Everybody has their own opinions

So like we need to be nice to each other

Because that's what they say

like, oh, Midwest

Everyone's just really nice

Because we don't

we don't know how to stand up for ourselves

Participants' experiences illustrate the importance of understanding how culture can show

up in the classroom. As was explored in chapter two, deliberate dialogue is not void of context,

power dynamics, and cultural influences. Culturally competent pedagogy, which is grounded in

practices that recognize and make adjustments based on understanding of cultures and skills that are cross-cultural and multicultural (Ayers, et al., 2009), can aid in better understanding how these cultural differences may affect access to critical dialogue.

Safety

Creating space for critical dialogue requires a space where students feel safe to speak and share their experiences. Critical dialogue must engage students in a way that allows them to recognize the humanity of others (Freire, 2018; Lissovoy & Cook, 2020; Owen, 2016). In both the Storytelling and Space sections of this chapter, participants spoke about safe spaces in the classroom and outside of the classroom. This section presents more poems directly related to feeling safe and how these feelings of safety or lack of safety affected their ability to engage in dialogue. This feeling of safety relates directly to seeing the humanity of others and creating space for others to share their stories without fear. Andi speaks about the ways they've learned to navigate unsafe spaces and how it feels for them to be in spaces with people who do not recognize their full humanity.

<u>Because of Who I Am</u>
I've developed a really good mask
that I can kinda step behind
and project that persona of myself

You open yourself up to potential attack
very easily when discussing identities

It's a very hard thing to know how to talk about in one-on-one dialogue
Because I don't think I can agree with somebody
who says my rights aren't valid
because of who I am

While Andi discusses ways their identities directly affect their ability to have dialogue with someone who is not recognizing their humanity, Micah talks about her experiences with her friend who does not feel safe in the community based on her friend's connection to her friend's church.

<u>Safe Spaces</u>

I have a friend that goes to a more conservative church here in town
We'll go out for coffee
She's literally been like, *I can't say anything*
She's like whispering
and scared
that someone from her church is going to be there
like in any public space we're in
She doesn't feel like she has very many safe spaces.

We often will be talking just in my car
where we know no one's listening
because it's like she's scared of
anybody hearing anything

Finding spaces that offer safety can increase the ability to speak more authentically, as Micah's story illustrates. However, if those spaces are only in places that are excluded from others who can learn from these stories and experiences, they are not truly spaces for dialogue. It is important to recognize the impact students' feelings of lack of safety can create a barrier to dialogue in the classroom and in identity-based student activism.

Institutional Harm

A significant component of critical pedagogy is examining power. Earlier in this section, poems were presented around the lack of access participants felt they had to administrators for dialogue. Another barrier layered on top of access to administrators is the amount of harm done

by the institution. This section considers the harm done by the institution as it relates to students' feelings of safety and belonging. As has been discussed in previous sections, feelings of safety and community directly connect to access to critical dialogue. Without examining the harm done by those in power, creating avenues for deliberate dialogue between administrators and identity-based activists will be extremely difficult.

Sawyer and Julia both talk about this experience with the termination of some faculty members and how it affected their journey at the institution. For Sawyer, being a student ambassador, who gives tours of campus to potential students and families, she found herself as a representative of the institution while also being a student participating in the protests against this decision.

<u>Stay Tuned</u>
When all the layoffs happened
I was not in support of it
I still am not

Somebody from marketing came and talked to us
basically told us what to say when people ask questions about the layoffs on a tour
She gave us a list of like general responses
and one of them was like
it was something like
great changes are happening at [this institution]
Stay tuned

I read that and it pissed me off
Frankly it pissed me off
because I was like
great, stay tuned
people just lost their jobs

I didn't want to have a full blown discussion with her

If I was too much in disagreement, I could get in trouble

I could lose my position as an ambassador

I felt like I couldn't speak out at ambassadors

But I could speak out elsewhere

I do watch what I put on Instagram

Because I know that there was somebody

On ambassadors who was asked to leave

Because of something they put on Instagram

I asked the group

well, when we do a tour, should we just start off with these answers?

Should we just clear the air?

And she was like,

Well, I don't think anybody's really paying attention to this

And I was like *Really?! Are you sure?*

Because I've heard professors telling me that

they have friends in California

who are talking about this

But I think they were just scared

To be honest

I think that marketing person and those senior administrators were kinda scared

Julia was also part of the protests. She articulated her experiences with attempting to communicate with administrators.

<u>No One Answered</u>

We talked

And we protested

and we marched

and we made petitions

and nothing happened

There wasn't any dialogue

Like no one ever answered

I feel like the administration is so busy trying to protect their decision

that they're not actually listening

They're trying to be like

We promise this is a good decision

Like you're not listening though

Now you're getting the feedback of the decision

and you should listen to that feedback

I just don't think we have an administration that does that

It's kind of a one-way street

Like we go there

And then we don't get a response.

Institutional harm can appear in many ways. While the incident with faculty terminations was an event that instigated protests on campus, participants spoke about other occurrences of institutional harm. One of these occurrences that has been discussed previously is the musical in which Micah participated. Part of Micah's experience includes communication with the person leading the Theater Department. Micah recalls the interactions with this leader.

Misled

I felt very like misled the entire time

because I had no knowledge about this character at all

until it was like we were running that song

And I was like, oh, this is not what I want to do

I brought up concerns about it from the start

and always was concerned about it

Again, I felt very misled about the whole thing

The director had threatened to pull scholarships in front of me

I had been told my costume had been

pictures of it had been sent to the tribe

and approved by them

but that was just not true

But I didn't know that

I was also, again, told that they had been speaking with the tribe

the entire time

which was not true

But I definitely felt

especially from the director

I felt like I was being lied to about the situation

Which didn't necessarily make me want to come back any faster

Micah's experience with the Theater department affected her decision to not be a part of further productions. While students often find a sense of belonging through extracurricular, and co-curricular activities, these experiences can also create a lack of sense of belonging.

Harm in the Classroom

As discussed in the first cluster of poems, the professor directly affects the feelings of an inclusive, safe environment. While some participants discussed how their connections to professors helped them engage in dialogue, it is still important for professors to hold authority in the classroom to help guide conversations and manage the dynamics in the classroom, as well as address harm in the classroom (Baecker, 1998). Participants shared stories of harm being done in the classroom both directly by the professor and by a professor not managing the classroom environment.

The first poem describes Marisol's experience with a professor making culturally racist comments in the classroom. She talks about the reactions of her peers and her own reaction as a Latina woman hearing the comments.

<u>Just Telling A Joke</u>
Then the professor was like
There is a Spanish phrase for Hispanic people

In English that is something like
Don't wait for tomorrow, what you can do today
You have something like that

Then he was like, for Hispanic people, it goes more like
what you can do today, just leave it for tomorrow
because they tend to be lazy

Now I felt like attacked for a second
Yeah, I was shocked
I was like um okay
But then, like, I didn't say anything

like I'm just going to let it pass

He was just telling a joke

But I don't know if I can do something to change it
Because it's just the way he is personally all his life
Like maybe that's a way this person sees the world
It wasn't intending any
harm
I didn't really think about what others might think
because I remember that they were

laughing

or something

One danger of creating space for dialogue is the potential for harm if an environment for deliberate dialogue is not established. The professor leading the classroom is responsible for managing power dynamics and giving students space to lean into dialogue in a way that minimizes harm. Micah discusses the positive and negative experiences she had in a classroom that challenged students to engage in good conflict but failed to give space for students to have dialogue around these conflicts. She also shares how this affected the classroom environment throughout the semester.

<u>Tangible Contention</u>

I think a debrief would have been nice

because there was one kid that was very like

on the other side every time

And you could tell that there was almost

like a tangible contention in the room

I felt like the rest of the semester people would walk in

and look at that kid

and be like

Oh that's that kid

I could tell that he was being judged

the rest of the semester

soon as we had that conversation

I think having a debrief giving people some time to explain their side

without it being like one versus ten

might've been kinda nice

The teacher was trying to play devil's advocate

but like when it's two versus ten

and there's already a power differential

It's kinda too late

Micah's story illustrates the risk involved in utilizing dialogue in the curriculum without utilizing critical pedagogy to recognize power structures and understand ways to create critical deliberate dialogue.

Activists' Harm

While harm by those in power is a concern when utilizing critical pedagogy, another risk is the possibility of naïve activism. As was discussed in chapter two, praxis requires reflection and action. Freire (2018) labels action without intentionality and reflection as naïve activism. This type of activism has the potential to do harm. This harm is often associated with a lack of seeing other people's humanity and lack of critical deliberate dialogue.

Sawyer talks about some of the actions her peers took towards a lead administrator after decisions to terminate faculty took place.

<u>Too Far</u>
Some people took it a little too far

Somebody put [his] address online

Like okay, calm down

He is still a man

He still deserves his privacy

Even if he made a bad decision,

in our opinion

He still has some rights

I think that the fact that some people took it to an extreme level

kind of took away some of the effectiveness

Even as a person who participated in protests against the decision made by administrators, Sawyer expresses her disagreement with some of the actions taken by her fellow student activists. While the previous poem focuses on activism against administrators, Micah's experience involved her fellow peers attacking her. Earlier in this cluster, Micah's poem is presented describing her experience with the Theater Department. In the following poem, Micah speaks about the harm done by her peers and how this has continued to affect her experiences and sense of belonging at the institution.

<u>Media</u>
[The school newspaper reporter] asked all of these other irrelevant questions
then didn't use any other interview material
from any other students
and only took that one question from me

Actually
the person who did the article was one of the first people I met on campus
at Playfair
we'd done like the secret handshake thing
and I had gotten to know her
then she came in,
published that article
and I was like,
Are you kidding me?

I had people that found me through YikYak
People would message me
be like
You're an awful person
You have no values
No morals

I felt really

I don't want to say attacked

but that's kinda how it felt

like everybody is upset with me

Like even now,

this semester

going in to classes

all those icebreaker activities

I was scared to introduce myself

What if these people read that article

and remember my name

and immediately have this horrible impression of me

when I feel like this is something like

that I've actively really tried to educate myself on

One noteworthy component of Micah's story is her previous relationship with the person who wrote the newspaper article about her. Micah had built a level of trust with this person through activities and discussions that she expressed made her trust this person during the interview. While the journalist may have felt she was speaking out against the musical and the character's portrayal, she did harm to Micah by the way she represented Micah's story in the media. Other students reaching out to Micah through social media also harmed Micah and negatively affected her experiences at the institution. Without a space to reflect on possible actions to make change, these students harmed a peer. They also did not engage in dialogue or protests against those in power who chose the play and "misled" Micah and other students who were part of the musical.

Technology

Technology was a theme that came up with every participant in this study. Some participants spoke about online forums as being a space they felt safer. Others expressed difficulty having dialogue with online courses, specifically asynchronous classes. Some participants talked about technology being utilized in their courses in ways that gave them some anonymity to be more authentic in their dialogue while others spoke about frustration with the tools being used such as recording posts for discussion boards instead of typing a response. This study does not focus on the online classroom specifically, or ways technology can affect dialogue and centering humanity of others. However, the impact it played in participants' experiences made it important to document as future research considers how technology creates place and space in different ways.

While discussing conflict, Micah examined why she felt she, and her peers, might not have the tools to engage in good conflict in the classroom. For her, technology played a part in this lack of opportunity to build skills around good conflict.

<u>Virtual Conflict</u>

We're such a phone generation
People prefer to do conflicts over text
They don't have to see another person's reaction
Conflict is really hard in person
I feel like people don't want to have that conversation in person

Expanding on Micah's poem, Grace talks about the difficulty in seeing another person's humanity in online forums.

<u>Losing Sight</u>

I think with online dialogue
It's really easy to lose tone

If you do engage in a tough conversation online

It's very easy to lose sight of the person

and just be so focused on your own opinions

and defending your stance

While Grace and Micah discuss some possible barriers to critical dialogue through the use of technology, Andi discusses their experiences finding a safer space for dialogue through online groups. As a queer person in the Midwest, Andi has expressed concern for their safety when discussing certain topics in the classroom and in the town in which the institution is located.

<u>Potential Attack</u>

Most of the dialogue I interact with

honestly, is online

it's something that's very hard to talk about

in non-online spaces

because it does impact so many aspects of who people are

you open yourself up to potential attack very easily

This last cluster has presented stories focused on barriers to dialogue, praxis, conscientização as well as the ability to center humanity within civic engagement and critical pedagogy. These poems examine how access, safety, harm done by institutions and activists, and technology can all be barriers. These barriers are linked to multiple components of critical pedagogy including redistribution of power, harm being done by those in power, centering humanity, and praxis.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, poems were presented formed by transcripts of interviews and focus groups with participants. These poems have highlighted the major clusters of this research study. Clusters of poems detailed participants' stories with critical pedagogy in the classroom, conflict,

individual actions, collective influence, and barriers. These findings have been presented with the intent to provide insight for educators aiming to intentionally design spaces for critical pedagogy in praxis as well as better understand what future research might be useful. By examining how mutual learning environments have been created, and techniques for creating these environments, this research provides strategies and possibility models for educators to use in their classrooms. These poems investigated how critical pedagogy in the classroom, conflict, individual actions and identities, collective influence and barriers affect students' civic identity development, civic engagement, and connection to dialogue within their identity-based activism. The next chapter will detail connections between these findings and critical pedagogy framework, consider the significance of these findings, and offer suggestions for future inquiries.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions, Interpretations, Recommendations

This chapter presents an overall discussion of the study, implications, and recommendations based on the research results. Sections of Chapter 5 include: (a) interpretations of findings, (b) significance of the study, (c) implications for practice, (d) recommendations for future research, (e) limitations of the study, and (f) conclusion.

The purpose of this research is to explore students' experiences and development of civic identities while investigating the role of dialogue in the classroom in this development at a Midwestern regional state institution through a lens of humanity as defined by Freire. This research was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do college students construct civic identities?

2. How do college students participate in civic engagement?

3. In what ways do identity-based student activists engage with Freire's concepts of dialogue and humanity?

Results related to these research questions are intertwined with one another, which is common in qualitative research (Bhattacharya, 2017). One experience shared by a participant can give insight into all three research questions. As is an intention of this study, results will be examined in a way that allows complexities and nuances in how they connect to the three research questions above.

Participants shared stories about ways they engaged in student activism on campus as well as participated in other ways of being change agents through their local communities. These included phone banks, protests, sitting on identity panels, and speaking up in the classroom. Many of the participants are also involved in student organizations on campus which has been a

space for them to construct their civic identities. However, they also shared that they struggled to find ways to participate in civic engagement.

Each participant was enrolled in at least one course with a curriculum that utilizes social justice pedagogy as illustrated through the syllabus, course description, and learning activities employed. All participants shared experiences in those courses. These experiences included their understanding of the role the professor played in setting up expectations and creating safe space for dialogue, the role the classroom environment played, and experiences in classrooms where they did not feel comfortable engaging in critical dialogue. While participants spoke about learning about concepts of dialogue in their classrooms, many of them expressed discomfort with engaging in dialogue outside of the classroom as well as in classrooms where the environment for dialogue was not already established. Some of this discomfort was linked to fears of how the other people engaging in dialogue with them would react or what rules of engagement they may not follow. The other barrier to participants engaging in dialogue outside of the classroom was a lack of access to spaces or people in power for dialogue.

Interpretation of Findings

The four main takeaways of this study include: (1) constructing mutual learning environments require clear expectations, trust, cultural competency, and universal design; (2) critical deliberate dialogue includes individual action and reflection as well as collective space and community, and must recognize the effect social identities and privilege play; (3) harm done by individuals and institutions must be addressed in order to create space for critical deliberate dialogue; (4) access to people in power, possibility models of good conflict, and space to engage in critical deliberate dialogue safely is imperative to making collective change. These takeaways will be explored in this section to summarize the findings of this study.

Constructing Mutual Learning Environments

The first takeaway from this study is that framing the classroom environment, setting expectations, building trust and constructing an environment informed by cultural competency and universal design are crucial to constructing mutual learning environments. One of Freire's (1972/2018) components of dialogue was that it cannot be an exchange of ideas to be "consumed". Mutual learning environments create space for all learners to be knowledge producers (Adamian & Jayakumar, 2018: Convertino, 2016; Freire, 2005). Participants shared experiences of being in classrooms where it was clear dialogue would be part of the classroom learning. In these classrooms, they referred to having a clear understanding of what was expected of them. There was also a clear understanding as to how the professor would manage these conversations. Professors shared examples of how they had handled situations in the past, and showed up when tension arose in the classroom. These discussions and actions built trust with participants and helped them feel safer to engage in difficult conversations.

Participants spoke about mutual learning environments feeling open, non-judgmental, and respectful. When examining those feelings, they often described incidents that build trust in their peers and professor in being respectful during difficult conversations. These results suggest activities and discussions that build trust can directly affect the construction of mutual learning environments.

While critical pedagogy can be utilized as a framework in creating mutual learning environments, these results challenge this framework to expand into considerations of cultural competency and universal design. Participants shared their inability, sometimes, to engage in dialogue because of cultural differences or lack of understanding of examples given that were based in American traditions. A participant also shared her experience with clear power

structures in her country and understanding how these structures existed differently in her classes here in America. An autistic participant shared their difficulty engaging in material without having access to the material ahead of class. Barriers to mutual learning environments could be decreased if the course design incorporates cultural competency and universal design.

Critical Deliberate Dialogue

Critical deliberate dialogue requires reflective practices in order to be truly critical. As a reminder, the other four components of Freire's (1972/2018) dialogue are:

1. it cannot occur if some are denying others the right to speak or be heard;

2. it unites reflection and action to transform and humanize the world;

3. they also need to have a commitment to others;

4. it must come from a place of love.

These components connect to the results through participants' experiences, as is illustrated in the found poems presented in chapter four.

Dialogue cannot deny others their right to speak or be heard (Freire, 1972/2018). Deliberate dialogue gives space for students to find their voices while also being critical about whose voices may be being silenced (Murti, 2010). In order to participate in critical deliberate dialogue in a mutual learning environment, it is imperative that classroom guidelines and framework name the effects social identities and privilege have on learners' ability to engage in this dialogue. One participant shared her experience about her culture being misunderstood or conflated with other identities. Another spoke about assumptions made concerning two of her social identities conflicting with each other. Two participants discussed how difficult it is for them to engage in dialogue when they felt like their social identities, and moreover their humanity, was not being recognized. A component of critical deliberate dialogue is restructuring

power dynamics in the mutual learning environment in order to create space for silenced voices to speak and be heard (Fanon, 2008; Kuecker, 2010; Linder et al., 2020; McArthur, 2010). These findings expand current literature as it links power redistribution to cultural competency and how social identities influence power structures and the ability to redistribute this power across students with privileged and oppressed identities.

Dialogue unites reflection and action to transform and humanize the world (Freire, 1972/2018). Participants shared ways in which they have reflected on their own biases and experiences to better engage in dialogue. These experiences include examining feelings about the social identities of others with whom they were engaging in dialogue, analyzing feelings of being taught about their social identities by someone who did not share those identities, and seeking out stories to help them better understand others' points of view.

Those engaging in dialogue must have a commitment to others while dialogue itself must come from a place of love (Freire, 1972/2018). Sections of chapter four address collective influence and community and how they relate to dialogue. Participants discussed ways they found places they fit and community. They shared stories of finding community through social identities, through protests, and through student organizations. Another participant discussed their difficulty finding community as a transfer student. This research suggests there is a need to create more space intentionally structured to build community and encourage students to seek understanding through a place of love.

Addressing Harm

Coming from a place of love also requires institutions and individuals to address the harm they have committed. Harm cannot be resolved if it is not acknowledged, and actions aren't taken to restore trust. Without trust, students will have difficulty continuing to engage in critical

deliberate dialogue as they do not trust it will make a difference, as was illustrated in "No One Answered" and "Any Difference at All". Participants shared stories of professors making racist jokes in the classroom, structuring difficult conversations in the classroom without guidance through these conversations, institutional representatives minimizing the impact of an incident about which students were protesting, and an institution employee misleading a student concerning a play with what students felt was a racist portrayal. All these stories shared by participants examined the harm done. None of them mentioned any ways these harms were addressed.

When discussing harm done by their peers, one participant reflected on how the school newspaper slanted the story they published about the play with the racist portrayal and also used a relationship with the actress to get an interview with her. Another reflected on the actions taken by her peers when protesting the institution's decision that led to the termination of faculty members. The participant argued that personally attacking and publishing personal information about the President of the institution actually harmed the student activists' goal of engaging in conversation around the institution's actions. Through engaging students in reflection as part of their praxis, some of this harm may have been able to be prevented.

Access

The last key finding from this study concerns access. This includes access to institutional leadership, possibility models of good conflict, and safer spaces to engage in critical deliberate dialogue. Participants spent a significant amount of time discussing their feelings of frustration and powerlessness when it came to how to make change. Specifically, they expressed confusion on how to engage in dialogue with people in positions of power at the institution. These experiences were associated with protests, but also with an overall lack of access to discussions

around concerns they had. Along with this lack of access to institutional leadership, they also shared their fear of expressing conflictual opinions in the classroom and with their peers. Even in classrooms utilizing a framework of critical pedagogy, participants considered the ways culture and lack of feeling safe affected their ability to engage in dialogue. Part of this fear, as was expressed by participants, came from the lack of understanding on how to engage in good conflict. Without models of what good conflict can look like, participants worried about creating conflict, as well as if their peers had the skills to engage in good conflict. Students need to have clear models of good conflict as well as opportunities to build these skills. They also need clearly defined places and processes to engage in good conflict, and dialogue, with institutional leadership and other individuals who hold power within the institutional system, to make change in a constructive and dialogical way.

Significance of the Study

Several findings from this study emerged that connect to existing relevant literature. These results are in conversation with literature presented in chapter two regarding how storytelling and voice connects to classroom environments and student praxis. This study can help in understanding how curriculum and mutual learning environments affect students' reflections and actions within their activism.

Voice and Storytelling

Storytelling provides possibility models while also building bridges across differences (Bell, 2020; Jobin-Leeds & AgitArte, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Participants shared experiences of hearing another person's story and finding stories through social media changed their perspective on a subject. This research also engaged in storytelling through the interview process and through the (re)presentation of stories through found poems. Focusing on

participants' voices and documenting their stories built upon the critical pedagogy that has been used for this study and centered their humanity as much as possible. Creating space for this process was important in this study but is also important in praxis. "The use of performance, storytelling, and critical voice… represents the development of critical pedagogy of humanism (pedagogy rooted in the students' lived experiences)" (Jenkins et al., 2017, p. 54). This study aids in understanding the importance of storytelling in the classroom, and in activist spaces, but also as part of research methods when studying social justice praxis.

The poem "Exposure" examines how lack of exposure to different ways of thinking may affect a person's understanding of harmful words and how they may affect others. Conversely, "Our Own Stories" talks about the power of sharing our stories and being visible even when laws are being passed against those identities. Giving students spaces to tell their stories can assist them in seeing themselves as change agents (Adamian & Jayakumar, 2018). Participants sharing their experiences with hearing others' stories and finding safer spaces to ask questions and learn about others' stories, connect directly with social justice courses focused on praxis through storytelling and intergroup dialogue (Adams et al., 2016; Storms, 2012).

The results of this study show the direct connection between storytelling, honoring authentic voices, and students building their praxis. "A storytelling discourse observes relationships between larger systems and individuals" (Wright, 2010, p. 181). By being able to reflect on their own stories, hearing others' stories, and finding space to create change through those stories, they are developing a praxis of activism.

Constructing Classroom Environment

Participants for this study were selected through a process that included reaching out to students who had been enrolled in one or more courses that demonstrated use of social justice

pedagogy through the syllabus, course description, and learning activities employed. The syllabus begins to construct the classroom environment from the start of the course (Sulik & Keys, 2013). Part of this construction includes clearly defining authority and power structures and using language, tone, and pronouns such as "we" and "us" to establish a mutual learning environment (Baecker, 1998; Harnish & Bridges, 2011). While participants did not specifically mention syllabi when referencing the classroom environment, they did speak about clear expectations being set by professors. They also talked about the tone and language used by professors and how that affected the classroom environment.

The poems "Learning Environment" and "The Class Has an Understanding" both discuss classroom norms and welcoming spaces. Setting up classroom community agreements aids in creating mutual learning environments for students to engage in complex critical thinking (Wright, 2010). Participants shared multiple experiences of being in classrooms where they knew the class would utilize dialogue and other classes where there was little space for dialogue. Establishing a classroom as a mutual learning environment that will utilize dialogue can help students participate in this mutual learning environment.

Even if clear expectations are set, tensions can arise as conflict takes place, even good conflict. Adamian and Jayakumar (2018) discuss their focus on naming tension when it arises so that the class can hold space for the tension. In "Fear of Just Asking," a participant shares her experience with a professor naming the tension in a way that hindered dialogue. These results suggest the need to name tension in a way that encourages more conversation instead of shutting it down. The second part of naming tension, as Adamian and Jayakumar (2018) discuss, is working through the tension together. It is necessary to create space for dialogue around the tension to move through it in a way that allows for a mutual learning environment to continue to

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exist. While literature has focused on defining and creating mutual learning environments (Adamian & Jayakumar, 2018; Adams et al., 2016; Bell, 2016; Convertino, 2016; Freire, 2005; Wright, 2010), this study advances this literature by understanding how critical deliberate dialogue directly connects with mutual learning environments as well as the affect handling difficult conversations and conflict has on these environments.

Praxis

This study aimed to understand praxis which Freire (1972/2018) defines as the ways "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed" (p. 126). Creating space for students to enter into dialogue and reflect on what they're learning can directly affect the actions students take in their civic engagement. Mutual learning environments can bridge the gap between learning and applied ways to make change (Wright, 2010). Focusing on praxis in the classroom requires giving students space to reflect and providing guidance on taking action after reflection.

Activism without reflection can be harmful, even for the most well-intentioned activist (Ollis, 2015). Results in the section on activists' harm illustrate a participant's experience with this. Sometimes, the perceived or real urgency behind activism prevents intentional reflection (Ollis, 2015). The poem "Media" describes how students' desire to speak out against a play they felt had racist depictions caused them to attack one of the participants in this study to the extent that she was affected even after the play was finished. The poem "Too Far" illustrates how action without reflection can not only negatively affect people but can also affect the cause for which the activists are fighting. This study connects to literature around naïve activism (Chovanec et al., 2007; Freire, 1972/2018; Ollis, 2015) and expands it to the harm done by activists to others and to the desired change they wish to make.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study offer suggestions that can be used in classrooms and across institutions as they focus on dialogue and civic engagement. The participants' experiences provide insight into strategies that have been successful within the classroom, possibility models for curriculum and classroom design, and how institutions can more intentionally create space for critical deliberate dialogue.

A significant number of stories and experiences participants shared were linked directly to the classroom environment and the role the professor played in engaging students in dialogue. Participants described classroom environments using words such as open, respectful, and non-judgmental. These words were also prevalent when they described professors in classrooms that felt safe to engage in dialogue.

These safe spaces were complicated by the identities held by participants and other students as well as the professor. Understanding this can help recognize complexities to the conversation around dialogue and to encourage intentionality around critically examining how identity can play a part in environments asking students to engage in critical dialogue.

Disciplines and curriculum were also referenced in how participants engaged with their peers and professors as well as preconceived ideas about what was expected within the classroom. These findings can have two major effects on future actions. First, this helps bring an understanding to the importance of setting clear expectations within the classroom environment in a way that recognizes cultural differences and norms as well as assumptions students may have based on the discipline within which the course is situated. Second, these results challenge disciplines that participants described as spaces not meant for dialogue to take a critical look at how they can set up intentional spaces for deliberate dialogue.

Participants shared the impact hearing others' stories and telling their own has had on their understanding of different experiences and cultures. These results build on social justice practices of using storytelling to connect across differences (Bell, 2020; Delgado, 1989; Jobin-Leeds & AgitArte, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The experiences shared by participants illustrate the impact storytelling still has. As disciplines or individual professors are building curricula that creates space for critical deliberate dialogue, it could be valuable to understand how storytelling might be incorporated into classroom activities and modules to aid in creating this space.

The fifth cluster of poems focused entirely on barriers to critical deliberate dialogue. These barriers add complexities to measures taken to create space for students to engage in dialogue in a way that is deliberate, critical, and as safe as possible. Designing curriculum and classroom environments for critical deliberate dialogue is an important step to engaging students towards conscientização. However, without understanding major barriers, students may still struggle to fully engage in this process. The results suggest building activities and curriculum that takes into account cultural competency, utilize universal design, incorporates technology, and creates clear community agreements collectively with students, can make more space for more students to engage more fully in dialogue in the classroom.

These barriers not only affect students' ability to engage in the classroom, but can also affect students abilities to engage in dialogue outside of the classroom. Identity-based student activism could look different, as some of the participants' poems show, if those activists have space for dialogue with those in power to make change. These results suggest that acknowledging and addressing institutional harm, as well as working towards minimizing it, can directly affect how identity-based student activism takes place on campus. Having access to

administrators directly affect identity-based student activists can also have a big impact. These results demonstrate the need for space for critical deliberate dialogue with administrators and transparent paths to this process.

Further Research

There are several topics from this research study that need more scholarship to understand better. The first area that came up during this research, but was outside of this studies scope, was dialogue in online classrooms. Participants spoke a lot about how different engaging in dialogue was in online classrooms, specifically asynchronous courses. As higher education continues to expand into global and online programs, it will be important to understand how students can engage with one another authentically and critically in online spaces.

Another concept that was threaded through participants' responses was the concept of "Midwest nice." Participants spoke a lot about their discomfort with conflict, even good conflict. They shared stories about lack of space for dialogue within their families. Several participants mentioned the culture of being "Midwestern nice." This specific institution has had minimal protests on campus in the past few years. Conducting a similar study at an institution that traditionally has more identity-based student activism may provide valuable results that could be in conversation with this study.

Another significant area in participants' stories and poems is the concept of safety and how that is affected by harm done by their institution. It is important to understand "the need for educators to relinquish formal notions of power and invite students to share their perspectives as experts of their own experiences" (Jenkins, et al., 2017, p. 54). Institutional harm often relates to power differentials within an environment (Smith & Freyd, 2014). Students enter into their institutions often with an expectation of physical and mental safety (Linder et al., 2020).

Participants shared their experiences with feeling a lack of safety on campus and in the classroom. They also spoke about ways they experienced harm from those in power, and from the institution. Unfortunately, a lack of response from an institution, according to some students, is more significant than the original harm they experienced (Linder & Myers, 2017). More research is needed around how this harm affects students' connection to the institution and their desire to engage in dialogue as well as identity-based student activism. Having a better understanding of this could help institutions minimize harm and address harm students experience in ways that best meet students' needs.

Expanding on the concept of harm, and its effect on dialogue and identity-based student activism, further research around harm done by peers and other identity-based student activists could be impactful to assist in better understanding how to create spaces for students to think critically about their actions and impact on their peers. Some of the participants spoke about their fear of judgment from their peers. Others shared stories of feeling attacked by other students while those students were engaging in activism. A deeper understanding is needed of the magnitude of this impact and how to engage students in thinking about their actions through reflection and encouraging a praxis within their activism.

The last significant area that needs more research is access to administrators and others in power. Dialogue, as Freire (1972/2018) posited, cannot take place between those who are being silenced and those who are silencing others. There is an inescapable power structure within positions of administration and institution leadership. How can space be created that builds trust, recognizes power dynamics, sets clear community guidelines, transparent processes, and allows for students to have access to enter into critical deliberate dialogue with administrators?

Research focused on this question could impact not only how identity-based student activism happens on campus, but how often it happens, and how it is defined in the future.

Limitations

Given the context of this study, there are several limitations that need to be addressed. The first limitation concerns the identities of participants in this study. Despite reaching out to all students who were enrolled in the courses listed in chapter 3, none of the students who filled out the survey to participate in the study identified as men. One reason for this could be the demographics of the student body at the institution where the study was conducted. Students who identify as men make up 1/3 of the student body. Another possible contributor to the lack of men filling out the survey to participate could be that the courses identified are all in liberal arts, humanities and interdisciplinary studies. Students who identify as men at this specific institution are greater represented in disciplines within the School of Business or Health and Human Performances. Having a participant who identifies as a man could have added another layer to the findings.

Another limitation that is linked to the above events is the position I hold at the institution. While I built relationships with participants through this research and through the work I do at the institution, I served as an administrator and sat on the strategic team that made decisions on the faculty positions that were eliminated. No participants named this as a limitation or a conflict in building a relationship with me as a researcher, but it is important to recognize this association as a possible limitation.

Conclusion

This qualitative study used a critical theory framework and a poetic inquiry methodology to explore students' experiences with identity-based student activism and pose potential

classroom frameworks and activities that can assist in students' ability to engage in critical deliberate dialogue. Through analysis of individual interviews and focus group transcripts, four key findings emerged. These findings suggest creating space for dialogue at an institution requires both classrooms framed as mutual learning environments and safe spaces outside of the classroom. These are necessary to engage in critical deliberate dialogue with people in positions of power to make institutional change.

This project utilized poetic inquiry to present data to create a connection between the research, the reader, and the participants. As part of the conclusion to this study, I have created a poem from the top 25 most frequent words used in interviews and focus groups with participants.

<div align="center">

I want to talk

To get to know people

Take time to understand differences

Maybe make connections

Have a discussion

Definitely spend time

in conversation

Know someone

Be kind to each other

Feel something

</div>

This study's results suggest students need spaces to build their critical dialogic skills and connections to collective community spaces to engage in this dialogue in a supportive and productive way. These practices should encourage students to engage in reflection and action while acknowledging power structures and recognizing the impact these power structures have on the ability to engage in dialogue and identity-based student activism. Institutions must find a way to leave space for historically excluded voices and address the silencing of these voices that has happened by peers, institutional employees and leaders, and larger systems of oppression.

Part of creating this space includes addressing the harm that has been done, finding ways to restore the trust damaged by this harm, and address the trauma caused by this harm. Critical deliberate dialogue can assist with building a more inclusive environment but only with intention and purposeful reflection and action towards a pedagogy of radical love and hope.

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Appendix A - IRB Approval

KANSAS STATE | University Research
U N I V E R S I T Y | Compliance Office

TO: Doris W Carroll, Ph.D.   Protocol Number: IRB-10574
        Educational Leadership
        Manhattan, KS 66506

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
        Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 07/25/2023

RE: Approval of Your Proposal Entitled, "Dialogue and Hope in the Classroom: A Poetic
        Inquiry into Freire's Theories Effect on Student Activism."

Federal regulations stipulate that human subjects protocols can be approved by IRB's for only
one year, and require "continuing review" and approval to continue past the expiration date.

On the basis of the IRB "continuing review," your project is classified as follows:

> **Active.** The activity is pending or in progress, and there have been no changes that
> have occurred or are contemplated that would affect the status of human subjects.

EXPIRATION DATE: 02/25/2024

        If the activity persists, it will be eligible for continuing review several months prior
to the new expiration date.

        Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 07/25/2023 11:45 AM ET

EMPORIA STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

GRADUATE SCHOOL AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

October 6, 2022

Dear Nyk Robertson and Dr. Doris Carroll:

Your application for approval to use human subjects has been reviewed. I am pleased to inform you that your application was approved and you may begin your research as outlined in your application materials. Please reference the protocol number below when corresponding about this research study.

Title: Dialogue and Hope in the Classroom: A Poetic Inquiry into Freire's Theories Effect on Student Activism
Protocol ID Number: 23014
Type of Review: Expedited
Time Period: 10/01/2022 - 10/01/2024

If it is necessary to conduct research with subjects past this expiration date, it will be necessary to submit a request for a time extension. If the time period is longer than one year, you must submit an annual update. If there are any modifications to the original approved protocol, such as changes in survey instruments, changes in procedures, or changes to possible risks to subjects, you must submit a request for approval for modifications. The above requests should be submitted on the form Request for Time Extension, Annual Update, or Modification to Research Protocol. This form is available at www.emporia.edu/research/irb.html.

Requests for extensions should be submitted at least 30 days before the expiration date. Annual updates should be submitted within 30 days after each 12-month period. Modifications should be submitted as soon as it becomes evident that changes have occurred or will need to be made.

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I wish you success with your research project. If I can help you in any way, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. John Barnett
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix B - Interview I Semi-Structured Questions

The questions below are intended to be a guide during participant interview. Unanticipated topics may come up as discussion with participants happen. Round 2 will be an extension of these questions informed by answers given by participants. This guide should be seen as flexible and open to change.

Step 1:
Introduction with name and contact information.

Step 2: Review informed consent form with participants and remind them of their participation is voluntary and they have a right to withdraw consent at any time during the process without any explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which they may otherwise be entitled. Receive verbal consent to understand their rights and their consent to be a part of the project. Allow for questions that participant may have before going into questions.

Step 3: Questions for Interview

Primary Questions

1. What identities do you hold that you want to share for this project?
2. Tell me about the communities you are a part of at Emporia State University.
3. Tell me about yourself and how your identities show up on this campus and in the classroom.
4. What identities do you find most relevant and primary on ESU's campus?
5. How have instructors talked about dialogue in your classrooms?
6. Describe the environment of classrooms that have used dialogue.
7. Describe interactions you've had with someone who does not share your most dominant identities with you in a classroom context.
8. Describe your experience with instigating change on campus when it comes to DEI and social justice.

Secondary Questions

1. Describe your comfort level while discussing DEI and SJ topics in a classroom setting.
2. Tell me about any protests or actions for social justice \ you have been a part of.

Appendix C - Focus Group Semi-Structured Questions

Introduce ourselves with names, pronouns, majors, and any other information you want to share.

Set up guidelines for focus group discussion.

1. How can we create a space for dialogue within this group?
2. What are some events, statements, or behaviors that might jeopardize a safe environment for dialogue?
3. Based on some individual interviews, it seems that many students struggle with conflict so much that it sometimes keeps them from speaking their minds or entering into dialogue. What are some ways in which we can encourage students to be more comfortable with conflict?
4. What changes do you feel could better enhance students' experiences here on campus?
5. How can we make some of those changes? How could you participate in that change?
6. Based on some individual interviews, it seems that many students have more experience having difficult conversations with their families rather than their peers. Why do you think that is?
7. Describe some differences in dialogue in online classes versus in person.
8. How can we build environments for dialogue in online classrooms?