USING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY TO EDUCATE FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE GRADUATE CLASSROOM

by

Romona Vivica Goomansingh

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

© Copyright by Romona Vivica Goomansingh (2009)
Abstract

This qualitative study examines professors’ teaching practices and students’ experiences in graduate classrooms that exhibit critical pedagogy in order to educate for democracy. The university has been criticized as markets values have commodified teaching and learning to serve private interests. This threat challenges students being educated for democracy with respect to concern for equity issues and thus opposes the public good. The study embraces radical democracy that acknowledges both issues of power and difference in order to understand social relations. Freire (1973) conceptualized critical pedagogy in order for students to explore knowledge critically similar to their roles as probing citizens. The study engages Shor’s (1992) agenda of values, a model of critical pedagogy, along with equity discourses of anti-racist and feminist thinkers. The study addresses three questions: (1) What are the professors’ teaching practices and the students’ experiences in the critical classrooms? (2) What is the pedagogical climate of the critical classroom that contributes to educating for democracy? (3) What is the purpose of actualizing critical pedagogy in order to educate for democracy? The data is collected through classroom observations and interviews with 15 students and 3 professors in three, 12-week graduate courses at a Canadian Faculty of Education. The critical classrooms were described through: experiences of standardized teaching and learning, student-centered teaching as a means to empowerment, role of teacher authority, silences among students and creating a language of possibility or projecting a grand vision of democracy. The pedagogical climate that contributed to the critical classrooms was: implementing student voice, constructing a political
discourse, striving for social change and using teacher authority. Constructing multiples publics
and developing the teacher-student relationship defined the purpose of critical pedagogy. It has
been concluded that a pivotal point for critical classrooms is examining the intersection of power
and difference among teachers and students. As exploratory research, limitations of the study,
implications for theory and practice as well as future research are addressed.
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my advisor, Dr. Jamie-Lynn Magnusson, for her guidance during my dissertation as well as throughout my entire doctoral program. Your input with the dissertation expanded its breadth and depth. Your encouragement inspires me to continue scholarly work. In addition, I wish to recognize the late Dr. Berta Vigil Laden, my initial advisor, who provided academic assistance and sought interest in my overall well-being. Being my first contact at OISE/UT, Dr. Laden created a sense of comfort for me in the program and the department.

I also extend my gratitude to Dr. John Portelli who provided meaningful insights with my dissertation. From your involvement, I have engaged with new ideas and perspectives that have greatly strengthened my understanding of my area of study. Thank you for always being available to have conversations and for being supportive in many ways.

I wish to thank Dr. Tony Chambers for joining the thesis committee at a crucial time. I appreciate you raising some probing questions to have me think critically about my dissertation and enhance its clarity. Your enthusiastic nature contributed to a positive experience with the committee.

Also, heartfelt gratitude is extended to the Department of Theory and Policy Studies administrative staff. They have effectively enhanced my graduate student experience. The care and concern for my well-being has been invaluable and provided a humanistic dimension to my studies.
# Table of Contents

## Abstract .......................................................... ii

## Acknowledgements ...................................................... iv

## Dedication .............................................................. x

### Chapter One: Introduction .............................................. 1

- Higher Education as a Commodity ........................................ 1
- The Impact of Keynesian Economics and Neoliberal Policies upon Higher Education .................................................. 5
- Neoliberal Restructuring in a Global Context .................................. 11
- The Definition of Democracy ................................................ 13
- A Public Vision of Democracy versus a Private Vision of Democracy .................. 14
- Liberal Democracy versus Radical Democracy ........................................ 16
- A Critique of Radical Democracy ............................................. 19
- Educating for Democracy .................................................. 21
- An Understanding of Critical Pedagogy ........................................ 23
- Shor’s Agenda of Values .................................................. 25
- Conceptualization of the Study ......................................... 26
- Purpose of the Study .............................................................. 28

### Chapter Two: Review of Literature ..................................... 31

- The Relationship between Education and Democracy ......................... 31
- The Impact of Neoliberal Capitalism on Education ................................ 35
- The Rise of Neoliberal Capitalism ............................................. 35
- Effects of Neoliberal Capitalism upon Education ....................................... 39
- The Separation of the Public Sphere and the Private Sphere .................... 48
- The Private Notion of Citizenry .............................................. 48
- A Feminist Understanding of the Public-Private Division ....................... 52
- The Single Public Sphere versus Multiple Publics ..................................... 56
- Understanding Critical Pedagogy .............................................. 61
- The Development of a Social Justice Framework ..................................... 65
- The Belief that Education is Inherently Political ..................................... 66
- A Connection between the Classroom and the World ................................ 67
- A Concern for Marginalized Groups ............................................. 67
- The Development of Social Change ............................................. 68
- Banking Education versus Problem-Posing Education ............................... 68
- Different Notions of Critical .................................................. 70
- Criticisms of Critical Pedagogy .............................................. 75
- Student Empowerment and Dialogue ............................................ 75
- A Feminist Critique of Friere’s Critical Pedagogy .................................... 78
# Chapter Three: Developing a Conceptual Framework

- Critical Democratic Theory .......................................................... 90
- Developing Critical Pedagogy ......................................................... 93
- Shor’s Agenda of Values .................................................................. 95
- Constructing the Model ................................................................. 100

# Chapter Four: Methodology

- Selection of the Site ................................................................. 104
- Perspective of the Methodology ..................................................... 106
- Selection of Courses ....................................................................... 109
- Data Collection Process ............................................................... 111
  - Classroom Observations ......................................................... 111
  - Professor and Student Interviews .............................................. 114
- Data Analysis ................................................................................ 115
- Revised Model ............................................................................... 117

# Chapter Five: Description of Courses and the Professors’ Teaching Approaches and the Students’ Experiences

- Description of Courses .................................................................. 120
  - Democratic Education Course ................................................... 120
  - Community Education Course ................................................... 121
  - Multicultural Education Course ............................................... 122
- Professors’ Teaching Approaches and Students’ Experiences ............. 123
  - Democratic Education Course ................................................... 124
  - Experiences of Standardized Teaching and Learning .................. 124
  - Student-Centered Teaching as a Means to Empowerment ............ 126
  - Role of Teacher Authority ......................................................... 129
  - Silences among Students ............................................................... 132
  - Creating a Language of Possibility or
    Projecting a Grand Vision of Democracy ..................................... 132
- Community Education Course ....................................................... 136
  - Experiences of Standardized Teaching and Learning .................. 136
  - Student-Centered Teaching as a Means to Empowerment ............ 138
  - Role of Teacher Authority ......................................................... 140
  - Silences among Students ............................................................... 142
  - Creating a Language of Possibility or
    Projecting a Grand Vision of Democracy ..................................... 143
- Multicultural Education Course ..................................................... 145
  - Experiences of Standardized Teaching and Learning .................. 145
  - Student-Centered Teaching as a Means to Empowerment ............ 148
  - Role of Teacher Authority ......................................................... 149
  - Silences among Students ............................................................... 150
  - Creating a Language of Possibility or
    Projecting a Grand Vision of Democracy ..................................... 152
Chapter Six: Understanding the Professors’ Teaching Approaches and the Students’ Experiences .......................................................... 155

Understanding Classroom Dynamics ................................................. 155
Silences and Tensions ...................................................................... 156
Openness of the Course .................................................................. 159
Relations of Domination .................................................................. 160
Power and Difference .................................................................... 163

Chapter Seven: Actualizing Critical Pedagogy .................................... 170

Implementing Student Voice .............................................................. 171
Constructing a Political Discourse ..................................................... 179
Striving for Social Change ................................................................. 183
Using Teacher Authority ................................................................. 188

Chapter Eight: The Aims of the Critical Teacher in Educating for Democracy ................................................................. 199

Constructing Multiple Publics ........................................................... 199
The Teacher-Student Relationship .................................................... 204

Chapter Nine: Conclusions ................................................................. 211

A Concern for Social Relations ......................................................... 211
The Issue of Power ......................................................................... 212
A General Vision of Critical Pedagogy .............................................. 214
The Reciprocal Relationship between Education and Democracy ....... 217
The Future Direction of the University .............................................. 219
Limitations of the Study ................................................................. 221
Implications for Theory ................................................................. 223
Implications for Practice ............................................................... 227
Future Research ............................................................................. 230

References ....................................................................................... 244
List of Appendices

Appendix A: Letter Requesting Administrative Consent........................................... 235
Appendix B: Informed Consent (for documents).......................................................... 236
Appendix C: Informed Consent (for observations)....................................................... 238
Appendix D: Informed Consent (for interviews)......................................................... 240
Appendix E: Professor Interview Questions.............................................................. 242
Appendix F: Student Interview Questions................................................................. 243
List of Figures

Figure 1: Original Model................................................................................................103
Figure 2: Revised Model.................................................................................................119
Dedication

To my parents, the late Vic Goomansingh and Mona Goomansingh, whose wisdom, sincerity and care have guided me through every phase of my life and assisted me to reach my achievements.
Higher education, for many educators, is a central site for keeping alive the tension between market values and those values representative of civil society that cannot be measured in narrow commercial terms, but are crucial to an inclusive democracy. Key to defending the university as a public good and an institution of critical learning is the recognition that education must not be confused with training—suggesting all the more that educators prevent commercial values from shaping the purpose and mission of higher education. (Giroux, 2003, p. 164)

Higher Education as a Commodity

Higher education, according to Henry Giroux, needs to embody the democratic imperative. In essence, the democratic imperative speaks to the public good by attention being drawn to concern for the human condition regarding issues of social justice, equity and citizenship. The democratic imperative highlights universal entitlements which contribute to the public good as opposed to privileging particular individuals which erase recognition of the social construction of identity. While democracy implies individual rights, a broader scope beyond the individual must be argued for its meaning. To this end, democracy means a concern for more than the self. Democracy necessitates a concern for others in terms of the public good. Newman (1907) alludes to the democratic imperative in identifying the purpose of a university education.

Today, I have confined myself to saying that that training of the intellect, which is best for the individual himself, best enables him to discharge his duties to society….If then a practical end must be assigned to a University course, I say it is that of training good members of society. Its art is the art of social life, and its end is fitness for the world…. But a University training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims
at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste…at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life. (p. 177-178)

Newman (1907) did not reject the importance of training individuals for their professions. However, he acknowledges a greater end for the university, that is, “the culture of the intellectual is a good in itself as its own end” (p. 165). He believes passionately that the purpose of the university extends beyond self-concern and points to the betterment of society. Newman (1907) argues that the connection between education and society is rooted in developing an intellectual mind that is engaged in thinking for the public good.

The benchmark of education has to be striving for a greater purpose than professional training which in turn sets the stage for educating for democracy. The purpose of educating for democracy builds community rather than creating barriers that exclude individuals based upon systemic inequities. As an example, The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (2008) outlined their vision through the concept of lifelong learning in order to create connections between education and society. The vision, referred to as Learn Canada 2020, “recognizes the direct link between a well-educated population and (1) a vibrant knowledge-based economy in the 21st century, (2) a socially progressive, sustainable society, and (3) enhanced personal growth opportunities for all Canadians” (p. 1). There is no denial that knowledge accumulation and job training are valuable tools. But, such dimensions of education have to be balanced with community building, forming connections and social responsibility which all validate the democratic imperative.

The challenge for the democratic imperative is that market values are influencing the direction and role of higher education. Teaching and learning domains, for instance, are
increasingly exhibiting market values which have contributed to the commodification of higher education. Bok (2003) suggests:

A commodity is something created, grown, produced, or manufactured for exchange on the market….The commodification of higher education…refers to the deliberate transformation of the educational process-into commodity form, for the purpose of commercial transaction. The commodification of education requires the interruption of this fundamental educational process and the disintegration and distillation of the educational experience into discrete, reified, and ultimately saleable things or packages of things….At the expense of the original integrity of the educational process, instruction has here been transformed into a set of deliverable commodities, and the end of education has become not self-knowledge but the making of money. In the wake of this transformation, teachers become commodity producers and deliverers, subject to the familiar regime of commodity production in any other industry, and students become consumers of yet more commodities. The relationship between teacher and student is thus reestablished, in an alienated mode, through the medium of the market, and the buying and selling of commodities takes on the appearance of education. (p. 3-4)

As higher education is redefined as a commodity, the democratic imperative is challenged because students have been “unabashedly reinvented as consumers, as shoppers at the store of education, buying a career-enhancing service. This commodification…manifests as a monetary exchange, paying tuition for accreditation necessary to get a professional-managerial class job” (Williams, 2001, p. 22).

In order to respond to the commodification of higher education, a commitment to fostering the democratic imperative is required. This commitment involves the role of higher education. Specifically, teachers and students need to contemplate and understand the meaning
of democracy. As graduate education witnesses intellectual work being discursively restructured by market values for commercial purposes, challenges arise for using knowledge to address the democratic imperative along the lines of social justice, equity and citizenship issues. The implication of transforming the graduate context, and moreover the educational enterprise as whole, into a commodity begs an examination of how the democratic discourse is addressed from a social perspective. Thus, this study explores how educating for democracy is approached by teachers through the pedagogical climate of graduate-level courses.

Prior to understanding the meaning of democracy, it is necessary to understand how commodified education has permeated the university. Commodified education reveals forms of teaching and learning that have been shaped by market values. Two main forms in the university are correspondence education and distance education.

Correspondence instruction emerged in the last decade of the nineteenth century along two parallel paths, as a commercial, for-profit enterprise, and as an extension of university-based higher education. At the heart of both was the production and distribution of prepackaged courses of instruction, educational commodities bought, sold, and, serviced through the mail. The university effort arose in response to the same demand for vocational training, as an attempt to protect traditional academic turf from commercial competition, to tap into a potent new source of revenues, and as a result of a genuinely progressive movement for democratic access to education, particularly adult education. While universities tried initially to distinguish themselves in both form and content from their increasingly disreputable commercial rivals, in the end, having embarked down the same path of commodity production, they tended invariably to resemble them, becoming diploma mills in their own right. (Noble, 2001, p. 5)
Subsequently, distance education is flourishing for similar reasons, but through the medium of the computer.

For-profit commercial firms are once again emerging to provide vocational training to working people via computer-based distance instruction. Universities are once again striving to meet the challenge of these commercial enterprises, generate new revenues streams, and extend the range and reach of their offerings. And although trying somehow to distinguish themselves from their commercial rivals...they are once again coming to resemble them, this time as digital diploma mills. (Noble, 2001, p. 5)

Correspondence and distance education were established in the university to challenge commercialization by the private sector, to contribute to its financial welfare and to serve students needs. Ironically, the university, through correspondence and distance education, has expanded into commercial ventures.

The intention to sustain the university economically is not surprising due to governmental cutbacks and competition among institutions. Yet, according to Bok (2003), concern about commodified education arises because profit-making has penetrated the central activities of the university--teaching, learning and research--as opposed to remaining at the periphery by supporting administrative initiatives, management systems and student services. This educational shift points to the university being restructured along a market agenda rather than along the democratic imperative.

*The Impact of Keynesian Economics and Neoliberal Policies upon Higher Education*

The restructuring of higher education resulted from the restructuring of the social welfare state from Keynesian economics to neoliberal policies. In essence, the decline of the Keynesian welfare state resulted from the rise of neoliberalism--the advancement of a market agenda. Magnusson (2000; 2001) carefully examines the way higher education has been impacted by the
two paradigms. Referring to Keynesianism, she notes, “the paradigm was a way to reconstruct capitalism in industrialized countries during a time in which industrialism showed signs of frailty in the aftermath of the war and the great depression” (Magnusson, 2000, p. 110). Moreover, according to Bhattacharya (2005):

Keynesian thought gained currency because it fitted the circumstances and requirements of its time. In the face of mass unemployment, Keynesianism offered a method of economic management that could restore prosperity and safeguard social order. In his account of Keynesianism as a response to social conflict, Massimo De Angelis summarises the Keynesian revolution as a matching of the problem – unemployment – to a means of resolution – economic growth – to be achieved through an identifiable instrument – monetary and fiscal policy. (p. 44)

In other words, Keynesianism flourished through state intervention which created economic policies in order to develop a national welfare state.

Specifically, the Keynesian way of thought stimulated industrialism through a specified division of labor. As Magnusson (2000) further comments:

An important consequence that the development of the welfare state had for higher education in Canada, as well as most industrialized nations, was the transition from elite higher education to mass higher education. From the perspective of capital accumulation, the Keynesian welfare paradigm was successful, and the welfare state, including access to higher education expanded….As the national social welfare state evolved, higher education had to be expanded to provide the kind of training required for people to take up positions within the growing private and public sector. (p.111)

Higher education, thus, became an instrument of the capitalist state in order to serve the industrialized sectors and the changing economy. According to Naiman (2004), in Canada,
Keynesian economic policies contributed to the “provision of social necessities” (p. 213) in terms of expanding education, along with instituting other public services such as health care, unemployment insurance and pensions. However, even though the Keynesian paradigm attended to social well-being, the basis of its contribution was grounded in capitalist imperatives which revealed discursive practices for the university as it was being established. Magnusson (2001) notes:

The discursive formation of the Canadian university and the role it played in terms of ideological formation was, therefore, shaped by how it was constituted through the development of the Canadian capitalist welfare state which, in turn, was mediated by U.S. economic interests. Hegemonic discourses and discursive practices could be expanded through programs of teacher education, social work, health education, business management, sciences, and so on. Higher education, then, was used by the state to cultivate skills, dispositions and social identities consistent with the imperatives of the capitalist state (Magnusson, 2001, p. 103).

The role of the national welfare state diminished due to neoliberalism which is “marked by… a political agenda favouring the relatively unfettered operation of markets. Often this renewed emphasis on markets is understood to be directly associated with the so-called ‘globalisation’ of capital” (Larner, 2000, p. 4). The Keynesian welfare state was dismantled in order to prevent government intervention upon state expenditures and upon regulations that could restrict transnational, corporate agendas (Magnusson, 2000). Therefore, neoliberal policies eroded a concern for the public good and served private interests. As McChesney (1999) states:

Neoliberalism is the defining political economic paradigm of our time-it refers to the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal
profit….Neoliberal initiatives are characterized as free market policies that encourage private enterprise and consumer choice, reward personal responsibility and entrepreneurial initiative….The economic consequence of these policies have been the same just about everywhere, and exactly what one would expect: a massive increase in social and economic inequality, a marked increase in severe deprivation for the poorest nations and peoples of the world, a disastrous global environment, an unstable global economy and an unprecedented bonanza for the wealthy. (p. 7-8)

In essence, neoliberalism renounced an obligation to the welfare state. “Whereas under Keynesian welfarism the state provision of goods and services to a national population was understood as a means of ensuring social well-being, neoliberalism is associated with the preference for a minimalist state….In conjunction with this general shift towards the neo-liberal tenet of ‘more market’, deregulation and privatization have become central themes in debates over welfare state restructuring” (Larner, 2000, p. 3). In essence, the decline of the welfare state revealed operations of control and issues of power at the cost of the democratic imperative.

Neoliberal capitalist ideology discursively restructured higher education. As an example, progressivism evolved as a hegemonic discourse through the formation of the university. “Progressivism refers to a conservative program of reform that achieves improvements in labor through regulated business practices… but at the same time leaves intact the basic economic framework characterized by private property, free markets, and the emphasis on individual achievement” (Magnusson, 2001, p. 102). While “progressivism supported the development of the welfare state” (Magnusson, 2001, p. 114), the reform “ideologically aligned with corporate interests and the corporate establishment, but is cast as a liberal democratic discourse. Hence, through discourses of progressivism, notions of citizenship and democracy are aligned with the interests of the capitalist state” (Magnusson, 2000, p. 114). The support projected for the welfare
state is based upon the notion that all individuals are treated the same. But, as Magnusson (2000) argues, participation and achievement are not equal among individuals due to “systemic inequities” (p. 114) that cause exclusion. The progressivist reform does not account for such inequities which is a serious issue. She concludes that since higher education was organized with respect to the capitalist welfare state and then expanded into various programs, progressivism was able to construct hegemonic discourses in the university.

As neoliberal capitalist ideology arose, progressivism was further cast negatively in the university. “The new progressivist discourse of neoliberalism…justifies the further dissembling of the welfare state, shifting public responsibility onto private ‘meritorious’ individuals” (Magnusson, 2000, p. 118-119). The danger with neoliberal capitalist ideology stems from the meaning that the new progressivist discourse assigns to “worthy” individuals which in turn advances the “hegemonic discourses of progressivism” (Magnusson, 2000, p. 114) in higher education. The new progressivist discourse operates to hide inequities by addressing issues of meritocracy rather than addressing issues of exclusion. The ability to gain access and to achieve is shaped by race, gender and class. Thus, without intersecting both the issues of participation and achievement with issues of difference, assumptions are cast about the social construction of identity. As Magnusson (2000) argues, “these kinds of neoliberal reforms to public policy concerning post-secondary education succeed in erasing how education is structured through interlocking systems of oppression” (p. 118). She concludes that “the meritocratic backdrop to the social construction of ‘deserving’ citizens reinforces and exacerbates economic and political marginalization constitutive of the capitalist state” (p. 119).

The extent to which the capitalist state impacted higher education can be understood through the similarities and differences between Canadian and American systems.
In the United States, national councils and societies had emerged that were influenced by governing bodies which represented corporate interests.…As Canadian universities developed, they not only followed the United States’ institutional model, but were as much influenced, in many respects, by American national research councils and societies. For example, achieving legitimacy as a Canadian scientist or social scientist often entailed presenting one’s work in United States research/scholarly societies, and publishing in the highly regulated, peer-reviewed research journals affiliated with these societies. (Magnusson, 2000, p.113)

As universities were influenced by capitalist imperatives, intellectual work was defined through elitism rather than defined through democratic discourses. As a result, notions of identity and citizenship, along an equity framework, vanished among promoting individualism, reputation and achievement in the development of the university.

According to Slaughter and Leslie (1999) who base their findings upon the work of Michael Skolnik and Glen Jones, Canadian higher education, in comparison to American, United Kingdom and Australian systems, resisted neoliberal restructuring because the former “gave the highest priority to increasing and widening access.…Canadian academics have perhaps been able to resist pressures by both business and federal government because Canada has by far the most decentralized higher education system of the four countries” (cited in Magnusson, 2001, p. 104-105). However, Magnusson (2001) shows that following the rise of the Liberal government during the early 1990’s, efforts were made to reduce the federal deficit. She notes that post-secondary education, along with other transfer payments to health care and income assistance received reduced funding and thus provinces, such as Ontario, began to deregulate tuition which increased funding from the private, corporate sector.
Thus, the conclusions reached by Slaughter and Leslie with respect to a Canadian resistance to ‘academic capitalism’ no longer hold true. On a province by province basis, and in particular after the Chretien government came to federal power in 1993, higher education has undergone extensive restructuring throughout Canada. (Magnusson, 2001, p. 107)

As education becomes restructured by a neoliberal agenda, ideas about “learning” are articulated through market values--profit-making, privatization and competition. Also, having dialogues about the meaning of identity and citizenship become neglected which in turn threatens the democratic imperative. The discursive practices of neoliberalism can be further evidenced on a global level.

*Neoliberal Restructuring in a Global Context*

Bhattacharya (2005) discusses the calamities caused by neoliberal polices globally. Globalized market relations have infringed upon social well-being. The beliefs that the global expansion of market relations is inevitable and that its impact upon humans is unavoidable are often the reasons for a lack of social responsibility. Bhattacharya (2005) argues that globalization has been explained as inescapable by rationalizing that “here the economy grows in unexpected and unplanned ways and we have no choice but to live with the consequence of this cultural earthquake” (p. 4). In denouncing globalization as a predestined occurrence, she emphasizes that “the global structures we inhabit have not emerged spontaneously, inevitably, and without historical context. In fact, others have argued quite the contrary, namely that [globalization] represents a plan for world domination” (p. 5). At the root of globalization, rich and privileged individuals make decisions for the larger masses. As a result, social inequities caused by globalization--struggles with race, class and gender--remain hidden.
Magnusson (2001) discusses that as the “immediate commercial potential” (p. 108) of advances in intellectual knowledge is “highly valued and supported within the restructured academic environment….this knowledge has devastating consequences when examined through the lens of global emancipatory interests and environmental sustainability” (p. 108). In tracing neoliberal restructuring, its discursive practices on a global level are far-reaching. Critical scholars who unveil the commercial abuse by the first world “illustrate the ways in which such ‘advances’ reinscribe global inequities through neocolonial practices that are raced, gendered, and classed” (Shiva, 1997; Amin, 1997; Mah, 2000, cited in Magnusson, 2001, p. 108). Globalization, therefore, undermines a concern for the democratic imperative. To this end, a concern for others is replaced with a concern for the individual self.

A lack of concern for others raises questions about the democratic dialogue in terms of the meaning of citizenship. In other words, how can individuals understand civic responsibility and civic rights when knowledge and skills have been woven through a neoliberal capitalist agenda? Magnusson (2000) believes that Canadian higher education “could serve as an important site of citizenship formation through science, technology, and social science education” (p. 113). But, since “higher education was discursively constituted through the welfare state” those academic areas “were productive of knowledges and skills required by the bureaucratized structures of both the public and private sectors” (p.113). Similarly, she explains that economic expansion into large, global ventures is accompanied by a lack of attention to civic responsibility and thus has lead to discursive outcomes upon humanity.

Rather than contributing to a social imaginary relevant to global issues of equity, peace, sustainability—that is, a global citizenship framed by emancipatory imperatives – the discourse of neoliberal restructuring at the level of local politics facilitates a destructive and oppressive framework for citizenship at a global level. (Magnusson, 2000, p. 119)
In other words, discourse about citizenship has suffered. A discourse about citizenship must be attended to and imagined according to the realities of neoliberalism. On a broader scale, since corporate interests have influenced intellectual work, there cannot only be reliance upon that dimension of higher education to pursue the democratic imperative. In other words, other dimensions of the university must be engaged in the discourse. This direction points to the teaching and learning domain, specifically the classroom, being grounded in critical dialogue that can address and foster the democratic imperative.

*The Definition of Democracy*

It is difficult to believe that higher education can eliminate neoliberal capitalist ideology within its institutions. At the macro level, institutions need to be financially strong in order to survive in the realm of post-secondary education. Thus, it is at the micro level--the university classroom--that can challenge neoliberal capitalist ideology. The classroom then aligns with what Antonia Gramsci coins a counter-hegemonic discourse. This discourse dismantles neoliberal thought by constructing a language in regards to power and privilege. To this end, the classroom becomes a crucial space for the teacher and students to dialogue about social relations. While the neoliberal imperative encourages “societies to invest more in human capital” (Levidow, 2002, p. 239), on the contrary, democratic discourse entails societies to invest in human relationships. As discussed, democracy refers to a concern for others and thus requires an understanding of social relations.

According to Dewey (1958), democracy can be understood from two perspectives: a political perspective and a social perspective. He states:

[D]emocracy is much broader than a special political form, a method of conducting government, of making laws and carrying on governmental administration by means of popular suffrage and elected officers. It is that, of course. But it is something broader and
deeper than that. The political and governmental phase of democracy is a means... for realizing ends that lie in the wide domain of human relationships and that development of human personality. It is, as we often say, though perhaps without appreciating all that is involved in the saying, a way of life. (p. 57-58)

In other words, the political perspective refers to governmental policies and processes. The social perspective encompasses values that govern self-development as well as construct relationships among individuals. Dewey (1958) elaborates on the social understanding of democracy as:

[t]he necessity for the participation of every mature human being in formation of the values that regulate the living of men together which is necessary from the standpoint of both the general social welfare and the full development of human beings and individuals. (p. 58)

Moreover, Portelli (2001) notes, “when philosophers of education refer to democracy in relation to education, they normally mean democracy as a way of life” (p. 280). In attempting to understand the use of critical pedagogy to educate for democracy, this study follows the social perspective of democracy in terms of a way of life.

A Public Vision of Democracy versus a Private Vision of Democracy

The concept of democracy as a way of life is situated within the public sphere rather than the private sphere. The public sphere draws individuals to think and act beyond private interests. Democracy cannot be understood only as the right to think and act according to one’s motives and desires. Democracy stems from relations with each other. Individuals must recognize that their actions and attitudes are relational to others as they can either hinder or expand individual freedom. Sehr (1997) comments:

Regarding their relationship to other members of society, people must come to view each other as equal, interdependent members of a social whole. They must see that they are
indeed individuals, but they are individuals-in-relations. Their individuality itself is formed in the interaction of individual agency with existing social relations and social structures. Society provides the context within which individuals exercise their freedom of self development. (p. 77)

The contrast between a public vision of democracy and a privatized one can be noted clearly. A public vision of democracy recognizes the interconnectivity among individuals. A privatized vision of democracy rejects that interconnectivity. Sehr (1997) adds:

The privatized and individualistic ideologies that currently dominate people’s understandings of the world deny and disguise the reality of people’s interdependence. These ideologies encourage individuals intentionally to close their eyes to the social consequences of their actions or their inactions. They replace conscious individual responsibility for shaping society, with blind faith in an economistic invisible hand. (p. 77-78)

A public vision of democracy and a private vision of democracy are oppositional because the former encourages collective dialogue to explore the democratic imperative. The latter adopts the ideology that market relations can provide an all-encompassing freedom for individuals to fulfill their personal goals. Thus, dialogue with respect to the meaning of democracy is obliterated with a private vision. The contrast between the two perspectives is further evidenced by the different identities constructed through each viewpoint. A public vision of democracy develops a learner who is concerned about social relations in terms of exclusion or inclusion. To this end, such a vision facilitates a critical perspective to address how particular individuals are privileged while others are subordinated. A critical perspective, by contrast, is devalued through a private vision of democracy that develops a consumer who advances personal interests—even at the cost of public interests.
A privatized vision of democracy aligns with neoliberal capitalist ideology. Similar to higher education, other public entities--predominantly health care--have been restructured through a neoliberal agenda. The neoliberal agenda appears to be infiltrating and restructuring many aspects of social life. In this way, a private vision of democracy dissuades interference from the state for the sake of individualism. Magnusson (2000) states:

Within neoliberal hegemonic discourse, the interventionist state is articulated as a curtailment of individual freedom, thereby achieving a rearticulation of the relation between the state and civil liberties. Specifically, responsibility for social welfare is shifted from the interventionist state and onto private individuals who pay for services that were once public. (p. 117)

By dismantling a public vision of democracy, inequities with race, gender and class are not approached as a collective struggle. The private vision of democracy erodes the application of an equity framework. In this regard, the private vision serves individual needs rather than serves the public good. The contrast between the public and private visions of democracy can be further understood through the different meanings of democracy.

_Liberal Democracy versus Radical Democracy_

Liberal democracy is conceptualized through individualism in terms of giving voice to one’s goals and desires.

Liberal democracy evolved in direct responses to the perceived encroachment of the state on personal liberty. At the center of the liberal democratic ethos lies the western notion of the autonomous individual, capable of free choice and motivated by self-interest. Individualistic private concerns are viewed as clearly separable from public issues of the community at large. Hence, the private sphere encompasses the realm of personal gain and subjective interest, as mediated by the competition of the market, while
the public comprises the arena of laws, legislatures, and other civic structures, whose ultimate logic is reducible to an apolitical ideal of the common good. (Trend, 1996, p. 11) Therefore, with individuals competing with each other in order to serve private interests, liberal democracy ignores the public good and supports competition stemming from capitalist systems.

Liberal democracy, moreover, constructs a universalized perception of the individual. In other words, there is the understanding that everyone has an equal opportunity to compete and achieve accordingly. Thus, the ideology overlooks both the differences among individuals and the oppressions as outcomes of capitalist societies. Manifesting through liberal democratic discourse is liberal individualism or humanism which assimilates social identities and treats individuals all the same.

Liberal individualism also encourages a philosophy of difference that simply wants to deny or erase difference. Those who subscribe to ‘we are all the same’ embrace—however unconsciously—a commitment to assimilation. This approach reflects the dominant culture’s privileged capacity to decide when and why differences are important. (Boler & Zembylas, 2003, p. 113)

Liberal humanism supports liberal democratic discourse based upon the perspective of the white, bourgeois, masculine individual who makes decisions for the larger masses without consideration of racial, gender and class struggles. Liberal humanism is problematic because the ideology does not account for issues of differences and therefore overlooks distributions of power. As Boler and Zembylas (2003) state, “in sum, the ‘we are all the same underneath the skin’ philosophy is a version of liberal humanism that also denies the ways in which power shapes and seeks to erase difference” (p. 113). As a result, liberal humanism projects “feel good” qualities that may appear progressive, but does not move individuals beyond their comfort
zones (Boler & Zembylas, 2003). Liberal humanism, thus, makes a pretentious attempt to serve the democratic imperative by hiding both issues of differences and power.

The discussion about universalizing individuals engages the topic of essentialism. Martindale (1992) argues for consideration of race, gender and class in establishing the nurturing teacher-student relationship. Without this consideration, there is the perception that all individuals will be treated the same. This perception is false due to issues of differences. As an example, she argues that feminist pedagogy cannot be assumed to be nurturing based upon the belief that women are innately nurturers. In contrast, race, gender and class impact how individuals are treated accordingly. Martindale (1992) states:

I want to question the process by which nurturing is constructed as what is sensitive, normal, and feminine for mothers, and then, by extension, is assumed to be appropriate for female teachers, and then, by extension, is assumed to be appropriate for female teachers, and then, by an even greater extension, is appropriated, sometimes, in my opinion, without critique, for and by feminist university teachers. (p. 323)

Martindale (1992) rejects that being a woman is determinant of a nurturing teacher without deconstructing issues of difference. Thus, without consideration of race, gender and class, educators will be essentializing the act of caring as a teaching attribute in the development of the nurturing teacher-student relationship.

As a challenge to the universalism projected through liberal democracy, radical democracy recognizes “a way of more fairly accounting for the complex differentiation of individuals into groups and identities” (Trend, 1996, p.13). Radical democracy accounts for the differences in individuals’ lives by expanding the democratic imperative into every sphere. In this way, particular individuals are not privileged over others. Trend (1996) states:
Theorists such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe proposed what they termed a radical democratic reconceptualization of the citizen unencumbered by such compartmentalized categories of subjectivity. Far from an independent member of a particular constituency, within this formulation each person belongs to numerous overlapping groups and multiple intersecting identities. (p. 15)

Radical democracy operates with regards to a critical perspective in order to address interlocking differences. In this regard, radical democracy embraces anti-racist, feminist and indigenous perspectives which instigate dialogues related to identity, difference and power.

A Critique of Radical Democracy

Radical democracy has been criticized for discussing difference without reference to any historical context. Dhaliwal (1996) states that “Mouffe does mention race and ethnicity; however, she does not sufficiently account for forms of domination related to race, geopolitical location or nationality” (p. 45). The lack of attention to forms of domination subscribes to inclusionary practices which is inadequate to serve the democratic imperative. As an example, Dhaliwal (1996) argues that progress is achieved in recognizing difference by radical democracy drawing upon the feminist perspective. However, without attention to the context of women’s lives, the result is privileging some women over others and thus, the struggle continues without expanding the democratic imperative. Dhaliwal (1996) summarizes this idea.

The racism of white women’s suffrage movements highlights the limits of Mouffe’s conception of plurality and difference because Mouffe’s conception of plurality and difference ignores the historical reality that the attainment of one group’s rights at the expense of others is a strategy often making attempts to obtain rights. (p. 48)

In other words, Dhaliwal (1996) believes that supporting racial diversity in societies is not enough to attend to issues of difference. In contrast, there needs to be a problematizing of
different racial categories. A description of such categories is insufficient; a context is required to understand both inclusionary and exclusionary practices.

Dhaliwal (1996) believes that liberal democracy defines “inclusion as a sign of equality and fairness” (p. 44). At the same time, she is also critical of Mouffe’s approach to define radical democracy by having a “view of citizenship which is adequate for multiethnic and multicultural societies” (p. 44). Dhaliwal (1996) contends that Mouffe’s perspective is not a better solution to address difference.

In the project to ‘extend’ democracy…Mouffe suggests that a radical democratic conception of citizenship would address the demands of what she terms “new movements”. …The question that remains undertheorized is: how is a radicalized democracy able to account for cultural differences in ways that (other) liberal democracies do not, especially when it retains liberal conceptions of difference? (p. 44)

In other words, while the liberal democratic perspective attempts to treat all individuals the same through inclusion, the radical democratic perspective makes a similar error in that consideration of a larger diversity of individuals is understood as creating equality. Dhaliwal (1996) illustrates how opportunities of inclusion do not guarantee equality. She states, for instance, that the issue of voting does not necessarily expand the democratic imperative. Even though individuals may have the opportunity to vote, the opportunity does not guarantee that their voices are heard accordingly.

“[V]oting is a highly meaningful act articulating race-infused notions of citizenship and democracy. The significations voting takes on must be carefully assessed. Skepticism is needed of attempts to equate speech or voting with agency, which liberal discourses do in conceiving of voting as one’s “political voice” or voting as speech. Questions of speech
and the “speaking subject” highlight that…the subaltern may be able to speak, but this does not guarantee representation”. (Dhaliwal, 1996, p. 57)

Therefore, acts of inclusion are laden with inequities that require attention in order to fully understand individuals’ experiences and to fully expand the democracy imperative. As Dhaliwal (1996) concludes, “radical democratic theorists, who in the abstract mention categories such as race and ethnicity…do not engage the racial history of democracy in sufficient specificity and detail” (p. 56).

Despite the criticisms of how relations of power are illuminated through radical democracy, the discourse clearly recognizes social differences. Moreover, radical democracy unveils social differences in the domain of daily life which can often be overlooked and dismissed. As Trend (1996) comments, “the politicization of social spaces formerly considered neutral makes apparent the often unacknowledged power relations in everyday activities. In this way, such off-limits territories as culture, education, and the family become sites of critical investigation and emancipatory contestion” (p. 15). In understanding that democracy is a way of life (Dewey, 1958), the discourse does not only concern individual entitlement, but needs to be a part of a larger political project in order to challenge social inequities. In order to assign meaning to issues of difference, democracy needs to examine power relations or dynamics.

This study conceptualizes democracy from a radical perspective that recognizes issues of difference and attends to power relations. Therefore, it is essential to understand how educating for democracy can be defined with the above focus.

*Educating for Democracy*

In order to foster the democratic imperative in higher education, students need to be educated for democracy. Thus, educating for democracy refers to a critical dialogue between the teacher and students in exploring the meaning of democracy. As the neoliberal paradigm has
discursively restructured higher education, understanding democracy is crucial since its discourse is challenged in this commercialized context. Without this understanding, the neoliberal agenda will continue to develop higher education through consumerism and individualism. Thus, a dialogue is constructed in terms of both the individual’s role and the institution’s role in fostering the democratic imperative. As discussed, democracy is more than a concern for individual freedom; the imperative embodies a concern for the public good. Democracy must be understood beyond a political meaning. Democracy encompasses a social meaning that brings attention to the social construction of identity. To this end, the plurality of individuals’ identities must be recognized in order to contextual personal experiences and histories. Without the pluralizing of difference, struggles with race, gender and class remain hidden and the democratic imperative cannot be expanded productively.

Educating for democracy brings attention to social relations and thus facilitates an understanding of power. In this way, relations of power can be understood in terms of how individuals are included and excluded along the lines of race, gender and class. Giroux (2004) calls for an understanding of power in education because “the issue is not whether public or higher education has become contaminated with politics; it is more importantly about recognizing that education is already a space of politics, power, and authority” (p. 140). Even though approaches to democratizing the classroom have been strongly understood from having a vision of democracy (Giroux, 2003; Giroux & Giroux, 2004; McLaren, 1998), there seems to be minimal attention paid to exploring relations of power in the classroom. Portelli (2001) recognizes that “the political, power-relations context of the classroom are not taken seriously or, at times, even not considered” (p. 289). Yet, classroom relationships manifest as unequal distributions of power by including or privileging particular individuals while excluding or disadvantaging other individuals. Ultimately, these relations of power are reflective of the
neoliberal capitalist perspective and thus need to be deconstructed as part of educating for democracy.

*An Understanding of Critical Pedagogy*

As a way to explore the democratic imperative by deconstructing power relations, Freire (1973) developed critical consciousness or critical engagement. Critical consciousness means questioning the assumptions behind an individual’s actions and attitudes that lead to inclusionary and exclusionary practices. This notion is sustained by critical pedagogy which is grounded in changing power relationships within the classroom. A framework to explore how critical pedagogy can be actualized to educate for democracy is through the Freirean conceptualization. According to Shor (1993):

This pedagogy challenges teachers and students to empower themselves for social change, to advance democracy and equality as they advance their literacy and knowledge. His critical methods ask teachers and students to question existing knowledge as part of the questioning habits appropriate for citizens in a democracy. In Freirean critical classrooms, teachers reject the methods which make students passive and anti-intellectual. They do not lecture students into sleepy silence. They do not prepare students for a life of political alienation in society. Rather, Freirean educators pose critical problems to students, treat them as complicated, substantial human beings, and encourage curiosity and activism about knowledge and the world. (p. 25-26)

Thus, critical pedagogy involves interrupting discursive power relations in the classroom. To this end, critical pedagogy explores the politics of the classroom. Based upon Paulo Freire’s work, Shor (1993) adds:

*The whole activity of education is political in nature.* Politics is not one aspect of teaching or learning. All forms of education are political, whether or not teachers and
students acknowledge the politics in their work. Politics is in the teacher-student relationship, whether authoritarian or democratic. Politics is in the subjects chosen for the syllabus and in those left out. It is also in the method of choosing course content, whether it is a shared decision or only the teacher’s prerogative, whether there is a negotiated curriculum in the classroom or one imposed unilaterally. (p. 27)

Clearly, politics cannot be separated from the classroom and education as a whole. Thus, there must be attempts to deconstruct and understand classroom interactions and dynamics.

Gore (1993) embraces Friere’s and Shor’s conceptualization of critical pedagogy because they acknowledge both a social vision for democracy and the politics of classroom practice. She states:

Certainly, pedagogy encompasses more than classroom practice/instruction, but I want to draw attention to the slippage away from instructional aspects precisely because they seem so often to get lost in the ‘grand theories’ of critical pedagogy. Giroux and McLaren provide an exciting vision of more democratic schooling and society, one that captured my imagination and energy many years ago. But that vision has not been actualized, and it is my contention that the ‘failure’ to live out its own politics is resultant, in part, from insufficiently attending to pedagogy; that is, pedagogy as the politics of classroom practice. (p. 42)

Similarly, Ng (2003) projects the educational context through an integrated equity approach which can attend to a social vision of democracy and the politics of classroom practice. Ng’s (2003) approach examines struggles with race, gender and class based upon their intersecting nature. By deconstructing the connectedness among race, gender and class, she argues that power relations can be identified in the classroom. In this way, an integrative approach contextualizes difference by unveiling practices of inclusion and exclusion. Thus, a social vision of democracy,
by itself, is insufficient because it would treat individuals all the same through an assimilated perspective. In embracing an integrative approach, the politics of the classroom can also be attended to accordingly. In order to serve an equity framework in education, critical pedagogy must address both a social vision of democracy and the politics of the classroom practice.

The study explores how a graduate context pays attention to a social vision for democracy and the politics of classroom practice. For both dimensions, a definition of values is required in order to foster the democratic imperative in the classroom. Moreover, recognizing that distinct values distinguish market forces from civil society (Giroux, 2003; Aronowitz, 2000), a construction of values is needed to actualize critical pedagogy in educating for democracy.

**Shor’s Agenda of Values**

Shor (1992) proposes an agenda of values. The agenda projects the democratic imperative by connecting life experiences with classroom knowledge. Shor’s agenda of values provides the framework for this study by being a guide to understand the interactions between the teacher and students in a critical classroom. This study adopts Sehr’s (1997) rationale for applying an agenda of values.

In any study of “democratic” education, researchers must have a way of understanding their observations, which connects them to a particular tradition of democratic ideas. That is, in order to assess…democratic curriculum and practices, it is necessary to have in mind a clear idea of what one means by democracy and citizenship. (Sehr, 1997, p. 174)

Furthermore, Sehr (1997) “developed an inventory of some values, attributes, and capacities that an ideal-typical public democratic citizen should possess” (p. 174). An agenda of values serves as a model to compare an ideal democratic classroom to observations of an actual class with a democratic vision. It is not the claim that a democratic classroom will possess all the
characteristics as described through the agenda of values. Rather, the agenda provides the pedagogical climate that can nurture the democratic imperative through a critical perspective.

The premise behind Shor’s agenda is addressing power relations within the classroom. “One of the central classroom relationships of power is of course that between the teacher and the students, and one of the most complex issues in all pedagogical theory concerns the bases for the authority of the teacher” (Maher, 2001, p. 14). Thus, the key element that impacts the structure and function of the critical classroom stems from deconstructing power relationships. It is perplexing, however, that power relationships between the teacher and students have been rarely examined. Besides Paulo Friere’s contributions to discussions about power within the classroom, the topic has been mainly explored through discourses related to critical pedagogy such as feminist, anti-racist and integrated equity perspectives. A more mainstream exploration of power relationships within the classroom is non-apparent.

Another significant aspect of Shor’s agenda is that the classroom brings together the public domain and private domain. hooks (1994) believes that university teachers separate their public roles as educators from their private life experiences. This separation, as hooks (1994) notes, constructs the classroom as a space to learn didactically rather than holistically. More importantly, the separation does not allow the teacher to enter a self-realization stage which challenges an authoritarian image. In essence, the study is grounded in deconstructing the public-private split. This study will examine how a connection between the public sphere and the private sphere attends to classroom interactions and dynamics as well as dismantles power relationships.

**Conceptualization of the Study**

The study examines the use of critical pedagogy in graduate courses at a faculty of education of a Canadian university. Knowing considerably fewer students pursue graduate
education in comparison to undergraduate education or professional education, the question may arise why the study is grounded in graduate-level courses. As discussed, the intellectual work of university has been shaped through a corporate agenda wherein graduate education has been targeted for commodification. Today, the expansion of off-campus graduate courses reveals the interest for independent learning and profit-making. Also, the increase of professionals pursuing graduate degrees suggests the desire for professional advancement and higher salaries. These occurrences encourage an exploration of the democratic imperative in the graduate context. Moreover, they beg the question how can education for democracy be pursued in the graduate context?

The setting of graduate courses is suitable because typically its environment is structured around critical thinking, critical dialogue and critical reflection which collectively provide a foundation to actualizing critical teaching and learning. A faculty of education is highly appropriate as the data site because there is a greater possibility that the professors in this discipline will have a substantial grasp of the theoretical and practical understandings with the topic of pedagogy. As the purpose of this study is to understand critical pedagogy, it is logical to explore an environment that can overtly display the teaching characteristics and can potentially offer examples of the approach. Hence, graduate-level courses at a faculty of education are suitable. The study is not claiming that undergraduate education or professional education cannot or do not exemplify critical pedagogy.

There is not a substantial amount of literature that addresses a connection between higher education and critical pedagogy. Paulo Freire’s philosophy of critical pedagogy has received attention internationally; although applied mainly to adult education which stems from his advocacy for Brazilian peasants to become literate. His vision created an approach to challenge their oppressions. Paulo Friere’s conversations about critical teaching have impacted public
education by encouraging democratic teaching practices. Despite writing about higher education, Paulo Friere’s vision for democracy has been only applied to the university with a general perspective. He did not specifically examine the dynamics of the university classroom. Moreover, a considerable amount of literature on critical pedagogy focuses upon the commodification of the university. Critical pedagogy is projected as a challenge to higher education as a commodity by espousing grand visions of equity, social justice and human rights. Thus, critical pedagogy has not been adequately addressed in terms of how teaching and learning needs to be restructured for the democratic imperative in the university classroom. Critical pedagogy must move beyond a broad perspective of democracy by exploring its impact along the lines of classroom interactions and dynamics.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore the pedagogical practices of professors who use critical teaching to educate for democracy. Also, the study examines the students’ experiences in this pedagogical climate.

The data for this research study is collected through classroom observations and one-to-one interviews. The observations provide a picture of the critical classrooms. The interviews give voice to the teachers and students with respect to their opinions, perceptions and feelings regarding the critical classrooms. The study is approached through a constructivist perspective.

Constructivism provides an alternative epistemological base to the objectivist tradition. Constructivism, like objectivism, holds that there is a real world that we experience. However, the argument is that meaning is imposed on the world by us. There are many meanings or perspectives for any event or concept, thus there is not a correct meaning that we are striving for. (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992, p. 3)
A constructivist approach is appropriate for the study. As critical pedagogy challenges an established way of teaching, predetermined experiences do not constitute an open classroom atmosphere. Thus, constructivism accounts for the multiplicity among experiences. With the teacher and students collectively negotiating the pedagogical experience, the constructivist approach can expose this shared engagement in the critical classroom. The teacher and students both explore and construct meanings about the classroom experiences; meanings are not uniform and cannot be imposed upon them. Moreover, voice can be given to them in order to hear and understand experiences from their perspectives.

Based upon the issues identified in the study, along with the gaps in the literature, the study explores three research questions:

(1) What are the professors’ teaching practices and the students’ experiences in the critical classrooms?

(2) What is the pedagogical climate of the critical classroom that contributes to educating for democracy?

(3) What is the purpose of actualizing critical pedagogy in order to educate for democracy?

The three questions provide a foundation to understand how critical pedagogy can be applied to educate for democracy. The questions allow the research to move beyond a descriptive study that illustrates the approaches of teachers and the experiences of students in critical classrooms. The intent of the questions is to acquire a broader understanding of critical classrooms in terms of both the development of relationships and the examination of power dynamics between teacher and students.

Chapter Two explores the literature that relates to the research questions as well as develops the conceptual framework and model. In Chapter Three, I describe the conceptual framework and illustrate the conceptual model which both represent dimensions of critical pedagogy that can educate for democracy in the classroom. Chapter Four presents a description
of the methodology used to collect the data--course selections, class observations and one-to-one interviews--and to analyze the data. Also, in this chapter, I include a revised model. In recognizing the limitations of the original model, I re-constructed the model based on the themes emerging from the professors’ teaching approaches and students’ experiences as well as from the literature. In Chapter Five, I describe the courses, the professors and the students in the study. Also, the chapter addresses the first research question by describing the professors’ teaching approaches and students’ experiences in the critical classrooms. Chapter Six presents an interpretation of the data findings. In Chapter Seven, the second research question is explored. By interpreting the teaching approaches and the students’ experiences in relation to the literature and conceptual framework, I discuss the pedagogical climate of critical pedagogy that contributes to educating for democracy. The climate is outlined based upon a comparison of actual critical classrooms to Shor’s agenda of values, as an ideal model of critical pedagogy. Chapter Eight addresses the third research question by examining the purpose of using critical pedagogy to educate for democracy. The professors’ aims with respect to a critical democratic classroom are explored. Both Chapters Seven and Eight explore the relationship between education and power and difference. In Chapter Nine, I provide conclusions for the study, discuss limitations of the research and present implications for future research on the topic.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Five areas of literature define this study: (1) the relationship between education and democracy, (2) the impact of neoliberal capitalism on education, (3) the separation of the public sphere and the private sphere, (4) characteristics of critical pedagogy and (5) criticisms of critical pedagogy.

The Relationship between Education and Democracy

Education has been conceived with a purpose beyond serving individual goals. This purpose attends to the public good. Dewey (1916) believes that the greater purpose of education is a concern for democracy. By definition, “democracy is more than a form of government, it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (p. 87). Democracy entails caring for more than the individual self. With the democratic imperative being definitive of education, the nature of their relationship provides further meaning.

The social, ontological framework representing the relationship between democracy and education embraces different perspectives. The relationship has been defined as the progressivist stance according to one perspective and alternatively defined through the conservative stance. According to Portelli (2001), the two perspectives demonstrate differences with the degree of teacher directiveness and the extent of student freedom.

The extreme progressivist stance holds that the kind of education that is consistent with democracy is one that provides the least constraints on students, is not authoritarian and allows for the unique, individual qualities of students to flourish….While the teacher is deemed to be more knowledgeable than the students, the role of the teacher is to facilitate the learning process rather than to impart knowledge. (Portelli, 2001, p. 285)

This open-ended learning process highlights individualism. “A common thread among progressivist views is the emphasis put on the individual: the essential, natural goodness of
individual human beings, the needs of the individual, the self-actualization of the individual, etc” (p. 287).

At the same time, it cannot be assumed that the public good—the well-being of society—will be addressed because students are centralized in the learning process.

The frequent reference to individual self-realization gives the impression that once the individual has fulfilled him or herself, then the contradictions, problems and tensions in the world will be resolved. The individual is almost idolized in isolation from the rest of the universe, as if the individual exists in and of himself or herself. (Portelli, 2001, p. 287)

The democratic imperative requires students to understand their interconnectivity with each other in order to act and think for equitable outcomes. This idea points to the conservative stance.

Portelli (2001) states:

This is seen as the primary responsibility of teachers in the schools of a democracy. For if this is not done well, then the students, the prospective citizens, will not have the knowledge and understanding needed in order to be able to participate in a democracy by making choices that matter in a responsible, autonomous manner. (p. 281)

Through the conservative stance, “the relationship between education and democracy is viewed as a linear or direct, causal relationship” (Portelli, 2001, p. 282). While this perspective has been criticized for its rigidity and lack of student engagement, its directive vision can provide students with a solid knowledge base for the democratic imperative. Through the progressivist stance educating for democracy becomes overtly personalized and does not necessarily serve the common good.

The relationship between education and democracy cannot be neutral, but must take a political stance. The political stance projects a specific discourse about what supports and what
threatens democracy. The discourse provides a clear idea about an individual’s roles in order to change oppressive circumstances. At the same time, the relationship between education and democracy requires an equitable process through critical dialogue, critical debate and critical reflection. Thus, despite the progressivist and the conservative stances, neither conceptualization advances a critical, democratic perspective. The conservative approach is skewed because its unilateral approach unveils a democratic imperative without creating spaces for students to explore and express their own perceptions. The progressivist stance allows greater student autonomy or “freedom”, but is nevertheless not the critical, democratic perspective that is the focus of this study. The “freedom” designated to students is only one dimension of the democratic imperative. A critical democratic perspective demands an equity framework that can address issues of difference--along the lines of race, gender, class, sexuality and ability--and issues of power. As an indication of an equity framework, the critical democratic perspective embraces anti-racist, feminist, indigenous and queer pedagogies.

Ng (2003) projects a critical democratic perspective. She advocates for understanding issues of difference through the integrated equity approach--the intersection of race, gender, class, sexuality and ability.

Thus, taking up only one issue serves to reinforce differences constructed along lines of gender, race, and ability. We need an approach that makes links across these domains of social life-an approach that integrates race, gender, class and other differences in dealing with equity. (p. 207)

Each issue of difference has been typically approached from only its domain. But, an individual’s life is multidimensional. Therefore, issues of race, gender, class, sexuality and ability must be exposed for their connectedness.
The intersection among issues of difference reveals dominate and subordinate relationships. “I argue that we need to see differences as power relations that are produced in interactions. Understanding power as a relational property is therefore key to working with inequality and difference in education” (Ng, 2003, p. 207). In this regard, unveiling the intersection among issues of difference reveals operations of power to include and exclude individuals in the classroom. Ng (2003) states:

In an educational context, the exercise of power is accomplished in interactions…manifesting itself as acts of exclusion, marginalization, silencing, and so forth. Thus, paying attention to how power operates along axes of gender, race, class, and ability (that is, recognizing that social differences are not given, but are accomplished in and through educational settings) is a step toward educational equity. (p. 213)

As an example, the experience of a white female male in comparison to a minority female can differ based on a combination of differences, such as race and class, rather than being only a result of gender.

Ng (2003) also argues that dominant and subordinate relations have infiltrated social institutions and social systems. She notes:

Finally, I want to show how these relations of inequality become systematized over time and how we over are implicated in their creation and reproduction….As can be seen, this arises out of the way, race, gender and class are implicated in the organization of a capitalist labor market. Racism, sexism, and classism are based on ideas of the superiority of one group (be they Europeans, men, or the bourgeoisie) over others, that developed over time. In North America sexism, racism, and classism were entrenched as systems of domination in the process of colonization and nation building so that certain practices become normalized as “this is the way things are done.” (p. 212-213)
In other words, relations of inequality and difference are a result of larger systems of domination that have to be exposed and dissected along the lines of power and difference in order to pursue the democratic imperative.

In sum, in order to understand the relationship between education and democracy, a critical lens is required for “addressing multiple axes of inequality and difference” (Ng, 2003, p. 207). The relationship between education and democracy must also be constructed upon a discourse of power. Ng (2003) states that “we need to develop a critical awareness of the power dynamics operative in institutional relations-and of the fact that people participate in institutions as unequal subjects” (p. 214). A clear indication that both issues of power and difference have constructed inequities within education is evidenced through the impact of neoliberal capitalist ideology. Therefore, the relationship between education and democracy must be explored for this discursive practice.

*The Impact of Neoliberal Capitalism on Education*

**The Rise of Neoliberal Capitalism**

Neoliberalism is the prevailing political economic paradigm in the world today and has been described as an ideological ‘monoculture’, in that when neoliberal policies are criticized a common response is that ‘there is no alternative’ (aka TINA)….Neoliberalism is embraced by parties across the political spectrum, from right to left, in that the interests of wealthy investors and large corporations define social and economic policy….Indeed, the corporate controlled media spin would have the public believe that the economic consequences of neoliberal economic policy, which serves the interests of the wealthy elite, is good for everyone. (Ross & Gibson, 2007, p. 2)

Thus, neoliberalism is more than a capitalist system that impacts and governs the economy. Neoliberal capitalism is grounded by a demand for power--with the intention of wealthy,
privileged individuals or corporations to attain economic control and influence dimensions of social life.

Today, social institutions such as health care and education are no longer impacted by their own activity. They are being impacted by neoliberal capitalism which encourages privatization, competition, and business initiatives—all for the purpose of profit-making. Referring to these developments, Ollman (2001) states:

> Taken together, these developments, which are all internally related, constitute a new stage in capitalism. It is a serious error to think that they have brought us beyond capitalism. If anything, with these changes, our society is more thoroughly capitalist than ever before….This is capitalism, capitalism with a vengeance, and that's globalization. Which means, too, that the problems associated with globalization cannot be solved—as so many liberals would like to do—without dealing with their roots in the capitalist system. (cited in Ross and Gibson, 2007, p. 9)

As neoliberal capitalism touts that the ideology creates the best for society, its expansion into globalization has lead to social and economic injustices that warrant serious examination.

Referring to Mark Rupert, Bhattacharya (2005) comments that “the whole debate about globalization and its emergence has been conducted in deeply ideological terms that mask the political project of a particular neoliberal vision of global integration” (p. 9). Thus, globalization is only partially about economic activity that connects people, technology and locations. The idea that globalization is inevitable diminishes the abuse by private corporations of rich nations to take advantage of the traditional knowledge, local resources and cheap labor of poorer nations. Globalization, therefore, has negatively penetrated everyday life through discursive political agendas that serve the rich and privileged of the Western world at the cost of exploiting the poor and disadvantaged of the Third World. The paradox is that while globalization has been
perceived as “people from many places [imagining] themselves as part of a larger world, [dreaming] the dreams of many other locations and [communicating] with others who live different lives in faraway places” (Bhattacharya, 2005, p. 22), human suffering has occurred. In this way, globalization, as a function of neoliberal capitalism, has given way to patriarchy, racism, sexism and classism. The rise of neoliberal capitalism warrants a discourse to understand the abuse of power that has discursively impacted human life and in turn challenges the democratic imperative.

Dei, Hall and Rosenberg (2000b) express a concern for the human suffering experienced by poor, marginalized communities who become vulnerable to rich, powerful corporations. Showing concern for the discursive practices of the global economy, they comment that “with the globalization of Western development, most indigenous cultures are being forced into programs of modernization that tend to regard the acquisition of material goods as the central purpose of life” (p. 8). In other words, exploitative relations have subjected particular people’s culture and history to abuses of power. Furthermore, Dei et al. argue that knowledge has been channeled through discursive practices of capitalism. They note:

[T]his ‘crisis’ is manifested in the contradictions and tensions of a competitive knowledge economy, the internationalization of labour, and the concomitant struggles over power sharing among social groups and among women and men. Globalization has accelerated the flow of cultures across geographical, political, and cultural borders; it has also transferred knowledge into a commodity to which the most powerful in society usually lay unjustifiable claim. (p. 3-4)

Dei et al. (2000b) believe that the Western world is destroying not only knowledge, but also destroying the life lines of ordinary people. In reference to Vandana Shiva, they claim:
The Age of Enlightenment and the way of progress to which it gave rise, was centered on…modern scientific knowledge and economic development. Along the way, the unbridled pursuit of ‘progress’ began to destroy life without any assessment having been made of how much and how fast the diversity of life on this planet—our life support system—was disappearing. (p. 9)

Furthermore, Vandana Shiva advocates for an “expanding awareness that these things which are presently called ‘progress’ are merely, in fact, the special projects of modern Western patriarchy” (Dei et al., 2000b, p. 10). The abuse of the Western world through the destruction of biodiversity represents more than control over economic rights; it represents the destruction of history and culture.

Shiva (2001) provides examples that Western corporate investments are exerting control over communal resources such as land, forests, water, agriculture and medicine.

Ironically, while indigenous communities reject the notion of private community, through the discursive practices of Western corporations, the commons are being enclosed and the power of communities is being undermined by a corporate enclosure in which life itself is being transformed into the private property of corporations. (Shiva, 2001, p. 45)

In essence, private corporations disadvantage indigenous people by commodifying their traditions, knowledge, resources and livelihoods. The rise of neoliberal capitalism, through globalization, demands a concern for social justice and human rights issues. An approach to changing oppressive circumstances begins with academic circles and the wider community understanding how power is discursively used to create exclusionary practices. This awareness requires a discourse situated in critical questioning that can expose how the exploitative nature of Western capitalism encroaches upon the democratic imperative. A critical discourse can assist
individuals to move beyond “the feeling of impotence and helplessness that suffuses so much of the commentary on globalisation, as if we are all caught in the headlights of global processes, transfixed by what we cannot avoid and cannot change” (Bhattacharyya, 2005, p. 3). At this point, individuals can begin to probe questions about inequities along the lines of race, gender, class, sexuality and ability.

The idea that markets can take care of everything leaves individuals disengaged from thinking critically about the resulting inequities. A possible reaction may be that the global impact may be too remote for people to relate to accordingly. However, with the discursive practices of neoliberal capitalism impacting dimension of social life, individuals must think critically about the resulting inequities. This attention can begin with understanding the discursive impacts upon education.

Effects of Neoliberal Capitalism upon Education

Hursh (2005) describes how neoliberal reforms have negatively impacted education in the United States and England through standardization of curriculum, standardized testing, school choice and educational methods. Hursh (2005) contends that “the differences between the educational systems have more to do with differences between the two governmental systems than with the overall policy objectives” (p. 3). Thus, the educational systems reveal the powerful impact of neoliberal reforms, despite differences in the political environments. It is necessary to understand how the neoliberal paradigm operates and how its characteristics have infiltrated education. According to Martinez and Garcia (2000), there are five key characteristics of neoliberalism: the rule of the market, cutting public expenditures for social services, deregulation, privatization and elimination of the concept of “public good” or community (cited in Ross & Gibson, 2007).

To begin with, Martinez and Garcia (2000) state that the rule of the market means:
liberating free/private enterprise from any restrictions imposed by the state (government) no matter the social damage that results. The aim is total freedom of movement for capital, goods, and services, which is facilitated by trade agreements such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services). (cited in Ross & Gibson, 2007, p. 3)

The market rule encourages profit-making without concern for an impact upon the human condition. If education is reduced to a good or a service for monetary exchange, then knowledge becomes a commodity for acquiring a job rather a discourse for subscribing to critical development. Hill (2003) states:

Within Universities…the language of education has been very widely replaced by the language of the market, where lecturers ‘deliver the product’, ‘operationalize delivery’ and facilitate clients’ learning, within a regime of ‘quality management and enhancement’, where students have become ‘customers’ selecting ‘modules’ on a pick’n mix basis, where ‘skill development’ at Universities has surged in importance to the derogation of the development of critical thought. (p. 9)

An example of market rule is school choice. The idea that the market grants “freedom” to students based on a perceived openness camouflages the exclusionary practices that construct boundaries by privileging particular racial groups and social classes over others. Based upon schools in England that allow school choice, Gerwirtz (2002) believes that the consequences of the market have negative impacts.

[T]he already advantaged school is able to retain and attract more capable students while the school struggling to meet the needs of its low-income and migrant students cannot attract students and must accept the students excluded from the favored schools. (cited in Hursh, 2005, p. 8)
Robertson and Lauder (2001) add “that choice may be about ‘fitting in’ and operates as a social class process with social class consequences” (cited in Hursh, 2005, p. 8). Class, race and other differences, rather than ability, desire and equity, determine how education is organized and applied accordingly. In this regard, school choice supports individualism; school choice does not attend to a collective concern about education as a public domain. Hursh (2005) believes:

school choice, as promoted in the United States by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and in England by open enrollments, encourages parents to transfer their children from school to school, therefore undermining their allegiance to the local school and the incentive to engage in public discourses regarding the nature and purpose of schooling. Because…the reforms focus on turning schools into competitive markets in which students apply to the school they want to attend, children and their parents no longer have shared interests with other students and families and, instead, may become competitors for the available openings. (p. 5)

It may be perceived that institutions will operate more effectively and efficiently based on school choice. Yet, in such a realm, there is no guarantee that schools will pay attention to equity work in order to serve the public good. By endorsing school choice, the financial support provided to schools, based upon enrollments, treats students as consumers and creates competition for resources rather than working for equity with respect to student access.

The ascendency of market culture into the university is concerning because the neoliberal discourse diminishes the purpose for a democratic discourse along the lines of equity, social justice and human rights. Readings (1996) argues that “the current crisis of the university in the West proceeds from a fundamental shift in its social role and internal systems, one which means the centrality of the traditional humanistic disciplines to the life of the University is no longer assured” (p. 3). Readings (1996) does not deny that the university has evolved as “a transnational
bureaucratic corporation” (p. 3). He believes that the university has to “respond to the demand for accountability” (p. 18). But, at the same time, he argues that the university cannot be reduced to a centre of administration and economics; otherwise this occurrence “will only serve to prop up the logic of consumerism” (p. 134) instead of attending to the public good.

Second, according to Martinez and Garcia (2000), cutting public expenditures for social services refers to reducing government financial support for public social services “such as education and health care” (cited in Ross & Gibson, p. 3). The public reduction negatively impacts education in that institutions are driven to seek support from large businesses and corporations. As market values encroach upon institutions, profit-making, consumerism, marketization and privatization are becoming standards to mark efficiency in the delivery of teaching and learning and in educational institutions overall. Hill (2003) reminds us that “within education and other public services business values and interests are increasingly substituted for democratic accountability and the collective voice” (p. 6). The loss of public interest to pursue an equity agenda moves social services from the public domain to the private domain which in turn establishes exorbitant fees and thus excludes particular individuals.

It is not surprising that the university is attracted to corporate dollars not only because of reduced government funding or a high demand for resources, but also to remain competitive among institutions. Similar to businesses which project excellence and productivity through managerial structures, the university seems to be following this pattern by “the growing power of administration which more and more responds not to faculty and students, except at the margins, but to political and market forces that claim sovereignty over higher education” (Aronowitz, 2000, p. 164).

Third, Martinez and Garcia (2000) state that deregulation is the “reduction of government regulation that might diminish profits” (cited in Ross & Gibson, 2007, p. 3). The negative impact
of deregulation upon education is revealed through rising tuition for higher education. Without control by government, higher education will experience increased fees that have the ramifications of excluding particular individuals. Hill (2003) argues that “the racialized, class-based hierarchicalization of universities is exacerbated by ‘top-up fees’ for entry to elite universities-pricing the poor out of the system-or at least- into the lower divisions of higher education” (p. 6). Moreover, fee deregulation is becoming difficult to curtail since knowledge is disseminated as a commercial good. Magnusson (2001) comments:

Hence, the shaping of intellectual work in Canadian universities through the discourse and discursive practices of neoliberal restructuring can no longer de denied. Within this discourse, conceptions of quality and excellence are linked to economic development through innovation and training of knowledge workers. (p. 107)

A prime example of defining education through commercial means is evidenced by “deregulated tuition fees for designer degrees (such as executive MBAs and infotech) [that] set the stage for commodity fetishism with regard to higher education as a consumer commodity” (Magnusson, 2001, p. 107). Instead of engaging knowledge to serve the public good, knowledge manifests as an economic good for financial gains by the institution or for personal benefits by students. Educational institutions can set tuition at exorbitant levels because they believe that students are willing to pay the fee in order to acquire knowledge for lucrative jobs.

Fourth, neoliberalism has been characterized through privatization which Martinez and Garcia (2000) describe as:

Selling state-owned enterprises, goods, and services to private investors (including public education). Although usually done in the name of increased efficiency, privatization has mainly had the effect of concentrating wealth in fewer hands and making the public pay more for its needs. (cited in Ross & Gibson, 2007, p. 4)
The negative consequence of privatizing education is evidenced by its deceptive approach. Similar to the rationale of the market rule, privatization capitalizes on the idea of education being more efficient and attractive to students’ needs. However, when probed further, the privatization of education focuses upon profit-making.

The following examples demonstrate the hidden agenda of privatizing education. In the United States, following the No Child Left Behind Act, schools were given funds if they “offered supplemental tutoring primarily through for-profit and faith-based corporations” (Hursh, 2005, p. 10). As another example of the hidden agenda for privatizing education, Hursh (2005) points out that the No Child Left Behind Act is manipulated by private organizations to capitalize upon the discontent with public education. As a result, parents and students are offered vouchers to attract them to private schools. Not surprisingly, the voucher system was “invented” by Milton Freidman who is known as the father of neoliberal capitalism.

All of his arguments are embedded in the notion that the individual and individual rights should reign over all other rights and that the state should only play the role of ensuring the rule of law and fostering competitive markets. Essentially, Freidman believes in the liberalization of markets, privatization, deregulation….Freidman and his proponents believe that individuals should have the right to “choose” and be increasingly responsible for providing for oneself and for one’s family. Thus, Friedman’s ideology, which has been embraced in the West, promotes individualism and more importantly, takes the collective good out of the discussion of what it means to be a civilized and democratic nation. (Pouragheli, 2008).

Thus, by implementing vouchers, discursive practices are revealed by schools as they align with individualism, competition and profit-making—all beliefs that threaten the public good. In England, similarly, corporate models are being implemented to evaluate the quality of education
and hence, direct teaching and learning into a profit-making venture. According to Hatcher (2003), private corporations evaluate schools and offer professional development (cited in Hursh, 2005, p. 10). Also, Peterson (2004) found that schools make profits by selling courses that can assist students with exam preparation (cited in Hursh 2005, p. 10). Privatization of education has gained support because business models, along with their values, become the measures for school effectiveness and efficiency. However, business agendas will not pay attention to the equity issues that lead to the inclusion and exclusion of students.

Last, Martinez and Garcia (2000) describe the “elimination of the concept of ‘the public good’ or ‘community’ and replacing it with ‘individual responsibility’ and pressuring the poorest people to find solutions to their lack of education, health care, etc.” (cited in Ross & Gibson, 2007, p. 4). This shift in thinking stems from market values replacing democratic values. Peters (1994) states that “neo-liberal governments take less responsibility for the welfare of the individual; the individual becomes responsible for himself or herself. The goal for neo-liberal societies is to create the competitive, instrumentally rational individual who can compete in the marketplace” (cited in Hursh, 2005, p. 4-5). Thus, individuals are not concerned about the welfare of others or the welfare of the public. In contrast, they are concerned about being skilled workers. They exist and function individualistically rather than collectively.

Elimination of the public good not only threatens the well-being of society, but also takes advantage of those already in positions of subordination. Showing the discursive impact of neoliberal capitalism upon the public good, Aronowitz (2006) discusses the abuse of global capitalism on third world countries. Referring to the term subaltern, as discussed by Gayrati Spivak, Aronowitz (2006) argues that global capitalism has created a subaltern--the disadvantaged and silenced poor of third world countries. The subaltern has no voice within this landscape. Similarly, the corporatization of higher education has eroded a concern for equity
issues that in turn marginalize individuals along the lines of race, gender and class. As Aronowitz (2006) comments:

[T]he real test of a determined struggle for freedom and democracy is whether intellectuals and activists are prepared to fight to preserve and to establish the elements of citizenship in their own communities and institutions. For in the final accounting, the assault against the subaltern is directly proportional to the level of understanding and mobilization in both the developed and the developing world, as they share a common foe: global capital. (p. 192)

In the developed world, individuals are dissuaded from collective action against the social costs of neoliberalism since they believe that the paradigm is a guarantor for their “freedom” and acts for the public good.

As individuals emerge complacent to challenging neoliberal capitalism, they maintain the status quo. The developed world has thus led to “the subaltern in paradise” (Aronowitz, 2006, p. 193). In other words, neoliberal capitalism has silenced citizens in the developed world as well as the undeveloped world, but the former masks the discursive practices by providing a notion of an all-encompassing “freedom”. The elimination of the public good moves away from asking critical questions about oppressive circumstances based upon issues of difference. Without collective action and without an equity framework, education will be defined through individualism. Without critical engagement, there will be apathy for critical action which is fundamental to the hope for democracy. Hill (2003) writes, “by engaging in critical transformative practice, we can, working solidaristically as well as individually, mitigate and replace unjust policies and educational inequalities, and in doing so, build a fuller and richer democracy” (p. 19). This idea refers to the responsibility of individuals, as citizens, and as
members of their communities to challenge neoliberal capitalism by taking ownership of their individualistic tendencies and undertaking equity agendas.

Neoliberalism does not attend to the public good, but deceptively, the paradigm projects itself with this intent. Hursh (2005) believes that neoliberal capitalism ideology manipulates the notion of democracy. Democracy is articulated in terms of the “choice” that market forces can grant individuals rather than through a concern for social relationships and political engagement. However, the neoliberal perspective does not account for the social inequities that prevent equal opportunity. As Ross and Gibson (2007) state, with neoliberalism “there is formal democracy, but the citizens remain spectators, diverted from any meaningful participation in decision-making….A depoliticized and apathetic citizenry…is a key outcome of neoliberalism; one that is arguably abetted by new education reforms” (p. 3). Neoliberal capitalism ideology has further justified itself by claiming to be a necessary reform responding to the deterioration of society.

[F]alling standards, dropouts, and illiteracy; the fear of violence in schools; and the concern over the destruction of traditional values…These fears are exacerbated and used by dominant groups in the politico-economic arena who have been able to shift the debate on education (and all things social) onto their own terrain— the terrain of traditionalism, standardization, productivity, marketization, and economic needs. (Apple, 2006, p. 22)

In other words, neoliberal capitalism not only overlooks political action to challenge social inequities, the paradigm has infiltrated education with its ideas of effective and efficient reforms.

Both Hursh (2005) and Apple (2006) discuss how neoliberalism masks a private agenda in the name of a “democratic agenda”. The hidden agenda of neoliberalism is so powerful that it has influenced a perspective that is theoretically oppositional to itself— the neoconservative paradigm. Neoliberalism and neoconservatism embrace market values and traditional values
respectively. According to the neoliberal perspective, the state must be minimized, preferably by setting private enterprise loose. According to the neoconservative perspective, the state needs to be strong in teaching ‘correct’ knowledge, norms, and values… These positions are inherently contradictory, but…the neoliberal agenda has ways of dealing with such contradictions and has managed to creatively build an alliance” (Apple, 2006, p. 21-22). The structural difference of the state’s role between neoliberalism and neoconservatism dissipates as both paradigms operate in order to gain an all-encompassing control over society. The similarities are further accentuated as each paradigm subscribes to the idea of privileged individuals dictating the organization of society. Both neoliberalism and neoconservatism are not concerned with social inequities, but instead are guided by predetermined values that are “aimed at restoring ‘lost’ traditions and authority” (Apple, 2006, p. 24). A greater sense of social responsibility will occur only when a shift in thinking occurs from individual rights and privileges to collective obligations and responsibilities. As neoliberal capitalism subscribes to the private sphere and moves away from the public sphere, attention must be brought to the separation of the two spheres.

*The Separation of the Public Sphere and the Private Sphere*

*The Private Notion of Citizenry*

Different conceptions of citizenry impact the relationship between the public sphere and the private sphere. The differences create tensions with respect to negotiating the democratic imperative. From one perspective, citizenry has gravitated from a public conceptualization to embrace a private notion. This shift positions individuals to be concerned about their own well-being at the cost of others. As an extreme, the shift entails a sense of public withdrawal altogether. Barber (2001) would align with Dewey’s (1958) conceptualization of democracy in which all individuals must participate in the formation of values for their own well-being and that of society. He states:
The large majority of multicultural countries…must seek common identity in something other than race, religion, and culture…democracy has itself offered a solution to the challenge of multiculturalism by emphasizing civic identity as an extension of democratic membership – that is citizenship. (p. 57)

In other words, democracy implies more than the individual freedom granted to a citizen. It also implies common values that define citizenship.

However, Barber (2001) admits that private interests threaten commonality among citizens through competing identities which are:

a renewed tribalism that has underscored blood brotherhood and set tribe against tribe, culture against culture, people against people, in a kind of modern “Jihad”, that is Balkanizing nation states throughout the world, and a postmodern commercial identity rooted in consumption that sees men and women as clients and consumers of economic, technological, and market forces that demand integration and uniformity and that are mesmerizing people everywhere with fast music, fast computers, and fast food. (p. 58)

The underlying notion is if individuals are separated by either their ethnic identities to exclude each other or by their consumerist identities to compete for material goods, who will attend to the public sphere in order to foster the democratic imperative? Even though an inclination may be to diminish the private sphere, attention is required elsewhere in order to reclaim the public sphere. As Barber (2001) states, individuals must recognize that citizenship does not only rest with private activities such as consuming, working and voting. Citizenry also stems from the public domain which extends to everyday activities of “going to church…doing volunteer work, participating in a voluntary or civic association…contributing to a charity, and assuming responsibility in a PTA”(p. 60)--all activities that require common values instead of individualistic ones.
Since the lives of individuals are a combination of both public and private domains, individuals need to understand citizenry through a synthesis of both spheres. This idea is reflected through the ideology of participatory democracy. Pateman (1970) embraces the work of Jean Jacques Rosseau who defines the ideology through participatory roles in order to engage individuals with decision-making.

Rousseau’s ideal system is designed to develop responsible individual, social and political action through the effect of the participatory process. During this process the individual learns that the word ‘each’ must be applied to himself; that is to say, he finds that he has to take into account wider matters than his own immediate private interests if he is to gain co-operation from others, and he learns that the public and private interest are linked. The logic of the operation of the participation system is such that he is ‘forced’ to deliberate according to his sense of justice, according to what Rosseau calls his ‘constant will’ because fellow citizens can always resist the implementation of inequitable demands. As a result of participation in decision-making the individual is educated to distinguish between his own impulses and desires, he learns to be a public as well as a private citizen. (Pateman, 1970, p. 24-25)

Rousseau believed that if citizens are participating in a decision-making process, then they are considering how their attitudes and actions contribute to the public good. If individuals think and act unilaterally, they are not engaged in participatory relations and thus are paying attention to their private interests.

Participatory democracy brings the public sphere and the private sphere together for the betterment of the collective. The key factor to bring together both spheres is the role of institutions. Yet, neither Rosseau nor Pateman (1970) elaborates on this point.

Pateman (1970) outlines two aspects of participatory democracy. One aspect is:
spheres such as industry should be seen as political systems in their own right, offering areas of participation additional to the national level. If individuals are to exercise the maximum amount of control over their own lives and environment, then authority structures in these areas must be so organized that they can participate in decision-making”. (p. 43)

Rosseau and Pateman focus upon democratizing the workplace in order for the domain to function as a political system that subscribes to participatory engagement. “The argument in the participatory theory of democracy is that the education for democracy that takes place through the participatory process in non-governmental authority structures requires, therefore, that the structures should be democratized” (Pateman, 1970, p. 45). However, besides democratizing structures in the workplace in order to illuminate the participatory process, how can individuals learn to function in the participatory process?

A more explicit connection between educational institutions and participatory democracy is required. Individuals need to develop the knowledge and skills for the decision-making process prior to the workplace. This development implicates the role of educational institutions. Following Rosseau’s perspective, Pateman (1970) vaguely suggests the necessity of an educational component as the other aspect of participatory democracy. She notes:

The existence of representative institutions at the national level is not sufficient for democracy…democracy must take place in other spheres in order that the necessary individual attitudes and psychological qualities can be developed. This development takes place through the process of participation itself. The major function of participation in the theory of participatory democracy is therefore an educative one, educative in the very widest sense, including both the psychological aspect and the gaining of practice in democratic skills and procedures. (p. 42)
The broad statement that participatory democracy requires an educative component is evidenced by the phrase “educative in the very widest sense” that refers to learning “democratic skills and procedures”. But, these dimensions are only a partial attempt for education to attend to participatory democracy. While Rosseau and Pateman insist upon creating participatory roles, education must also develop democratic discourses. For instance, participatory democracy requires questioning the meaning of citizenship beyond private interests. To this end, citizenship needs to be approached from the perspective of community, civic responsibilities and national identity. This perspective does not suggest that personal goals, individual rights and individual freedoms have to be overlooked. The role of education is to create discourses in that the participatory process recognizes that the public sphere and private sphere can be operational together rather than being antagonist. In essence, a deeper understanding is required how the public sphere and the private sphere can function together.

_A Feminist Understanding of the Public-Private Division_

Bringing together the public sphere and private sphere is rooted in the feminist perspective. Feminist theorists have advocated against the separation of the public sphere and the private sphere. The premise for their argument is society functions through the interconnectivity of individuals. Individuals are not independent beings, but instead connected through relationships. Gould (1988) remarks:

Entities that make up social reality, such as groups, social institutions, social structures, processes, and practices, as well as society as a totality, are derived entities that are constituted by the activities of, and relations among, such individuals. To say that individuals-in-relations are the fundamental entities is not to say that there are two sorts of fundamental entities: individuals, on the one hand, and relations, on the other. Rather,
these individuals are such that their characteristic mode of being, that is, their activity, is relational or essentially involves their relations with others. (p. 105)

Gould (1984) adds that democracy, as the freedom for self-development, extends beyond individuality; democracy unites individuality and community. To this end, democracy unites the public sphere and the private sphere. As an example of the relations among individuals, the feminist perspective identifies women’s primary roles—motherhood and family obligations.

Both roles demonstrate that individuals are interconnected beings.

Feminists, on a whole, believe that private issues necessitate a place in the public sphere, otherwise to maintain a separation between the public sphere and the private sphere contributes to oppressions and injustices. While relational feminists such as Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) encourage that the feminine characteristic of caring move beyond the private sphere into the public sphere, they have been criticized for essentializing women through such qualities.

Thus, there is a serious need to find ways to intersect differences in order to construct an equity agenda. If a division between the public and private spheres is maintained, the oppressions that individuals face are relegated to the private sphere and not challenged with any political motives to bring about social change in the public domain.

However, bringing together the public sphere and the private sphere is a challenge. The separation of the spheres stems from the differences among the traditional masculine roles and feminine roles.

The concern with individuality has traditionally been primarily associated with men, and the concern with community or sociality has traditionally been primarily a women’s concern. In modern times, the public sphere of work and politics has been characterized by egoism, that is, an ideology of individual self-interest, and individual achievement and recognition. This public sphere has been one in which men have historically
predominated, and so this ideology has been primarily associated with men. On the other hand, women have historically been mainly assigned to the private sphere of the family and personal relations. The ideology and concerns characteristic of this sphere have been those of supportiveness and compassion for others and the importance of the family or the community as a social whole – in general, the privity of social relations. One may therefore say that concerns with individuality and community have been separately associated with men and with women. (Gould, 1984, p.16-17)

The segregation has led the public domain to be a historically masculinized domain and therefore androcentric. The key to bringing together the public and private is for individuals to recognize that freedom is not only a part of personal actions, but also a part of social relations (Gould, 1984). To this end, feminists believe that in order to serve the democratic imperative that there must be an intersection of power and difference which in turn can validate everyday lives and experiences. Following the feminist perspective, educational institutions need to embrace the idea of contextualizing differences rather than essentializing differences.

While relational feminists such as Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) encourage that the feminine characteristic of caring move beyond the private sphere into the public sphere, they have been criticized for essentializing women through such qualities. Thus, there is a serious need to find ways to intersect differences in order to construct an equity agenda. This perspective will not account for the experiences of single, working class mothers or of lesbian women. Thus, there is a serious need to find ways to intersect differences in order to construct an equity agenda. The feminist scholars do not address issues of race and class and thus essentialize ideas about “womanhood” that are rooted in a white, middle-class perspective.

As a further example, Martindale (1992) argues that educators cannot essentialize teaching by outlining particular differences. She claims that feminist pedagogy have fallen
victim to essentialism by identifying difference through broad strokes and hence excluding some axes of difference. “Although much current feminist theorizing attempts to produce a simultaneous tri-systems approach to differences of gender, race and class, most of those working in the field will admit that class, especially in North America, is the most occluded member of feminism’s holy trinity” (p. 323). Martindale (1992) hopes that “teachers attempting to use a tri-systems approach [will] work through the painful contradictions of gender, race, and class oppression by essaying a deconstructive materialist feminist pedagogy in dialogue with their students” (p. 324). In other words, teaching can overlook ways of defining individuals based upon a division of traits that cannot account for the issues of differences that students bring to the classroom.

Martindale (1992) states that women have been essentialized according to the perspective of the white, middle-class, and heterosexual individual. In other words, addressing the issue of gender is insufficient to foster the democratic imperative. In order to understand women’s experiences, an equity framework is needed to address differences such as race, class, sexuality and ability. Martindale (1992) claims that it cannot be assumed that a woman will be nurturing because this quality is characteristic of females. She refers to her personal experience with her working class mother who:

stifled my intellectual curiosity and positively took steps to keep me from developing my mind….Not only did I learn to read unaided and at an early age, I had to conceal this ability from my mother out of fear of punishment were the truth and the accomplishment revealed. Where there should have been celebration, instead there was deprivation. (p. 3)

An intersection of difference is needed in order to understand the experiences or relations, whether between mother and child or between teacher and student. There cannot be a universal nurturing experience simply because of the assumed role of a woman.
Feminist scholars discuss that differences can be overlooked to provide the sense that all students can be treated the same. For example, Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) discuss how the classroom has adopted all students as the same to convey that they can “potentially be middle class with the right brains and the rights mothers” (cited in Martindale, 1992, p. 327). Also, hooks (1989) comments that “she had to…de-naturalize and de-universalize class- and race-specific assumptions about maternal caring” (cited in Martindale, 1992, p. 327). These ideas suggest that blending traits can be problematic. This approach will overlook and erase the differences that are unique to individuals and which they bring to social domains such the classroom that in turn impact their experiences.

*The Single Public Sphere versus Multiple Publics*

From another perspective, the meaning of citizenry has embraced more than a single public conceptualization. Fraser (1994) explicitly discusses this meaning as multiple publics which can reveal individuals’ histories and experiences by acknowledging race, gender and class differences. The conflict between citizenry conceptualized through a single public sphere and multiple publics stems from Habermas’s definition of a public sphere which supports a bourgeois perspective. According to Habermas:

The idea of a public space is that of a body of ‘private persons’ assembled to discuss matters of ‘public concern’ or ‘common interest’. This idea acquired force and reality in early modern Europe in the constitution of ‘bourgeois public spaces’….These publics aimed to mediate between ‘society’ and the state by holding the state accountable to ‘society’ via ‘publicity’…. At another level, it designated a specific kind of discursive interaction. Here the public sphere connotated an ideal of unrestricted rational discussion of public matters. The discussion was open and accessible to all, merely private interests
were to deliberate as peers. The result of such discussion would be ‘public opinion’ in the strong sense about the common good. (Fraser, 1994, p. 76-77)

A public space, as perceived by the bourgeois and Habermas, was viewed separate from the state, the market or any private interests. It is:

the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction. This arena is conceptually distinct from the state; it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state….it is not an arena of market relations but rather one of discursive relations, a theater for debating and deliberating rather than for buying and selling.

(Fraser, 1994, p. 75)

Thus, a public space was appropriated for open, critical debates about the welfare of society. The space was constructed with the intention to serve the democratic imperative. It was devoid of the interference or bias of the state, the market or any private interest.

Even with its good intentions, the bourgeois public did not allow for free, open dialogue. Despite that the public space strived to engage all citizens, they were not all entitled to equal participation and could not all participate openly based upon issues of difference (Fraser, 1994). There were variations in the perceptions of a public space based upon the ensuing private interests that challenged a sense of commonality among citizens. Clearly, one single definition of the public sphere could not accommodate the social differences and competing interests. As examples that the bourgeois conception restricted equal participation in society, Fraser (1994) notes:

Women of all classes and ethnicities were excluded from official political participation precisely on the basis of ascribed gender status, while plebeian men were formally
excluded by property qualifications. Moreover, in many cases, women and men of racialized ethnicities of all classes were excluded on racial grounds. (Fraser, 1994, p. 81)

Having one single public space to engage citizens in participatory roles is restrictive and unrealistic. Hence, the argument gives rise to the necessity of multiple publics. Consequently, Fraser (1994) views multiple publics as a means to give voice to those excluded or disadvantaged and create opportunities for equal participation. To demonstrate its viability, Fraser (1994) discusses how multiple publics is a more appropriate perspective than a single public sphere among both a stratified society and an egalitarian, multicultural society.

To begin with, the single public sphere and multiple publics have been pitted against each other.

An underlying evaluative assumption, namely, that the institutional confinement of public life to a single, overarching public sphere is a positive and desirable state of affairs, where as the proliferation of a multiplicity of publics represents a departure from, rather than an advance toward, democracy (Fraser, 1994, p. 83).

In reality, the perspective of multiple publics is not anti-democratic. There will not be a silencing of individuals to accept a universalized view of democracy as projected through a single public sphere. Multiple publics allows for citizens to internalize and give voice to lived experiences through their stories, beliefs and views. The plurality among citizens illustrates that one single public sphere cannot represent all voices equally. But, the idea of recognizing multiple publics is not only about hearing all voices. Multiple publics move away from positions of silence and subordination in some cases and in other cases moves away from uniformity and universalism towards equal participation which Fraser (1994) refers to as participatory parity.

Fraser (1994) studies the suitability of multiple publics compared to a single public sphere in a stratified society. By definition, stratified societies are “societies whose basic
institutional framework generates unequal social groups in structural relations of dominance and subordination….in such societies, full parity of participation in public debate and deliberation is not within the reach of possibility” (Fraser, 1994, p. 83). In other words, relations of exclusion and inclusion define stratified societies. Fraser (1994) believes that multiple publics will better allow for subordinate voices to be heard as the single public sphere operates upon relations of exclusion. But, beyond assisting subordinate voices to surface, the multiple publics expose oppressed, silenced voices referred by Fraser (1994) as “subaltern counterpublics” (p. 84).

[M]embers of subordinated groups—women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians—have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics….subaltern counterpublics…signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. (Fraser, 1994, p. 84)

The delineation of multiple publics into subaltern counterpublics provides an evaluative lens to subordinate groups whose experiences may be universalized through a single public perspective. Thus, subaltern counterpublics expose the discursive practices cast upon subordinate individuals and assist them by positioning their private issues in a public arena. To this end, subaltern counterpublics can be the catalyst for collective concern and social change. As Fraser (1994) states:

these counterpublics emerge in response to exclusions within dominant publics, they help expand discursive space. In principle, assumptions that were previously exempt from contestation will now have to be publicly argued out. In general, the proliferation of subaltern counterpublics means a widening of discursive contestation, and that is a good thing in stratified societies. (p. 84)
Fraser (1994) also investigates how multiple publics better suit egalitarian, multicultural societies. By definition, egalitarian, multicultural societies “are classless societies without gender or racial divisions of labor…provided such societies permit free expression and association, they are likely to be inhabited by social groups with diverse values, identities, and cultural styles, hence to be multicultural” (Fraser, 1994, p. 85). Having multiple publics in multicultural societies emphasize that if there is not the opportunity to express a range of beliefs and experiences then society is working towards universalizing personal beliefs and experiences.

It is doubtful that a single public sphere will be receptive to all cultures equally in that “public spheres themselves are not spaces of zero-degree culture, equally hospitable to any possible form of culturally expression” (Fraser, 1994, p. 86). This lack of neutrality, according to Fraser (1994), is evidenced in the public sphere through either modes of literature or designation of physical space that give advantages to particular cultures over others. In reference to an egalitarian, multicultural society, a single public sphere:

would be tantamount to filtering diverse rhetorical and stylistic norms through a single, overarching lens. Moreover, since there can be no such lens that is genuinely culturally neutral, it would effectively privilege the expressive norms of one cultural group over others, thereby making discursive assimilation a condition for participation in public debate. The result would be the demise of social equality. In general, then we can conclude that the idea of an egalitarian, multicultural society only makes sense if we suppose a plurality of public arenas in which groups with diverse values and rhetorics participate. By definition, such a society must contain a multiplicity of publics. (Fraser, 1994, p. 86-87)

Multiple publics not only allows participation from all voices, but also opens lines of communication among groups which builds participatory democracy, as Fraser (1994) states,
instead of segregating one cultural group from another. Furthermore, Fraser (1994) admits that it is not a simple task to seek what is common where cultural differences lie accordingly. Yet, the starting point must be dialogue and the opportunity to dialogue which will not occur through only one universalized perspective of democracy.

The idea of separating what is private and what is public manifest as a serious concern. There appears to be diminishing concern for anything that is public since it is “devalued or ignored altogether as the idea of the public sphere is equated with a predatory space, rife with danger and disease as with ‘public’ restrooms, ‘public’ transportation, and urban ‘public’ schools…the term public has itself become perjorative” (Giroux, 2004, p. 224). In this regard, there is not only a separation of the public sphere from the private sphere, but more threatening, the obliteration of both anything that is deemed public and actual public spaces. The disassociation from public spaces to address private concerns threatens educating for democracy. It is necessary, therefore, to discuss how education can serve the democratic imperative by bringing together the public and private spheres. This focus points to critical pedagogy.

*Understanding Critical Pedagogy*

Freire’s conceptualization of critical pedagogy is rooted in education, specifically the classroom, acknowledging private lives in the realm of learning. In doing so, Friere’s critical pedagogy identifies a notion of democracy that addresses issues of power such as dominance, oppression and exclusion. To this end, discourses about power can be brought into the classroom in order to facilitate critical inquiry and instigate social change. In defining critical pedagogy, it is helpful to outline its history and development.

“The notion of critical pedagogy—the concern with transforming oppressive relations of power in a variety of domains that lead to human oppression…finds its origins in critical theory” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 45). Critical theory arose seventy years ago by the Frankfurt School--the
Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003). Critical theory emerged following the ramifications of World War II which resulted into economic depression, political struggles and class conflicts in Germany and Central Europe. Some of the major critical theorists engaged at that point were Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Max Weber (Darder et al., 2003; Kincheloe, 2004). The work of these individuals arose in order to project views concerning the resulting oppression during the post-war period. Also, critical theory was influenced by Marxist capitalism. Repercussions of World War II led the world, especially the West, to build its defence mechanisms. The West advanced considerably through:

- the rapid development of science and technology and their persuasive penetration into the political and social systems summoned a new and major transformation in the structure of capitalism. This accelerated development of an advanced industrial-technological society represented a serious area of concern. (Darder et al., 2003, p. 9)

The theoretical perspective, as explained by Kincheloe (2004), flourished further when Jewish critical theorists felt threatened in Germany after World War II and disembarked for the United States to continue their scholarly work. The positivistic paradigm that had defined the world, until this time period, through one lens was contrasted with these critical theorists whose “research could describe and accurately measure any dimension of human behaviour” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 47).

Subsequently, as an indication of expansion, critical theory was disseminated throughout the world. Kincheloe (2004) describes:

Emerging in the 1960s, the New Left was politically influenced by the anti-colonial liberation movements breaking out in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The group
supported the civil rights movements in the United States and opposed the Vietnam War and American imperialism abroad. (p. 47)

Hence, critical theory stemmed from historical circumstances that revealed discursive power relations and its impact upon personal experience and human behaviour. Ultimately, critical theory emerged as a discourse that was concerned “with the social construction of experience...and power relations of the social and historical contexts…that could eventually lead to a more egalitarian and democratic social order” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 47-48).

In understanding human experience, critical theory did not position itself as a monolithic tradition based on a universal way of knowing. For the obvious reason, understanding experience was drawn from social differences such as race, culture, gender and class. To project only one way of knowing is anti-democratic in itself and contradictory to the purpose of critical theory. If the goal of critical theory is to foster democratic practices, then a fixed set of characteristics cannot be used to deconstruct histories and experiences. To this end, the teaching of critical theory or the encounter of critical theory with education yields critical pedagogy which embraces various traditions and discourses. Kincheloe (2004) notes:

diverse theoretical traditions have informed...critical pedagogy and have demanded understanding of diverse forms of oppression including class, race, gender, sexual, cultural religious, colonial, and ability-related concerns. In this context, critical theorists become detectives of new theoretical insights, perpetually searching for new and interconnected ways of understanding power and oppression and the ways they shape everyday life and human experience. (p. 49).

Critical pedagogy emphasizes to students how operations and assumptions of power impact their own actions and attitudes through constructing dominance and oppression, exclusion and inclusion and privilege and punishment. In terms of the classroom, a critical approach
highlights how predetermined teaching and learning approaches have occurred, how particular bodies of knowledge have been privileged and how the teacher-student relationship had been conditioned. Students, as a result, can begin to address the oppressive structures within classrooms and dialogue about what they have accepted blindly as false expectations. This critical awareness can then be applied to understanding the broader social world.

Paulo Friere defined critical pedagogy as the expansion of students’ thinking capacities with a curious and questioning disposition. Therefore, critical pedagogy extends beyond a set of critical methodologies or techniques. Critical pedagogy stems from critical theory. Kincheloe (2004) writes:

A critical social theory is concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system. (p. 49)

At the root of critical pedagogy is acknowledging that control, power and privilege shape everyday life and human experience to “undermine for social justice, freedom and egalitarian social relations in educational, economical, political, social and cultural domains” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 78).

Critical pedagogy is an antithesis to traditional ways of teaching since it does not envision education with predetermined approaches. Despite the varying perspectives on the characteristics of critical pedagogy, consistent themes have emerged among critical pedagogues. Critical pedagogy can be defined according to five fundamental characteristics: (1) the development of a social justice framework, (2) the belief that education is inherently political, (3) a connection between the classroom and the world, (4) alleviation of human oppression and (5) the development of social action. Besides exploring its characteristics, it is insightful to also
understand how banking education is oppositional to problem posing education which is advanced through critical pedagogy. In addition, defining critical pedagogy necessitates understanding the different meanings of critical.

*The Development of a Social Justice Framework*

Having a social justice framework, critical pedagogy responds to oppression, alienation and subordination (Kanpol, 1999). In other words, critical pedagogy seeks human emancipation from social inequities through rigorous questioning of dominant knowledge, practices and values. A social justice framework purports justice and equality as a larger vision of education. Kincheloe (2004) discusses as critical pedagogy is grounded in social, cultural, economic and political contexts, it is concerned about both education and society. By pursuing a social justice framework, a connection between the classroom and the larger community facilitates issues of justice and equity. Therefore, learning is not isolated to the curriculum, teaching approaches and academic regulations, but also situated in the broader social world. Without a larger vision for learning, the purpose of education emerges as questionable. Kincheloe (2004) alludes to this point. He states that in assuming a vision of justice and equality, critical teachers hope they are affecting the type of students that emerge from the educational process. He asks:

Do we want socially regulated workers with the *proper* attitudes for their respective rungs on the workplace ladder? Or do we want empowered, learned, highly skilled democratic citizens who have the confidence and the savvy to improve their own lives and make their communities more vibrant places in which to live, work, and play? If we are unable to articulate this transformative, just, and egalitarian critical pedagogical vision, then the job of schooling will continue to involve taming, controlling, and/or rescuing the least empowered of our students. (p. 8)
Arguing for the latter, that is, democratic values in curricula, Kincheloe (2004) rejects the purpose of education as dominating students, dismissing their struggles and maintaining the status quo. This type of education is anti-democratic, seriously questions the purpose of teaching and learning as well as threatens the future of education.

_The Belief that Education is Inherently Political_

Acknowledging the political dimension of education is central to understanding critical pedagogy. The inherent political nature of education refers to the hidden assumptions behind the knowledge that students learn and how they learn that knowledge. Critical pedagogy aims to unveil what is assumed to be “neutral” in the educational domain. Shor (1992) discusses the political nature of education by stating that “all forms of education are political because they can enable or inhibit the questioning habits of students, thus developing or disabling their critical relation to knowledge, schooling and society” (p.12-13). If the curriculum is not oriented to critical thought, then it directs students to accept that knowledge is fixed and to accept that change is not necessary.

Freire and Faundez (1989) state that “any educational practice based on standardization, on what is laid down in advance, on routines in which everything is predetermined, is bureaucratizing and anti-democratic” (p. 41). As an example, it has been argued that the curriculum is an inscribed practice that controls and disciplines students. Popkewitz (1997) contends that the curriculum is an expression of historical and social monuments handed down by dominant groups who determine how students should perceive themselves and reason about the world. This domination interferes with the critical and democratic development of students. Hence, a crucial dimension for critical pedagogy is to educate students about the inherent political nature of education, its impacts on their lives and the broader social world.
A Connection between the Classroom and the World

A connection between the classroom and the broader social world is important in constructing critical pedagogy. Freire (1987) outlines a link between learning and the broader social world through literacy. He states that this “reading of the word” means that students use literacy as a medium to move beyond the text and examine its unstated, hidden meaning. Freire and Horton (1990) deem reading as a way to illuminate the fact that history and social context are ingrained in literacy. In essence, they argue that literacy empowers students to understand the relationship between power and knowledge. Therefore, the meaning of their expression “reading of the word and the world” translates into understanding that relationship. Connecting the classroom to the world democratizes the pedagogical process as personal histories and experiences are included in the classroom. The connection exposes students to think about how what knowledge is presented, about how dominant ideologies have impacted human lives and about how the world is a product of particular knowledge forms.

A Concern for Marginalized Groups

Critical pedagogy is interested in the margins of society, the experiences and needs of individuals faced with oppression and marginalization…Mainstream scholarship and the education it supports often drop the margins from consideration in order to concentrate on the so-called typical. (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 23)

In a critical classroom, a concern for marginalized groups pertains to individuals who have been excluded because they are not a part of the dominant, Eurocentric culture. Thus, a concern for marginalized groups brings attention to issues such as race, class, gender, sexuality and ability. A critical teacher may explore non-Western ways of knowing in the curriculum as a way to unveil marginalized groups. Dei (2000) notes that educational institutions play crucial roles in terms of how knowledge is produced, valued and sustained which in turn influences how the broader
social world is perceived accordingly. Kincheloe (2004) states, “making use of non-Western knowledge and indigenous voice is not to ‘save’ marginalized students, but to provide a safe place for them and to learn with them about personal empowerment, the cultivation of the intellect, and the larger pursuit of social justice” (p. 25). This purpose shows that a concern for marginalized groups in essence can advance the democratic imperative.

The Development of Social Change

Giroux (2004) states that “any viable notion of critical pedagogy has to foreground issues not only of understanding, but also social responsibility and address the implications the latter has for both affecting students and for influencing a democratic society” (p. 247). As an example, a concern for marginalized groups needs to be demonstrated in order to work towards changing oppressive conditions. Having a democratic vision necessitates responsibility for social change. This awareness for change begins in the classroom as students seek responsibility for more than their own well-being and think about the welfare of others. The development of social change extends to the greater community by teachers and students acting as social justice agents to foster the democratic imperative.

Banking Education versus Problem-Posing Education

For higher education to foster the democratic imperative, critical thinking is required as a central component. Simon (2001) argues that the university has moved away from being a “place to think”. He states:

When we hand our students a course outline at the first meeting of a course, we are promising not only to cover particular topics and to use particular evaluative methods, but also that this plan will be worthwhile, that it will bring the receptive student to a new, enhanced state of redeemed potential in regard to some combination of student knowledge, understanding, and skills. The problem that concerns me, however, is the
possibility that something precious is lost around the practicalities of our promissory practices. (p. 51-52)

If the learning experience is defined by the teacher’s predetermined goals and assumptions about students will gain, without attention to their identities and experiences, then “something is lost” in the educational practice. Despite promises, there must be a realism attached to the teacher’s agenda that emerges from what students bring to the classroom. Simon (2001) contends that pedagogy needs to be refocused through critical thought and social change in order to establish a link between higher education and a democratic vision.

Freire (1970) encourages the development of critical thinking through problem-posing education. Problem-posing education is a challenge to the banking model of education which has defined the traditional classroom. According to Freire (1970), banking education has domesticated the typical classroom by directing students about what to think accordingly. The banking model treats classroom learning as information to be memorized and skills to be transferred to students. Problem-posing, on the other hand, facilitates the teacher and students negotiating the meaning of knowledge.

The banking model has discursively structured teaching and learning. Noble (2001) discusses how higher education has entered a phase termed “digital diploma mills”. By this term, he suggests that technical means have commodified learning through distance and online education, thus diluting a sense of community, student engagement and interactive learning in the university. This commodification emphasizes skills training as compared to critical teaching. Noble (2001) states that “education must be distinguished from training…training involves the honing of a person’s mind so that his or her mind can be used for the purpose of someone other than that person” (p. 2). Thus, to define higher education through the development of skills contributes to a mechanical learning process which in turn subverts critical thinking and the
democratic imperative. Similarly, Giroux (2003) argues that students are not being prepared for their community roles as active and critical citizens. He believes that the emphasis on job preparation has encroached upon critical thought and democratic values within higher education. In this regard, higher education must balance its social responsibility with its interest in being a training ground for the workplace.

It is important to understand the oppositional dynamics between problem-posing education and the banking model of education. The banking model treats “students’ minds as empty accounts into which they make deposits of information, through didactic teachers and from commercial texts” (Shor, 1992, p. 31-32). The banking model regards students as adaptable beings who can be moulded into something predetermined. According to Freire (1970; 1993), in the banking model, the teacher is the subject of the learning process while students are the objects. The banking model leads students not to question the pedagogical process which is dominated by particular ways of knowing. As students accept passive roles, they increase their likelihood of adapting to, rather than inquiring about the world around them. With the problem-posing approach, students are exposed to think in more democratic ways and encouraged to seek social change stemming from critical awareness.

Different Notions of Critical

Critical pedagogy may be perceived unilaterally as the development of critical thinking. While critical teaching necessitates critical thinking skills such as interpretation, reflection, inquiry and debate, the meaning of “critical” also encompasses the process that engages the term. Therefore, a definition only through thinking skills limits the understanding of the term. Burbules and Berk (1999) thoroughly discuss the similarities and differences of the different notions of critical, that being, critical pedagogy and critical thinking.
One notion of critical, as outlined by Ennis (1987), is the taxonomy of critical thinking that refers to the skills required for a critical thinker. Several scholars have paid attention to the meaning of critical through the development of skills (Brookfield, 1987).

To critical thinking, the critical person is something like a critical consumer of information, he or she is driven to seek reasons and evidence. Part of this is a matter of mastering certain skills of thought: learning to diagnose invalid forms of argument, knowing how to make and defend distinctions….More recently, however, various authors in this tradition have come to recognize that teaching content and skills is of minor importance if learners do not also develop the dispositions or inclinations to look at the world through a critical lens. By this, critical thinking means that the critical person has not only the capacity (the skills) to seek reasons, truth, and evidence, but also that he or she has the drive (disposition) to seek them. (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 48)

To this end, critical thought needs to be connected to values--democratic values. While critical pedagogy aligns with acquiring critical skills; it also necessitates action for social change.

[Critical pedagogy] is an effort to work within educational institutions and other media to raise questions about inequalities, about the false myths of opportunity and merit for many students, and about the way belief systems become internalized to the point where individuals and groups abandon the very aspiration to question or change their lot in life. (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 50)

In other words, another meaning of critical is the interest or desire to act upon one’s critical capacities. Referring to this disposition as criticality, Burbules and Berk (1999) state, for critical thinking “it is not enough to know how to seek reasons, truth, and understanding, one must also impassioned to pursue them rigourously” (p. 51). For critical pedagogy, Burbules and Berk (1999) comment that the ideology “requires praxis – both reflection and action, both
interpretation and change” (p. 51). Thus, both critical thinking and critical pedagogy translate into having a purpose for a critical disposition.

At the same time, some differences and criticisms exist with critical thinking and critical pedagogy. Critical thinking and critical pedagogy can be understood along a continuum. Critical thinking constructs ideas about oppressions and inequities that will instigate social change.

Critical thinking engulfs a sense of probing or questioning. However, critical pedagogy mobilizes ideas in order to bring about social change. Conceptualizing critical thinking and critical pedagogy along a continuum would have offered clarity to the different notions of critical.

Critical pedagogy would never find it sufficient to reform the habits of thinkers…without challenging and transforming the institutions, ideologies and relations that engender distorted oppressed thinking in the first place…for critical thinking, at most the development of moral discerning thinkers might make them more likely to question discreditable institutions, to challenge misleading authorities. (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 52)

Both critical thinking and critical pedagogy acknowledge the purpose for developing critical dispositions, but the latter actually serves social change.

Critical thinking and critical pedagogy have faced criticism in terms of the meaning of critical. The criticisms reflect limitations with both traditions. Burbules and Berk (1999) criticize critical pedagogy for not allowing critical interpretations to surface naturally, but instead directing students how to think critically, thus indicating a bias.

From the perspective of critical thinking, critical pedagogy crosses a threshold between teaching criticality and indoctrinating. Teaching students to think critically must include allowing them to come to their own conclusions. Yet, critical pedagogy seems to come
dangerously close to prejudging what those conclusions must be. (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 54)

Ultimately, this criticism is dangerous for critical pedagogy which objects to banking education in terms of not allowing students to think on their own in order to formulate their own interpretations. However, this bias is downplayed as:

students must be brought to criticality, and this can only be done by alerting them to the social conditions that have brought this about… critical thinking’s claim is, at heart, to teach how to think critically, not how to think politically; for critical pedagogy, this is a false distinction. (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p.55)

In other words, critical pedagogy requires a particular way of thinking, that is, a political stance which is the impetus to transform oppressions and inequities.

Critical thinking and critical pedagogy have been criticized because they demonstrate exclusionary practices. Both traditions do not reflect the difference between women’s and men’s thought processes. Burbules and Berk (1999) note:

There are certainly significant women writing with each tradition, but the chief spokespersons, and the most visible figures in the debates between these traditions, have been men. Not surprisingly, then, both traditions have been subject to criticisms, often from feminists, that their ostensibly universal categories and issues in fact exclude the voices and concerns of women. (p.56)

Similarly, critical thinking and critical pedagogy have suffered from the criticism that racial groups are not equally presented through the traditions. Agreeing with Ellsworth and Gore, Burbules and Berk (1999) also state that critical pedagogy overlooks the multiplicity of voices. Yet, because of an idealized purpose to include all voices, critical pedagogy uses that purpose as a way to be “rationalistic” (p.57) or to legitimize its critical conceptualization. This lack of
representation is hypocritical for critical pedagogy. When voices are excluded, the critical dialogue is not open-ended and is not democratic, thus raising concern that despite “its discourse of emancipation…being another medium of oppression” (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p.57).

In order to address this criticism demands critical thinking to:

be questioned from the standpoint of social accountability; it needs to be asked what difference it makes to people’s real lives…and it needs to be interrogated about the social and institutional features that promote or inhibit the ‘critical spirit’. (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 58)

In other words, being critical requires engagement with the conditions that sustain or prevent critical development. Perhaps critical thinking is being approached with a universalized perspective defined through blind questioning.

Burbules and Berk (1999) suggest that critical thinking needs to be more humanizing. To this end, critical thinking must account for experiences and feelings that invoke the feminine viewpoint rather than a masculine one. Critical thinking must be careful to not standardize ways of thinking and knowing the world. Similarly, Burbules and Berk (1999) believe that critical pedagogy “needs to be questioned from the standpoint of critical thinking: about what [are] its implicit standards of truth and evidence” (p. 58). Rather than assuming critical pedagogy allows open-ended dialogue and empowers students because it claims to do so, understanding the ideology for concrete inclusionary or exclusionary practices is required. Critical pedagogy, otherwise, will be defined as open conversations without any purposeful direction.

Critical thinking and critical pedagogy view each another as lacking some significant component of the other tradition. This recognized deficiency indicates that the two critical traditions are not the same. Clearly, the term “critical” cannot be universalized. One significant
challenge for both traditions is that they are often represented as meta-narratives. Burbules and Berk (1999) note:

The contemporary challenge to ‘meta-narratives’ is sometimes misunderstood as a simple rejection of any theory at all, a total rejection on anti-epistemological grounds….The challenge of such criticisms is to examine the effects of meta-narratives as ways of framing the world; in this case, how claims of universality, or impartiality, or inclusiveness, or objectivity, variously characterize different positions within the critical thinking and critical pedagogy schools of thought. (p. 58)

In other words, being “critical” is often assumed to be objective, impartial and inclusive simply because of its disposition. But, that assumption is false until there is an examination of the entire critical process.

In examining the critical process, differences arise between critical thinking and critical pedagogy. The differences reveal criticisms of the traditions which in turn encourage greater meaning and contribute to the democratic discourse. Indeed, these differences are not negative components of the traditions. They encourage the essence of the term--criticality --which “promote[s] a sharp reflection on one’s own presuppositions…that foster[s] thinking in new ways” (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 59). The different notions of critical can enlighten teachers and students about gaps in the meaning of critical. As the study explores critical pedagogy, there is a need to understand both the successes and failures of critical pedagogy.

**Criticisms of Critical Pedagogy**

*Student Empowerment and Dialogue*

Despite its claims of emancipation and equality, critical pedagogy displays weaknesses which often are hidden because of the ideology’s democratic vision. Critical pedagogy makes attempts to give students voice in the classroom through empowerment and dialogue.
Yet theorists of critical pedagogy have failed to launch any meaningful analysis of or program for reformulating the institutionalized power imbalances between themselves and their students or of the essentially paternalism project of education itself. In the absence of such an analysis and program, their efforts are limited to trying to transform negative effects of power imbalances within the classroom into positive ones. Strategies such as student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact. (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 98)

In other words, the teacher-student relationship has not been contextualized or more importantly given sufficient attention, despite that it is a pivotal point to facilitate change for the democratic classroom. Ellsworth (1992) further states, “empowerment is a key concept in this approach which, treats the symptoms but leaves the disease unnamed and untouched” (p. 98). From this perspective, educating students for democracy is projected through maintaining the status quo in the classroom.

There is further criticism with implementing student empowerment. The lack of directiveness defined as “empowerment for what” (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 99) results in students striving for some universal, common good that is vague, misunderstood and unclear. Consequently, student empowerment has been conceptualized through “ahistorical and depoliticized abstractions and defined in the broadest possible humanistic terms, and becomes a ‘capacity to act effectively’ in a way that fails to challenge any identifiable social or political position, institution or group” (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 99). This idea raises the question, who benefits from the critical process? Similar to Ellsworth, Gore (1993) admits that the process often unfolds through teacher directiveness that is concealed through “emancipatory authority” (p. 99). In other words, the authority of the teacher is rationalized because it is believed that
challenging oppressions necessitate a directive approach. Giroux and McLaren (1986) state that teachers are justified through emancipatory authority based upon:

The political and moral referents for authority they assume in teaching particular forms of knowledge, in taking stands against forms of oppression, and in treating students as if they ought also to be concerned about social justice and political action. (cited in Ellsworth, 1992, p. 99)

Thus, emancipatory authority becomes legitimized in order to teach students their participatory roles for democratic change (Gore, 1993).

While students require a clear understanding about the workings of oppressions, teacher directiveness is hypocritical for this development. The role of the teacher needs to be contoured to fit the critical classroom. Gore (1993) suggests that emancipatory authority reflects the teacher’s interests, not the students’ interests. This criticism emerges from a lack of neutrality with the teacher’s voice based upon two main reasons: silencing students’ voices and domination of the teacher’s perspectives. First, as Giroux (1988) states:

On the one hand teacher voice represents a basis in authority that can provide knowledge and forms of self-understanding allowing students to develop the power of critical consciousness. At the same time, regardless of how politically or ideologically correct a teacher may be, his or her ‘voice’ may be destructive for students if it is used to silence them. (cited in Gore, 1993, p. 100)

Emancipatory authority can serve “the interests of the teacher who is able to exercise a great deal of power in deciding who should have a voice, which voices are in the interests of democracy, and so on”(Gore, 1993, p. 100). Second, Ellsworth (1992) questions how is a teacher better situated to project knowledge about particular situations more than one’s students. She argues that the teacher often uses his or her position of privilege in a quest for democracy.
Similar to the criticisms of empowerment and authority, dialogue in the classroom also reveals a negative dimension in critical process. “Dialogue in its conventional sense is impossible in the culture at large, because at this historical moment, power relations between raced, classed, and gendered students and teachers are unjust” (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 108). Based upon individual differences, having equally in the dialogic process is a challenge. The opportunity to speak or share experiences equally in the critical classroom cannot be guaranteed based on a myriad of reasons.

These include fear of being misunderstood and/or disclosing too much and becoming too vulnerable…resentment that other oppressions (sexism, heterosexism, fat oppression, classism, anti-Semitism) were being marginalized in the name of addressing racism….confusion about levels of trust and commitment surrounding those who were allies to another group’s struggle; resentment by some students of color for feelings that they were expected to disclose ‘more’ and once again take the burden of doing the pedagogic work of educating White students. (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 107-108)

The ideology is not removed from challenges simply because of inserting dialogue and sharing in the classroom. Dialogue is not equal among students based upon both issues of power and difference. Overall, critical pedagogy, with its lofty goals to challenge oppressions, is not exempt from displaying biases.

A Feminist Critique of Friere’s Critical Pedagogy

Weiler (2001) has criticized Friere’s work, in detail, from a feminist perspective. She claims that Freire’s critical perspective generalizes an understanding of oppression. As a result, his perspective overlooks the uniqueness of women’s experiences voiced through feminist projects. Despite deconstructing oppressive relations, the Freirean perspective has failed to address particular dimensions of human experience. The criticism against Friere rests with
situating oppression within classism—without consideration of racism or sexism. Specifically, Weiler (2001) is concerned that the Freirean perspective exhibits sexism because it has not explored how patriarchal ways of thinking impact society. In critiquing critical pedagogy, she compares the ideology to feminist pedagogy.

Like Freirean pedagogy, feminist pedagogy emphasizes the importance of consciousness raising, the existence of an oppressive social structure and the need to change it, and the possibility of social transformation….Like Freirean pedagogy, feminist pedagogy assumes as fundamental the need to challenge dominant assumptions of knowing and knowledge and to value all students. What distinguishes feminist pedagogy from these other approaches…is its analysis of patriarchy and attempts to develop an education appropriate for women. (p. 68)

The fundamental difference between critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy is the former’s lack of attention to male domination or male privilege.

By the contrary, hooks (1994) recognizes that even though Friere’s work displays sexism, she believes that his perspective on oppression provides a sense of inclusion. She argues that Friere recognizes one’s location and history of which others, even some feminist scholars, did not acknowledge accordingly. hooks (1994) explains this feeling.

I came to Freire thirsty, dying of thirst (in that way that the colonized, marginalized subject who is still unsure of how to break the hold of the status quo) who longs for change, is needy, is thirsty), and I found in his work…a way to quench that thirst. To have work that promotes one’s liberation is such a powerful gift that it does not matter so much if the gift is flawed. (p. 50)

hooks (1994) continues to acknowledge the powerful and unique contribution of Friere’s work to mobilize people from their subordinate positions to positions of emancipation. She argues:
There are no history books that really tell the story of how difficult the politics of everyday life was for black people in the racially segregated south when so many folks did not read and were so often dependent on racist people to explain, to read, to write. And I was among a generation learning those skills anew...so Freire’s emphasis on education as a practice of freedom made such immediate sense to me. (p. 51)

Weiler (2001) does acknowledge the appeal to a wide audience “precisely because Friere’s work is so decontextualized and because his claims are so sweeping, he can speak to readers with many different histories” (p. 75). In this way, Friere has attracted a range of individuals to find their voices in the name of social justice. Nevertheless, she is critical of Friere’s universalism towards the experiences of oppressed individuals, especially in terms of women’s lives. Weiler (2001) states:

the fallacy of assuming that there is a single category-‘woman’-hides the profound difference among women in terms of their race, class, nationality, and other aspects of their identities. It echoes Freire’s calling forth of “the oppressed” as a general category without acknowledgement of the complexities and differences among real people. (p. 75)

At the same time, hooks (1994) admits because individuals have different standpoints, they will not uniformly believe that Friere’s work is sexist and has failed to understand one’s location and history. Thus, hooks will agree with Weiler’s general claim to transgress beyond the generalization of oppression because there are different meanings based upon issues of difference.

It is believed that Friere’s lack of attention to a patriarchal way of thinking and male privilege in society is evidenced by the separation between public life and private life. Friere’s conceptualization has failed to include personal experiences and thus, focuses upon oppression from a public perspective through education, work conditions and civic rights. One of the
reasons that explain Friere’s understanding of oppression is based upon his perception of the liberatory leader as a public, rather than private individual. Friere’s work is situated in struggles among the working class. Therefore, his vision for liberation stemmed from leaders that facilitated change for the masses. Freire viewed his revolutionary leader in public roles because that would have challenged power imbalances in public spaces. He was concerned with power differences, emerging from colonial class struggles, which in turn contributed to illiteracy, lack of civic rights and disadvantaged work conditions (Weiler, 2001).

Weiler (2001) refers to a conversation between Antonia Faundez and Paulo Friere who state that the oppressed need to be mobilized beyond their intellectual capacity. As they remark, “our starting point should be ideology in action, not ideology in ideas. And not only in action of groups of intellectuals…but fundamentally in action of the people, where the political strength of a movement resides” (Friere & Faundez, 1989, p. 26). In agreement with the ideology of action, Paulo Friere states:

The starting point should precisely be resistance. In other words, there needs to be forms of resistance for the popular masses. If we refuse to acknowledge these forms of resistance…we end up lapsing into a voluntarist or intellectualist position, into authoritarian speeches proposing courses of action which are not feasible for the people. (Friere & Faundez, 1989, p. 27-28)

In emphasizing public roles to challenge power imbalances, Paulo Friere describes “the need for a qualitative change in the struggle to change society…arises out of what the working classes are learning through their struggles in factories, trade unions, residents’ associations and social movements” (Friere & Faundez, 1989, p. 62). Thus, Friere’s idea of liberation from power imbalances stems from attention to classism.
Freire is not addressing the struggles with domestic life or the inequalities between men and women. In other words, Friere is concerned with mobilizing people at a public level, not engaging in their private or domestic lives. Weiler (2001) criticizes Friere’s view of the public liberating leader who brings about social change. The criticism arises because women cannot identify with this role.

[T]he revolutionary hero [who] is imagined as male and as existing solely in the public world, a vision which discounts the world of personal relationships or of everyday life—the world of women. The glorification of the liberatory teacher without considering location and identity is of course a pressing issue for women teachers. (p. 76)

Friere can be criticized for his definition of the liberating leader because he has not explored women’s location and history. He has drawn clear lines considering who are liberating leaders and their roles. In separating the liberating leader from private roles to public roles, genderized roles in society emerge that relegate men and women to particular locations. This separation leads to a hierarchy and antagonism between men and women.

What he fails to address here are the complexities of the intersection of the private and public, the density of everyday life. This tendency to ignore the personal, domestic world, as numerous feminist theorists have pointed out, is typical of the Western tradition of political philosophy and has been tied to the gendered division of the world into rationality and emotion, public and private, with men the actors in the public world and women the nurtures of the private. (Weiler, 2001, p. 76-77)

Friere is further challenged for his use of sexist language in his early writing. He “was criticized not only for his assumption that ‘the oppressed’ were male peasants or workers in the public sphere, but also for his use of the male pronoun to refer to all people” (Weiler, 2001, p, 78). Even though Friere changed his subsequent work to include both of terms “women” and
“men”, his writings did, at some time, exhibit genderized language, indicating the nature of his thoughts (Weiler, 2001). hooks (1994) acknowledges that Friere’s work displays sexist language. There is agreement that Friere’s work has defined the quest for freedom through the experiences of men and presents a language that excludes the experiences of women. But, in explaining his writing as a purposeful project, hooks, unlike Weiler, does not only criticize Freire for his language. The dualism of Friere’s work places hooks (1994) in a difficult position.

[I]t is difficult for me to speak about sexism in Friere’s work; it is difficult to find a language that offers a way to frame critique and yet maintain the recognition of all that is valued and respected in the work….Friere’s sexism is indicated by the language in his early works, notwithstanding that there is so much that remains liberatory. There is no need to apologize for the sexism. Friere’s own model of critical pedagogy invites a critical interrogation of this flaw in the work. But critical interrogation is not the same as dismissal. (p. 49)

In other words, Friere’s work cannot be discarded based on his own criticisms as well as from feminist analysis. While Friere acknowledges the feminist critique of his sexist language, he once rejected a criticism of his work because he felt that the critique did not consider the context or time period in which this work was written (Weiler, 2001). Friere is suggesting that the criticism is misguided because the sexist language of his work had been changed to reflect a more inclusive vision. Friere believes that his work became more inclusive and egalitarian by simply changing its language. By the contrary, Friere is limiting his understanding of liberation and oppression with this perspective. He is not asking “more fundamental questions about the conceptualization of liberation and oppression as imagined in terms of male experience” and is [failing] to address oppression in actual history and discourse” (Weiler, 2001, p. 81).
Friere addresses oppression without attention to the multiple layers of the issue (Weiler, 2001). Instead, Friere assumes a unidimensional perspective to understanding oppression by making “strong statements about the need to fight against sexist discrimination” (Weiler, 2001, p. 79). In offering lofty comments, Friere insists upon social change without examining the overlapping issues of oppression. This stance explores freedom thorough a universalized experience as evidenced by Freire’s understanding of oppression only through classism. Freire separates other mitigating factors that contribute to oppression. He comments “liberation should take place for both men and women and not just for men or for women or along color or ethnic lines” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 172). But Friere is overlooking the point that all men and women cannot seek liberation because of their color or ethnic lines. Friere treats oppression stemming from race or gender as unrelated or as a disparate issue from classism. But this is a fallacy. By addressing oppression with a general perspective, Friere believes that it is a challenge individuals can overcome equally. Yet, race and gender differences prevent such equality. Therefore, oppression must be deconstructed by accounting for race and gender issues along with their intersection. Weiler (2001) believes that Friere has ignored the intersection of difference and does not recognize that “class exploitation is precisely structured by both racism and sexism” (p. 82).

Weiler (2001) believes overlooking the intersection of oppressions is rooted in how men and women understand each other. Freire claims the deconstruction of oppression begins with women recognizing that they are seeking freedom from men who also encounter oppressions (Weiler, 2001). Thus, Freire proposes “both these oppressed men and women need to understand their different positions in the oppressive structures so that together they can develop effective strategies and cease to be oppressed” (Weiler, 2001, p.82). It is surprising that Friere states that oppressed individuals need to understand each others’ position of oppression in terms of
“simultaneously [moving] toward cutting the chains of oppression”. Freire is correct to situate liberation in understanding each others’ position. However, his argument is flawed again in his general perspective for deconstructing oppression without attention to related issues, in this case, sexism. Friere has equated deconstructing oppression with acknowledging its occurrence, not by understanding its multiple causes. The following statement reveals Freire’s neglect of sexism.

For Friere, the most important focus for women instead should be to understand men, and their second goal should be to ‘help’ men confront their own sexism. In both cases, the historical actors are men, and women’s role is to understand and help these men improve their own weakness. (Weiler, 2001, p. 82)

But acknowledging male and female positions of oppressions and helping men admit their sexist behaviour are insufficient for progressive change. Friere does not unpacking the issues that lead to and sustain oppression. Friere deters feminists from continuing their focus on “the levels of women’s oppression-the different forms of oppression and privilege of black and white women...the differences between working-class and bourgeois women, the different positionings and interests of lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual women” (Weiler, 2001, p. 82). However, it is only through this understanding that can address the locations of different ethnic, class and sexual groups.

hooks (1994) will agree with Weiler’s claim that understanding oppression necessitates a connection among layers of oppressions. To this end, hooks (1994) advocates to bring critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy together. The two pedagogies need to work collectively, not exist in isolation. There is the assumption that understanding the world emerges from holding one perspective which in turn compartmentalizes knowledge. This separation parallels the division between public roles and private roles which constructs one lens in pursuing freedom. hooks (1994) comments:
Unlike feminist thinkers who make a clear separation between the work of feminist pedagogy and Friere’s work and thought, for me these two experiences converge. Deeply committed to feminist pedagogy, I find that, much like weaving a tapestry, I have taken threads of Paulo’s work and woven it into that version of feminist pedagogy…it was the intersection of Paulo’s thought and the lived pedagogy of the many black teachers of my girlhood (most of them women) who saw themselves as having a liberatory mission to educate us in a manner that would prepare us to effectively resist racism and white supremacy. (p. 52)

Based upon bridging perspectives, issues of race and gender can be explored together for the purpose of challenging oppression.

Critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy do not have to be antagonist with each other. Considering that both pedagogies attempt to challenge oppression, they should be employed to support each other for the goal of democracy. hooks (1994) felt included in Friere’s work in a way that was not apparent through feminist work. Interestingly, while Weiler criticizes Friere for situating his work only in classism, hooks (1994) felt scholars:

> do not talk enough about the way in which class shapes our perspective on reality. Since so many of the early feminist books really reflected a certain type of white bourgeois sensibility, this work did not touch many black women; not because we did not recognize the common experiences women shared, but because those commonalities were mediated by profound differences in our realities created by the politics of race and class. (p. 51-52)

Feminist pedagogy and critical pedagogy need each other to clarify the differences among individuals’ oppressions and realities which will otherwise remain obscured.
Despite criticisms, it is not the case that Friere is distant from a relationship with feminist criticisms; he admits the critique which hooks (1994) believes is “a quality of open-mindedness that...is often missing from intellectual and academic arenas...and feminist circles have not been an exception”. (p. 54). hooks (1994) discusses the impact of Friere’s open-mindedness as “his willingness to struggle non-defensively in print, naming shortcomings of insight, changes in thought, and new critical reflections”. (p. 55). While the focus of criticisms has been on Freire’s work, it must be addressed that feminist pedagogy has also been critiqued accordingly. Both Weiler and hooks admit such critiques. For black women, their struggles were not identified through early feminist works. hooks (1994) felt feminism “was not a location that welcomed the radical struggle of black women to theorize our subjectivity” whereas “Friere’s work affirmed my right as a subject in resistance to define my reality” (p. 53). Weiler (2001) also notes that feminist pedagogy attempts to find equal space for all voices by “[raising] to the surface the tensions and angers of an unequal society” (p. 84). In other words, feminist pedagogy needs to also specify where the perspective is coming from accordingly. The criticism of both critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy is that the idealized goal for freedom cannot stand by itself. There needs to be engagement with the limitations facing the pedagogies. This engagement requires an intersection of issues of difference.

Lastly, Friere’s work is inspiring and courageous. He has ventured into unchartered waters with his passion to challenge oppression. Freire’s strength is to understand the struggle for liberation from more than having good intentions and thus to engage with the struggle through praxis—reflection and action-- which Freire believes leads to social transformation. But at the same time, Friere’s approach to challenging oppression is loaded with generalizations. Without addressing how race and gender impact human lives, Friere is minimizing an important struggle. Friere acknowledges women in their struggles without acknowledging the reality of
their lives. Furthermore, the universalizing of women’s oppression understands their struggles as a power difference with men rather than through the multiple issues that contribute to those struggles. Because Friere did not wish to address issues of patriarchy and the intersection of oppression, he did not address the realities of the oppressed.

In sum, Weiler (2001) comments that approaching oppression through Friere’s generalized language hides:

conflicts that emerge from the specificity of oppression…and when these conflicts are not articulated they grow and lead to the deflection of energies inward or to a sense of failure on the part of Freirean and feminist educators in whose practice the categories of oppressor and oppressed are not so clear and who cannot or do not wish to act as the revolutionary liberation of their students. (p. 84-85)

How can teachers construct classrooms that properly probe individuals’ histories and identities if their teaching practices are devoid of paying attention to that realism? The lack of attention to the realities of oppression is connected to the image of the liberating teacher who has been idolized as Freire’s conceptualization of a revolutionary leader. The emphasis is upon the end goal of liberation, without attention to the complexities of human lives. The gaps in Friere’s perspective reveal that critical pedagogy has challenges that must be explored. These gaps have a tendency to be overlooked or minimized because critical pedagogy challenges traditional education.

Exploring how critical pedagogy can educate for democracy requires attention to: the relationship between education and democracy, the impact of neoliberalism capitalism on education, the separation of the public sphere and private sphere, characteristics of critical pedagogy and criticisms of critical pedagogy. It is significant to acquire a broad understanding of the topic through these fundamental areas that define the ideology. Friere’s work offers noteworthy influences to the critical classroom. Thus, his work demands an examination of
classrooms which are attempting to implement critical teaching in order to educate for democracy. Prior to doing so, a conceptual framework is needed as a model for the critical classroom.
Chapter Three: Developing a Conceptual Framework

This chapter identifies the conceptual framework for the study. The conceptual framework captures how educating for democracy can be fostered in the critical classroom. To this end, the study is conceptualized through critical democratic theory. The conceptual framework also explores the manner in which teaching should unfold when it unites with critical democratic theory. Thus, the emerging pedagogical perspective is critical pedagogy which can be constructed, as an ideal model, through Shor’s (1992) agenda of values.

Critical Democratic Theory

The study is premised upon the idea that capitalism shifts education from serving public interests to serving private interests. As critical democratic theory projects democracy as a standard of education, the framework is well-suited to ground this study. Critical democratic theory provides context to understand the reason for educating for democracy and to explore how to educate for democracy.

Kincheloe (1999) explores the development of critical democratic theory. He shows that the philosophy emerges from the tradition of critical theory which was established by the Frankfurt School. Following the aftermath of World War II, “forms of domination” (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 70) were brought upon society by the discursive practices of capitalism. As discussed, the operations of capitalism influenced the economic, technological and political arenas of society which in turn ignited social inequities and challenged the democratic imperative. Therefore, critical theory emerged as a discourse to address the workings of power that were shaping human experience. Critical theory was woven through the social sciences and discussed by theorists in order to understand the discursiveness of capitalism and create hope for the democratic imperative (Kincheloe, 1999). Moreover, the discourse provided:

New conceptualizations of human agency promising that men and women could, in part, determine their own existence, offered new hope for emancipatory forms of social
practice when compared with orthodox Marxism’s assertion of the iron jaws of history, the irrevocable evil of capitalism, and the proletariat as the privileged subject and anticipated agent of social transformation (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 71).

In reference to critical educators, Kincheloe (1999) identifies education as the domain to facilitate a vision for hope against the discursive nature of capitalism. He notes:

[W]hen Henry Giroux and other critical educators criticized the argument made by Marxist scholars Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis that schools were capitalist agencies of social, economic, cultural and bureaucratic reproduction, they contrasted the deterministic perspectives of Bowles and Gintis with the idea that schools, as venues of hope, could become sites of resistance and democratic possibility through concerted efforts among teachers and students to work within a liberatory pedagogical framework.

(p. 71)

In other words, education can provide the domain for teachers and students to think about the dominant perspectives emerging from capitalism that have negotiated the way of human life.

The idea of challenging the capitalist perspective gives rise to critical democratic theory. “This critical theorizing is especially concerned with how democracy is subverted, domination takes places, and human relations are shaped in the schools, in other cultural sites of pedagogy, and in everyday life” (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 71). The discourse is driven by individuals coming into consciousness or self-direction about how dominant perspectives determine their “political opinions, worker role, religious beliefs, gender roles and racial self-image” (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 72-73). Critical democratic theory defines human life outside of a market dynamic, that is, beyond individualism, consumerism and competition. Therefore, individuals must be recognized in their everyday, private lives—the social, cultural and political contexts that define their
realities. Critical democratic theory provides a framework to challenge a universalized human experience by historicizing personal lives through attention to race, gender and class struggles. Kincheloe (1999) argues that the critical discourse negates a positivist view of education which standardizes the pedagogical experience through objective knowledge and the authoritarian teacher. He remarks:

Positivistic culture presents a view of education and knowledge production that has little use for the critical goals of individuals deciding their own meanings, ordering their own experiences, or struggling against the sociopolitical forces that would squash their efforts toward such self-direction. By dismissing the importance of human empowerment, the culture of positivism ignores ethical and moral questions and thus tacitly supports forms of domination, hierarchy, and control. In this context knowledge produced is an external body of data that exists independent of human beings and their historical context. (p. 76)

The conceptual framework addresses the idea that larger forces influence individuals’ perspectives. Capitalism, as a larger force, would align with the positivistic culture by telling individuals what to think and how to live.

The meanings that individuals assign to their social experiences will continue to be overlooked until larger forces are exposed for diminishing the democratic imperative. “When we begin to understand the inseparability of political and educational questions, we contend that educators should be made more political—that we should expose the hidden politics of neutrality and the culture of positivism that supports it” (Giroux, 1997; Lyotard, 1984; Scholes, 1982, cited in Kincheloe, 1999, p. 77). It must be recalled that critical democratic theory positions education as the platform to foster the democratic imperative and specifically points to a “liberatory pedagogical framework” (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 7). When the discourse is woven through teaching, critical pedagogy emerges as the pedagogical framework to educate for democracy
(Kincheloe, 1999). By integrating the discourse into teaching, critical pedagogy attends to power relations and an ethics of concern in the classroom.

Developing Critical Pedagogy

In developing critical pedagogy, a pivotal point is acknowledgement that power exists in the teaching and learning domain. Thus, the classroom is not exempt from power relations. However, deconstructing power in the classroom has been a challenging task. Darder (1991) comments:

Seldom are issues of power seriously addressed with respect to the structure of classroom life. And even when educators make some effort to address the issues in their classroom, often it is done in a ‘banking education’ mode (Friere, 1970) that in content may be theoretically emancipatory but in practice is pedagogically oppressive. (p. 74)

Thus, an examination of power needs to probe the inclusionary and exclusionary practices within the classroom.

This power dimension of critical pedagogy is central and practitioners must be aware of efforts to dilute this power literacy. Simply caring about students, while necessary, does not constitute a critical pedagogy. The power dimension must be brought to bear in a way that discerns and acts on correcting the ways particular students get hurt in the everyday life of schools. (McLaren, 2000, as cited in Kincheloe, 2004, p. 9)

Critical pedagogy also needs to expose the issues of difference that students bring to the classroom. As an example, Kincheloe (2000) argues, “when critical pedagogy embraces multiculturalism, it focuses on the subtle workings of racism, sexism, class bias, cultural oppression, and homophobia” (cited in Kincheloe, 2004, p. 9). To this end, critical pedagogy must not only attend to issues of difference through inclusivity, but also through understanding power relations that cause social inequities. Critical pedagogy needs to explore how power
differentials are woven through struggles with race, gender, class and sexuality. The idea that power relations are a part of the pedagogical climate reveals that the classroom experience cannot be universalized. As Kincheloe (2004) argues, “the political dimension of education should be pointed out in all teaching and learning-critical pedagogy included. We must expose the hidden politics of what is labeled neutral” (p. 10).

Critical educators must be concerned about how power relations manifest in their pedagogical practices in order for a democratic climate in the classroom. In order to dismantle power relations between teacher and students or among students, the critical classroom must be built around critical dialogue and participatory roles. However, in this context, students neither emerge as independent learners nor do teachers relinquish their authority. Shor (1992) captures this idea.

Empowerment here does not mean means students can do whatever they like in the classroom. Neither can the teacher do whatever she or he likes. The learning process is negotiated, requiring leadership by the teacher and mutual teacher-student authority. In addition, empowerment…here is not individualistic. The empowering class does not teach students to seek self-centered gain while ignoring public welfare. (p. 15-16) Shor’s idea projects the teacher and students sharing responsibility and working collaboratively rather than individually for producing knowledge.

Critical pedagogy must also exemplify that education has a purpose beyond private interests. This purpose is achieved through a sense of humanity. In this regard, developing critical pedagogy entails an ethics of concern. Kincheloe (2004) states:

If critical pedagogy is not injected with a healthy dose of what Friere called ‘radical love’, then it will operate only as a shadow of what it could be…Critical pedagogy uses it
to increase our capacity to love, to bring the power of love to our everyday lives and social institutions, and to rethink reason in a human and interconnected manner. (p. 3)

An ethics of concern refers to attention to the public good. Thus, it emerges by having more than a universal discourse with respect to social experience. A concern for others means validating individuals’ experiences through discourses that can reveal struggles with race, gender, class and sexuality. In this regard, critical pedagogy requires an equity framework that can explore anti-racist, feminist, indigenous and queer perspectives.

Critical pedagogy attempts to link public spaces to private lives as a way to be concerned for others. In this regard, students become both critical thinkers and critical citizens who think and act beyond their self-interests. Giroux (1988) states that “schools need to be defended, as an important public service that educates students to be critical citizens who can think, challenge, takes risks, and believe that their actions will make a difference in the larger society” (cited in Shor, 1992, p. 16). Thus, in negotiating the public sphere with a concern for private lives, the critical classroom becomes grounded in social justice and human rights issues. Using domestic abuse, as an example, without collective concern in the public sphere, the issue will remain in the private sphere lacking activism for social change. Thus, reframing private issues into public concern for the democratic imperative requires questioning issues of difference and validating multiple perspectives.

_Shor’s Agenda of Values_

Shor (1993) conceptualizes an “agenda of values” (p. 33) that ignites critical consciousness or the habit of critical questioning. The agenda attends to the democratic imperative by connecting “individuality to larger historical and social issues” (Shor, 1992, p. 17). Thus, by weaving issues of difference such as race, gender and class through the agenda, Shor (1992; 1993) draws a connection between the public sphere and the private sphere. The agenda
contributes to an ideal illustration of how a critical classroom can be arranged to educate for democracy. This model allows for a comparison to actual critical classrooms. The comparison provides insights about the structure and function of the critical classroom.

Since Shor’s agenda is an antithesis to banking education, it challenges the universalized student experience that excludes personal histories and individual experiences from the teaching and learning context. According to Shor (1992), “because it deposits information uncritically in students, the banking model is antidemocratic. It denies the students’ indigenous culture and their potential for critical thought, subordinating them to knowledge, values and language of the status quo” (p. 33). In contrast, the agenda of values reveal that one’s histories and experiences are not only for personal concern. Even though race, gender and class are strongly emphasized with particular values of Shor’s agenda, they are woven throughout the entire agenda which validates personal histories and individual experiences.

Shor’s agenda captures everyday lives from Friere’s definition of an anthropological perspective of culture. In essence, Friere understands individuals organically in their everyday lives. His understanding challenges the capitalist perspective that emphasizes individualism rather than a concern for others. Following Paulo Friere’s work, Shor (1993) writes:

Culture is what ordinary people do every day, how they behave, speak, relate, and make things. Everyone has and makes culture, not only aesthetic specialists or members of the elite. Culture is the speech and behavior in everyday life, which liberating educators study anthropologically before they can offer effective critical learning. The anthropological definition of culture - situated in the experiences of everyday life, discovered by observing the community life of students - democratizes pedagogy because the curriculum is built around the themes and conditions of people’s lives. Freirean
educators study their students in their classrooms and in their community, to discover the words, ideas, conditions, and habits central to their experience. (p. 30-31)

By constructing knowledge through studying individuals in their lives, a line of critical questioning connects the classroom to everyday life. In this way, Shor’s agenda of values nurtures a pedagogical climate that mobilizes students from positions of complacency, as objects, to positions of activism, as subjects. The transformation from object to subject invokes critical inquiry, critical dialogue and critical reflection. Thus, Shor’s agenda provides a framework in terms of how knowledge should be produced and how pedagogical practices should be established for the democratic imperative.

Shor’s (1992; 1993) agenda is reflected through ten values: participatory, situated, critical, democratic, dialogic, desocialization, multicultural, research-oriented, activist and affective

**Participatory** means that learning is an interactive and cooperative experience whereby students take an active role in classroom activities. They participate in discussions “instead of listening to teacher-talk” (Shor, 1993, p. 33).

Being **situated** refers to course material being grounded in student thought, experience and language. A situated learning experience allows students to understand course material through their own words and relate that material to their everyday life conditions.

Being **critical** means that the pedagogical process emphasizes both self and social reflection in understanding the way knowledge is constructed and how it is imparted to students. In this context, there is emphasis on critically understanding “how we know what we know, how we can learn what we need to know, and how the learning process itself is working or not working” (Shor, 1993, p. 33). Being critical is alternatively referred to as **problem-posing** to indicate the approach of critical teachers.
problem-posing offers a search for knowledge. In this mutual search, the teacher and students develop ‘co-intentionality’, that is, mutual intentions, which make the study collectively owned, not the teacher’s sole property….Co-intentionality begins when the teacher presents a problem for inquiry related to a key aspect of student experience, so that students see their thought, language and subjectivity in the study. (Shor, 1993, p. 26)

Democratic suggests that knowledge is mutually constructed by the teacher and students. In other words, the classroom does not represent a one-way dialogue from the teacher to students. A democratic classroom has given voice to students and allows them to contribute to the decision-making activities around the classroom.

Dialogic means that the class engages students to share their experiences and perspectives. The teacher guides and initiates the dialogic process and invites students to participate in the dialogue with their own words. As Shor (1993) states, “[students] are doing education and making it, not having education done to them or made for them” (p. 33).

Desocialization means to deconstruct the traditional classroom that has led students to rely on authority-dependence and thus, be passive in the learning process. Shor (1993) argues that until students are desocialized from “waiting to be told what to do and what things means”, (p. 33) they will continue to be silenced and subverted in the classroom. Desocialization also directs teachers to not accept a fixed way of teaching such as lecture-based, but also embrace other approaches such as problem-based learning and cooperative learning. Desocialization does not mean to replace one form of teaching with another, but to restructure the classroom beyond a pre-determined teaching and learning approach.

Developing multicultural values means that the classroom acknowledges issues of race, gender, class and sexuality in the curriculum. A multi-cultural context encourages a critical examination of dominant and non-dominant groups in terms of how power relations contribute to
inclusionary and exclusionary practices. This recognition can contribute to equity in classroom relations.

Being **research-oriented** means learning is socially relevant. Learning does not solely rest with academic knowledge, but also extends to everyday life experiences. Being research-oriented acknowledges that learning is contextual and not isolated to theoretical or abstract knowledge.

**Activist** means using knowledge to facilitate social change. Based upon problem-based learning, students are encouraged to assume active roles that can transform discursive conditions in their lives, workplaces and communities. In these capacities, they can address and deconstruct power contexts.

Being **affective** means “the critical, democratic classroom is interested in the broadest development of human feelings as well as the development of social inquiry and conceptual habits of mind. Being affective refers to developing “a range of emotions from humour to compassion to indignation” (Shor, 1993, p. 34) in the critical classroom.

In Shor’s model, dialogical is conceived beyond “talking” or “making room for discussion”. Dialogical translates into how an individual experiences and interprets the world. In other words, the term extends beyond “dialogue” as a classroom practice. Dialogical has a more profound meaning that views the world as being mediated through social relations. Thus, being dialogical represents an ontological commitment that reveals that individuals experience and interpret the world as a result of their social relations. For example, how individuals understand the world arise from inclusionary and exclusionary relations that reflect issues of race, gender, class and sexuality. In application of this meaning, the critical teacher cannot implement dialogue with an idealist perspective. They cannot merely create sharing moments in the classroom. Moreover, every student is not capable of experiencing the agenda of values in the
same way because of social inequities which are reproduced in the classroom. Thus, in order to foster the democratic imperative, the critical teacher has to acknowledge the social construction of identity and how individuals experience the world differently.

*Constructing the Model*

The model represents the manner in which Shor’s agenda of values can be constructed accordingly. The model is constructed as a multidimensional structure with the teacher and students at the centre of the model. The teacher and students hold the central position in the model because educating for democracy revolves around a change in their interactions. The values, encompassing the teacher and students, manifest in a multidirectional process as any one value influences and relates to another value. It is not the goal or expectation to identify all ten values in actual critical classrooms and thus, reproduce the entire agenda of values. In that case, the critical classroom can be accused for universalizing education wherein there is a standardized perspective to teaching and learning.

Critical pedagogy is not its own universal theory or methodology that transfers neatly from one situation to another. Nor is it meant to be the imposition of a particular ideology. It is an interdisciplinary process that changes with each unique social/classroom context and creates a space for teachers and students to engage in critical dialogue in which the objective is the production of their own ideas and values rather than the mere reproduction of those of the dominant groups. (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1999, p. 7)

Therefore, it is most unlikely to adapt all ten values. Educators and students do not need to be consumed by exactly replicating a critical classroom with the ten values. They need to focus upon a classroom climate that captures the essence of these values which points to mutuality, respect and tolerance.
Shor’s agenda functions as a starting point to understand the pedagogical climate in order to educate for democracy. The model allows teacher and students to work together in developing critical thought and reflection. Hence, the agenda of values attends to a pedagogical climate that transforms the interactions between teachers and students. The transformation is based upon deconstructing power relations within the classroom. In essence, modeling a democratic teacher-student relationship is the foundation of educating for democracy.

The model exhibits that the pedagogical climate of a critical classroom restructures the teacher-student relationship. Each value stems from the teacher challenging preconceived notions of the classroom experience. Rather, the teacher works collaboratively with students to create the pedagogical climate. The classroom is not only a space for developing academic knowledge. The classroom is also a space for developing the teacher-student relationship. The agenda of values create a climate wherein the teacher and students pay attention to how individuals speak to each other, how they listen to each other and how they respect each other--a climate built upon communication, trust and tolerance. But, as education becomes commodified, these values are overlooked and obliterated.

There is insubstantial research in exploring the teacher-student relationship in the university setting. University course evaluations have assessed teacher-student relationships through qualitative means that are often guided by Likert-scale measures. Standardized questions, such as “What did you enjoy most about the course?” “What would you change about the course?” and “What did you prefer most about the professor’s approach?” may be included in order to address the classroom climate. However, these questions do not probe the complexities and diversity that students bring to the classroom through their experiences, identities and perspectives. A greater quantitative context is required in order to interrogate how both issues of power and difference impact classroom dynamics and classroom relationships. This awareness
ignites reflections, along with a substantive critique and analysis about the classroom climate rather than making an assessment through a description of activities. By understanding how classroom relationships can be built upon equity as well as how they can be entangled with social inequities provides examples for individuals to apply to their personal lives, workplaces and communities.

In sum, the conceptual framework represents educational change and social change. The conceptual framework projects a democratic vision that has to be modeled in the classroom. In this regard, the framework guides the study by illustrating that social inequities have become reproduced in social institutions and teachers and students need to take ownership of democratic projects beyond the classroom. Shor’s agenda of values develops the conceptual framework through connecting pedagogy to everyday lives by unveiling power relations. In making this connection, the critical classroom shows that the purpose of education is more than attention to individual goals. In contrast, the purpose also encompasses being concerned for others. The conceptual framework, thus, operates to develop what Paulo Friere calls the “teachable heart” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 3).

As educating for democracy through critical pedagogy can create meaningful experiences for students both in and outside the classroom, the study identifies critical classrooms in order to understand the teaching and learning experience.
Figure 1: Original Model
Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter addresses the methodology for the study. Specifically, the chapter describes the reasons for selecting the research site. Moreover, the methodology is explained in terms of how the perspective taken, that being constructivism, facilitates critical pedagogy. As part of the data collection process, an understanding of how courses were selected is provided. Moreover, the data collection process is explained with respect to the classroom observations as well as the professor and student interviews. The chapter includes how the data results were analyzed accordingly. Following the analysis of the data, a revised model emerged which is described in this chapter.

Selection of the Site

The setting for this study is a graduate school of education in Canada. As market values have restructured the intellectual work of universities, it is suitable to explore how the democratic imperative has manifested in the graduate context. “Restructuring practices such as performance based funding, institutional funding contingent on business partnerships, and curricula jointly developed and delivered by the public and private sector are transforming the university in terms of its institutional form” (Magnusson, 2001, p. 107). The expansion of graduate education through corporate agendas, rather notably in Ontario, raises concern over the function of the graduate context in a rapidly changing environment. Magnusson (2001) discusses the actions of the Ontario government, after the rise of the Liberal government in 1993, which were preceded by federal cutbacks to provincial transfer payments. She notes:

At the same time that it reduced operating grants, the Ontario government began to reinvest in universities through targeted initiatives and matching grants. The three billion dollar Challenge Fund introduced in 1997 involved a provincial government contribution of up to $500 million toward research and development. To access these funds,
universities are required to shift some of their operating revenues toward research and secure at least a one-third contribution from the private sector. (p. 106)

Furthermore, Goyan (1998) states that “also in 1998, the provincial budget dedicated $29 million dollars toward higher education accessibility, $75 million dollars over a twenty-year period toward graduate scholarships, and $75 million toward research excellence awards (cited in Magnusson, 2001, p. 107). Thus, with graduate education expanding in these ways, alongside reinvestment strategies that serve university-business partnerships, an examination is warranted about how the graduate context can develop the democratic imperative amid these circumstances.

The transformation of intellectual work has implications for the type of knowledge produced to serve the democratic imperative. Thus, the graduate context, being characterized by intellectual work, must be explored for the knowledge forms that emerge in this changing domain. Also, the impact of neoliberal restructuring upon universities has given rise to the development of the knowledge economy. The term knowledge economy suggests that “greater ‘human capital’ will be necessary to enhance worker creativity, to use information productively, to raise the efficiency of the service economy, to achieve economic competitiveness, and thus to maintain employment” (Ross and Gibson, 2003, p. 239). Therefore, attention is shifted upon how knowledge is produced for the market imperative rather than applied to an equity framework that pays attention to the public good.

Even though faculty in other disciplines may directly or indirectly embrace the ideals of critical pedagogy within their classrooms, I explored the topic with graduate teachers in education discipline who could reflect on their practices as scholars and activists situated in the politics of classroom work. Hence, a graduate school of education was deemed suitable for the study.
Perspective of the Methodology

The methodology of the study is grounded in a constructivist perspective. “In contrast to more traditional realist approaches in which the truth of things is regarded as objectively ascertainable, newer constructivist views explore the ways in which processes of knowledge creation and human modes of cognition can be said to structure or constitute what is known” (Gould, 2003, p. ix). The stance is appropriate for the research because it explores both individuals’ perspectives and the knowledge production process which collectively ground critical pedagogy.

[A] constructivist view of learning suggests a approach to teaching that gives learners the opportunity for concrete, contextually meaningful experience through which they can search for patterns, raise their own questions, and construct their own models, concepts and strategies. The classroom in this model is seen as a minisociety, a community of learners engaged in activity, discourse, and reflection. The traditional hierarchy of learner as the unknowing, controlled subject studying to learn what the teacher knows begins to dissipate as teachers assume more of a facilitator’s role and learners take on more ownership of the ideas. Indeed, autonomy, mutual reciprocity of social relations, and empowerment become the goals. (Fosnot, 2005, p. ix)

Thus, the constructivist perspective can facilitate critical pedagogy by validating the teacher and students working collaboratively rather than being a hierarchical arrangement in the knowledge production process. Constructivism, as defined by Fosnot (2005) “is a theory about knowledge and learning; it describes both what ‘knowing’ is and how one ‘comes to know’…the theory describes knowledge as temporary, developmental, nonobjective, internally constricted, and socially and culturally mediated” (p. x). In other words, constructivism defines knowledge as not fixed or pre-determined, but through the subjectivity of the individual. As a result,
constructivism frames the methodology in order to unveil the students’ perspectives and thus, moves beyond a single view of knowledge or a single view of what is truth.

While this conceptualization of constructivism centralizes students in the knowledge production process, an equity audit or analysis must also be applied to the subjectivities of individuals. It is insufficient to create opportunities for voices without situating those voices. To this end, both the multiplicity of voice and the contextualization of voice are required. The study approaches the constructivist perspective with a broader lens in order to generate discussions that connect ways of knowing to issues of difference. Specifically, in expanding the meaning of constructivist, the study underscores the necessity of having a discourse that engages issues of difference in relation to understanding personal experiences. The post-colonial, feminist work of Bhattacharya, the anti-racist work of Dei and the feminist work of hooks are brought into this study in order to expose issues of race, gender and class among personal experiences. Expanding the constructivist perspective to embrace an equity framework therefore adds richness to the methodological approach. The extension of the constructivist perspective validates the claim of critical pedagogy to challenge the boundaries of a universal knowledge base and instead recognize the realities of individuals’ lives.

Pursuing an expanded viewpoint for the constructivist perspective is crucial when one traces the trajectory in which scholarly work has been presented in education. Magnusson (2000) examines how “within the social sciences, qualitative inquiry within a constructivist epistemology has come to occupy centre stage—or at least a significant portion of centre stage—in the areas of education and evaluation research” (p. 122). Specifically, she argues that framing qualitative research with the constructivist perspective brought in “the use of focus groups as an inquiry form” (p. 122) that acknowledges multiple voices or multiple truths. However, Magnusson (2000) notes that this approach of constructivism “blends nicely with such practices
as quality circles and corporate teams” (p. 122) which in turn support the corporatization of the social sciences. The discursiveness attached to this version of constructivism can be evidenced by the false perception that all voices and all perspectives can be heard equally. But, to the contrary, equality cannot occur simply because the perspective develops knowledge bases through “the notion of flattened hierarchies, egalitarian participation, and decision-making by consensus” (Magnusson, 2000, p. 122).

In order to embody equality in the knowledge production process, an equity framework must be invoked to recognize lived experiences grounded in both issues of difference and power. However, without an equity framework being applied to the constructivist perspective, the knowledge production process aligns with the interests of neoliberal capitalist ideology. As Magnusson (2000) argues, “constructivism, with its notion of plural realities constructed through social and cultural frames, supports neoliberal ideology in that the notion of subjugated realities is absent from the discourse” (p. 122). Since early qualitative research in education restricted and blurred the application of constructivism (Magnusson, 2000), a more critical approach is required consequently. In acknowledging that “the knower personally participates in all acts of knowing and understanding [and] knowledge does not exist ‘out there’ in isolation from the knower” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 116), the constructivist perspective is well-suited for this study because it represents a critical framework that can champion multiple perspectives, along the lines of power and difference. As a challenge to a neoliberal construction of knowledge, the constructivist approach is appropriate in order to expose the pretense that all perspectives are accepted and voiced equally while in actuality particular, dominant perspectives prevail based upon inequities with power and difference.
Selection of Courses

Referring to the literature, teaching from a critical perspective is grounded in issues of power addressed through social, cultural and political contexts.

In an effort to strive for an emancipatory culture of schooling, critical pedagogy calls upon teachers to recognize how schools have historically embraced theories and practices that function to write knowledge and power in ways that sustain asymmetrical relations of power under the guise of neutral and apolitical views of education—views that are intimately linked to ideologies shaped by power, politics, history, culture, and economics. (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003, p. 11)

Typically, a negotiated teaching approach facilitates critical pedagogy in that issues of power not only impact the content of the class, but also contribute to transform the structure of the class. In selecting courses, I looked for ones that incorporated the theme of power and embraced a shared philosophy.

I looked for courses that critically explored issues related to educating for democracy. I became aware of courses in the institution that projected the critical perspective. This information was acquired from random and informal inquiries with professors and students. I also reviewed the institution’s online course information and general course descriptions in the timetable to identify tentative courses. I noted six courses that potentially suited the study. Through email, I acquired the course syllabi from professors.

I initially attempted to select graduate courses from a range of departments within the institution. I believed that selecting a range of departments could indicate a variation in teaching approaches and learning experiences. At the same time, my focus was identifying and exploring approaches to critical teaching. Thus, if applicable courses were from the same department, I was
still interested to select them for the study. I did not limit my selection based upon department or area of study in the institution.

After reading through the syllabi of six courses, I believed that some courses did not serve the purpose of the study. Being an exploratory study, I was attempting to understand the atmosphere of a critical classroom that nurtures the democratic imperative. Therefore, I felt that three graduate courses were relevant. Two of the three graduate courses were in the same department. However, one of the two courses was in a distinctive sub-area of that department. I was not concerned that two courses were selected from the same department as they addressed a variation of topics.

I contacted each professor of the chosen course through email. I provided an overview of the study, invited them to participate in the study and requested access to their classes for observations. I indicated that I was specifically exploring their critical teaching and classroom activities. Also, I noted that I was investigating critical pedagogy in other graduate courses. The professors described my study with their respective students for any initial concerns. All professors agreed to participate in the study. All professors invited me to a class in order to address the students about their participation.

A factor in selecting courses from the six possible courses was class size. Some of the relevant graduate courses had between 6-10 students. I perceived those classes to be too small in size for observations. I felt that my presence would have been too intrusive in those settings and student identity may have been compromised. I believed that among the larger classes, that is, class sizes of at least 15 students, my presence would have potentially been less distracting. Also, I felt that there would be more variety of interactions between the teacher and students in the larger classes compared to the smaller classes. Thus, I selected courses that presented larger class
sizes. It is recognized that I may have witnessed critical teaching differently based upon class size.

**Data Collection Process**

Following the constructivist approach, the data collection process needed to be conducive to this viewpoint. Thus, classroom observations and one-to-one interviews were appropriate because they could provide an exploration of the knowledge production process and individuals’ perspectives.

The observations provided a picture of the pedagogical climate of the critical classrooms. The classroom observations served as a first step in identifying the structure and function of critical classrooms that model the democratic imperative. The one-to-one interviews were suitable for the second component of the data collection. It was necessary to understand what teachers and students felt and thought about the critical classrooms. Two fundamental components of critical pedagogy are dialogue and participation. These activities directly engaged the teacher and students in each respective class. Therefore, it was essential to understand how the teachers and students internalized both dialogue and participation. Overall, the one-to-one interviews allowed a sharing of attitudes and opinions concerning the critical process.

**Classroom Observations**

Class observations commenced three weeks into each course from the beginning of the fall term. I felt that by this time students would have acquired a basic understanding of the course. Also, I felt that the teachers and students would have begun to develop a rapport with each other. I hoped this timing would have contributed to more insightful observations. Prior to conducting class observations, I attended each class to introduce myself and explain my study. I indicated that the purpose of the study was to examine the role of critical pedagogy in relation to educating for democracy within graduate classrooms. I explained my understanding of critical
pedagogy and educating for democracy. I emphasized that my intention was neither to judge the performance or ability of professors or students nor to evaluate courses, programs, or the institution. In addition, I discussed the nature of my observations and attempted to assure the participants that professors, students, courses and the institution will not be identified, in any manner, as stated in all consent forms. To provide an overview of the study, I explained that there will be an opportunity to voluntarily participate in a one-to-one interview in order to acquire perceptions about class experiences. I provided the opportunity for questions about the study or concerns about participation. In addition, I directed students to my contact information if any questions or concerns arose independently. Through arrangements with each professor, it was planned at the subsequent class that a decision will be reached concerning my presence as an observer and then consent forms would be signed and returned. There was agreement from all individuals, in all the courses, to participate in the study.

I observed each class five times during the fall term. As the term consisted of twelve weeks, I conducted observations for more than one-third of the class time. I attended each class on alternative weeks to minimize my intrusiveness and to allow time for my own reflections. By doing so, I felt students could be more comfortable with my presence in the class which in turn could assist with interests for interviews. I was available before and after the class to answer any questions. On several occasions, students approached me and engaged in casual and informal conversations about my research interests and the study. In having this interaction, I felt less intrusive during the classroom sessions. This contact also contributed to students feeling more comfortable with me during interviews.

My observations focused upon the professors’ teaching approaches, the nature of class activities, student responses to class activities and interactions between professors and students. Each professor provided me with their respective course syllabi that outlined course objectives,
components of the class and the structure of the class. I reminded professors of my presence a week before I attended their classes. At this time, the professors emailed me an agenda for the class or any other pertinent information for the class. During the classes, if there were handouts or other course materials, I was provided that information. All of the written material contributed to the context for the classes. This information assisted with my understanding of the class setting and with my construction of interview questions.

The professors and students were informed about the interview component of the study during my introductions. During my last observation of each class, I recapitulated the purpose of the study and invited the students to participate in an interview. I explained that the interview will enhance my understanding of the class interactions and activities as well as offer perceptions of their class experiences. At this time, I circulated a sign-up sheet for students to provide their names and emails if they wished to participate in an interview. I indicated that if upon reflection students had an interest in an interview, they could contact me using information provided. Through emails, I contacted the students who signed up for an interview or who contacted me after the class. I set up an interview date and time suitable to the students. I provided them with an informed consent letter that outlined the purpose and nature of the interview.

Similarly, during the last observation, I personally spoke with each professor to invite them to participate in an interview. If they were interested, I asked them to inform me through email or directly with a suitable date and time. As each professor agreed to an interview, I asked each individual if they were open to conducting the session in their respective offices. I identified that space as private and comfortable for them. I left a copy of the informed consent letter with each professor in order to inform them about the purpose and nature of the interview.
Professor and Student Interviews

I interviewed all professors, thus 3 professor interviews were conducted. I interviewed 5 students from each graduate course, thus 15 student interviews were conducted. I hoped for a variation in student experience that would emerge from personal background as well as learning experiences. It must be noted that there were considerably fewer males than females in all the classes. Also, the participants were representative of a wide age range with a combination of direct entry-level graduate students and mature graduate students.

Each interview with professors and students was approximately 50 minutes. I followed a structured interview format for all the interviews. I began interviewing at the end of the fall term and continued conducting interviews at the beginning of the winter term. All professor interviews were completed during the fall term while student interviews continued into the winter term. Before attending the interview, I asked participants to read the informed consent form, to raise any concerns or questions and sign a copy if they agreed to the interview as the form outlined. I specifically asked if participants will agree to have their interviews tape-recorded. I received permission from all participants to tape-record all interviews.

The purpose of the interviews was to acquire opinions, perceptions and feelings related to the respective critical classrooms. The purpose of the study was not to be evaluative of professors, students, the course or the institution. However, I found some of the student responses to be of this nature. I was able to clearly identify the evaluative remarks and distinguish them from responses about the critical teaching and learning experiences. The purpose of the professor interviews was to ask them about their pedagogical practices. I found the professors did not include personalized opinions of students, but spoke more generally about their courses and teaching. The interview questions also provided an opportunity to further understand my observations of the activities and interactions in the classrooms.
There were a few ethical issues regarding this study. In exploring the professors’ teaching, they could have felt as though assessments and judgments were being cast upon them and their classroom approaches. By introducing myself and the purpose of the study through informal conversations, I hoped that I clarified my intentions and created a sense of ease and trust with them. It was clearly stated in the consent letter that the study was not to be judgmental of the course or the professor.

Another ethical issue was that my presence may have affected classroom dynamics which I identify as an impact upon the learning process. My observations and taking notes on the classroom practices and activities may have made some students feel uncomfortable. But, similar to the professors, I hoped that my personal introduction at the beginning of the class would assist in clarifying my research intentions as well as create a sense of reassurance and comfort. The intentions of the study were clearly explained in a consent letter to the students.

I tape-recorded and transcribed all the interviews. I transcribed the interviews immediately after they were conducted with professors and students. In the interview transcripts, I used pseudonyms for the names of professors, students, courses and the institution. All data, fieldnotes, transcripts, audio-tapes, disks and coded documents were securely stored in a locked filing cabinet. All data is kept in files on a computer with a username and password only known to me.

Data Analysis

The observational fieldnotes provided a detailed description of the activities and interactions in each class. I coded the fieldnotes for categories and themes. The observations provided an “opportunity to move beyond the selective perceptions of others” and “arrive at a more comprehensive view of the setting” (Patton, 2002, p. 264).
I used a constant comparative method to analyze the interview transcripts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The method operates by creating categories or themes to compare incidents. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) state, “the analyst starts by coding each incident in his [sic] data into as many categories of analysis as possible, as categories emerge or as data emerge that fit an existing category” (p. 92). The categories or themes that I assigned to the data enabled me to insert pieces of the professors’ and students’ responses into them and compare similarities and differences among them. “[T]he defining rule for the constant comparative method: [is] while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different categories” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 106). Thus, I compared the various incidents in each class in order to understand the experiences. This comparison then moved from incidents within each classroom to comparisons among the classes. “[T]he constant comparative units change from comparison of incident with incident to comparison of incident with properties of the category that resulted from initial comparisons of incidents” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 108). Based upon this dimension, the constant comparative model allowed for the evaluation of the themes as the professors’ and students’ responses were compared respectively. In addition, it was insightful to identify patterns in the themes between the observations and interviews for interpretations. The constant comparative model addresses issues of reliability by not merely assigning an evaluation to an incident by itself. The continual comparison among incidents provides the possibility of alternative themes. This approach allows for greater meaning to emerge with the data. The possibilities of themes and the greater meaning assigned both contribute to the reliability of the data.

Through the data analysis process, I realized that the original working model required revising. The change was necessary in order to indicate particular values as a starting point for the actualization of critical pedagogy in educating for democracy.
Revised Model

The original conceptual model indicated that the agenda of values manifests in a multidirectional process as any one value also relates to another value. In this case, the values are not independent of each other, but rather any one value requires other values to develop the habits of critical questioning. In educating for democracy, the values that support its environment are interdependent. Therefore, in the revised model, I still identify one value relating to another value. I do not believe, however, that the model is well-represented in a multi-directional manner wherein all values exist simultaneously. In contrast, I believe that the values are embedded within each other and have a fundamental starting point and end point. There must be a solid foundation for the critical classroom. Similarly, there must be a definite purpose for the critical classroom. The values build upon one other to reach the ultimate goal—the democratic value. Thus, I revised the original model from a multidirectional structure to a circular arrangement that develops as a flower-like structure.

In educating for democracy, it is essential to first engage the teacher and students in a desocialization process. Desocialization is the trigger point to educate for democracy in that the classroom environment has to deconstruct behaviours, attitudes and values from a standardized way of teaching, learning and thinking. Through desocialization, the teacher and students are engaged in a process where they discuss, debate and reflect upon a universalized understanding of the world and how it might be different. The desocialization stage challenges the status quo way of being and thus can expose ideas and beliefs on power and difference. Stemming from this interaction, the values of dialogic, participatory, critical and situated emerge to allow the teacher and students to share their ideas and beliefs. These above values are an essential second stage of the model.
Critical pedagogy leads teachers and students to realize that knowledge exists in multiple forms. Also, critical teaching emphasizes the different applications of knowledge which contribute to the well-being of individuals and society. In other words, knowledge is not only defined through a factual basis for memorization and reiteration. This stage gives rise to the values of multiculturalism, being research-oriented and being affective. These values establish the third stage of the model. They are grouped together to reflect the essence of discussing and sharing perspectives in order to then apply knowledge to everyday lives. The circular model culminates with activism and being democratic. These values form the fourth stage of the model. They are central values for the critical process. Activism is a focal point in the model because the democratic imperative is reached through social change. Being democratic is the essence of all the values and can subscribe to an equity framework which fosters a critical classroom.

The flower-like structure provides a clearer purpose and greater meaning to how a critical classroom functions in educating for democracy. The revised model reflects that the critical classroom should not focus on simultaneously having all values. But, rather the focus should be to build upon values so that students acquire a better sense of critical engagement and the meaning of democracy. Having restructured the model to be more representative of the critical pedagogical climate, the professors’ teaching approaches and the students’ experiences need to be described in order to understand the actual issues and dynamics of critical classrooms.
Figure 2: Revised Model
Chapter Five: Description of Courses and the Professors’ Teaching Approaches and the Students’ Experiences

This chapter provides a description of the graduate courses (Democratic Education, Community Education and Multicultural Education) which were the focus of the study. Also, the chapter describes the professors’ teaching practices and the students’ experiences in each respective class.

Description of Courses

Democratic Education Course

The purpose of the Democratic Education course was to examine the meaning of democracy. Based upon this understanding, the course addressed how individuals can be prepared for their citizenship roles as a means to foster the democratic imperative. In this light, the course explored the meanings of democratic citizenship and how these meanings can be taught in the educational context. The course explored how different cultures and nations have unique views of democratic citizenship and engaged political, social and the transnational dimensions to understand democratic citizenship. Furthermore, the course emphasized how democratic citizenship education manifests through the public school curricula and examined the challenges that arise through its implementation. The course is approached from Canadian and international perspectives. The course readings were on topics such as: conflict with citizenship education, values in citizenship education, citizenship knowledge as well as experiences and agency with democratic citizenship action. Small group work was employed to address the issues of democratic citizenship education.

Evaluation in the course involved four parts. To begin with, written responses were assigned for course readings. The responses were based on critically comparing and contrasting different pieces of work. Furthermore, the responses involved explaining one’s interest in the readings, situating one’s experiences in relation to the readings and identifying missing issues in
the readings. Second, students were asked to facilitate a small discussion group based upon their reading responses. The purpose for the discussion was for each student to highlight important insights from their chosen readings and plan discussion questions. Third, students had to analyze a piece of democratic citizenship education curricula from both a theoretical stance (in relation to principles and goals of democratic citizenship education) and a practical stance (in relation to course content and the teaching process). Lastly, evaluation in the course involved class participation.

The class consisted of 19 students of which 2 students were males and 17 students were females. 3 students can be identified as minoritized. The professor was a white female.

*Community Education Course*

The purpose of the Community Education course was to examine community/social action education, that is, projects or initiatives that relate to social justice and equity issues. The premise of the course was the need for community/social action to challenge oppressions or inequities among issues of race, gender, class and sexuality. The courses involved three areas: to understand the nature of community/social action education, to understand the diversity of areas within community/social action education (Indigenous, Feminist, Environmental, Anti-Racist) and to understand the challenges faced by community/social action educators. The course readings focused upon topics such as: the political nature of education, social action education, the role of the critical educator, critical analyses in a Canadian and global context, anti-racist education/politics and feminist education. The course was grounded in developing a political framework in examining community/social action education from both local and global perspectives. Film was a central dimension of the course to present different areas of community/social action education. The films focused upon human rights, social justice,
economic justice, and environmental degradation. The use of film exposed students to the plights of oppressions and the challenges faced to foster the democratic imperative.

Course evaluation involved an analytical research paper that allowed students to explore the issues and challenges related to their own community projects. Also, class participation was also a part of the course evaluation.

The class was comprised of 18 students of which 3 students were males and 15 students were females. 4 students can be identified as minoritized. The professor was a white female.

*Multicultural Education Course*

The purpose of the Multicultural Education course was to understand how the linguistic and cultural contexts of public schools are changing due to increased cross-cultural expansion. The premise of the course was that despite the increased mobility of different populations, the English language remains a universal language that prevents the expansion of both other languages and forms of minority education in public schools. The course readings focused upon topics such as: linguistic imperialism and the spread of English, standardized testing, second language pedagogy, anti-racist education and bilingual/immersion education. The professor allowed the students to pursue other topics based upon their interests. Some of these topics were: the impact of using technology for teaching and learning, barriers for English as a Second Language (ESL) students and educational programs for minority students. The course focused upon the role of the educator to teach in multicultural contexts, how teacher education programs prepare educators to teach in these contexts and the challenges at the local and international levels to implement academic programs for minority students. Class debates, regarding issues of multicultural education, structured the course. In this regard, students were asked to select a topic of interest, related to multicultural education, and defend their perspectives.
Evaluation of the course involved a final term paper focusing upon a topic with multicultural education. The students were asked to describe and discuss the topic based on issues that they felt were significant. Class participation was also a part of the course evaluation.

The class was comprised of 16 students of which 3 were male students and 13 were female students. 9 students can be identified as minoritized. The professor was a white male.

Professors’ Teaching Approaches and Students’ Experiences

The interviews unveiled the professors’ teaching approaches and the students’ experiences. For the professors, I was interested in understanding their perspectives related to actualizing their teaching approaches. For the students, I was interested in understanding their responses to the teaching approaches. As an opening point, all interviews began with the question “how do you understand critical pedagogy?” I commenced with this question in order to acquire the professors’ and students’ ideas about critical pedagogy that could reveal some of their personal experiences with teaching and learning. Recalling that critical pedagogy is not a linear approach, from teacher to students, but rather is a negotiated experience between them, I hoped to capture this shared engagement. Thus, I felt that a description of both the teaching approaches and the students’ experiences should be placed together in order to reveal the interactions between the professor and students in each classroom. I constructed suitable themes that represented this interaction rather than have themes for the professors’ teaching approaches and the students’ experiences separately.

Even though the experiences shared by each professor and student were distinctive, themes emerged across their stories. The themes are not meant to generalize the experiences within a critical classroom. Also, the themes identify the similarities and differences surfacing from the graduate classrooms. Five themes emerged: (1) experiences of standardized teaching and learning, (2) student-centered teaching as a means to empowerment, (3) role of teacher
authority, (4) silences among students and (5) creating a language of possibility or projecting a grand vision of democracy. The themes indicate the main dimensions that constructed the critical experiences. In order to understand the dimensions in each class, I categorize the five themes according to each course.

Democratic Education Course

Experiences of Standardized Teaching and Learning

Referring to experiences in other graduate courses or in previous university education, students mentioned that they were rarely exposed to critical teaching and not in the manner presented through this course. One student acknowledged that even though graduate courses develop critical thinking, she felt that often the teaching approaches were directive in that the courses did not model a critical approach. The student remarked:

My other graduate courses have been more skills-based where there has been that transfer of knowledge--that transfer from professor to the student. Even though the expectation is for us to be critical, the actual teaching style is not representative of that.

The student believed that the Democratic Education course was facilitated in a manner that presented knowledge as not fixed or not universal.

Another student felt that the course explored topics using a social, cultural and political lens. In her opinion, other graduate courses did not intersect topics with these perspectives which in turn address the underlying issues of power and difference. She comments that, “the teacher did not ask us questions and expect answers. She peeled away the layers to reveal how issues of power and difference around race, gender, class and so on contribute to and threaten democracy”. Similar to this student, another student experienced critical engagement through reading the course articles. The student talked about the emphasis to examine course material
based upon the “politics” behind the writings as opposed to merely summarizing the articles. She elaborated:

In reading the first set of articles, the professor intentionally pointed out who the article was written for, where the funding from the article came from, which author is behind the article. The professor was blatant that this was what we will be doing in class, how we will be approaching material and in this fashion. I had never been exposed to course material with this approach.

The same student discussed previous teaching approaches in which she felt standardized perceptions about learning. In this course, she felt students were neither spoon-fed the meaning of the articles nor were they asked to “re-tell” the articles. There was an application of a critical viewpoint.

In the first reader response that I had to do, I experienced difficulty in writing a response. I was digging. I was trying to find salient points to reflect on. The feedback that I received from the professor was don’t summarize the article. This was something that I had always been told to do. Others professors are always saying present this to me as though I haven’t read the article. For this course, the professor wrote on my first assignment, “I have read these articles”. Don’t write as though you are teaching me the material for the first time. Find a point in the article that stands out to you and debate it, present a certain perspective in terms of what bothers you, what would the author say about your perspective, and how does it relate to practice.

She felt that students were encouraged to not blindly absorb course material, but instead to express how they understood the text, to express what was important to them, and to express what they wished to discuss in the course.
Student-Centered Teaching as a Means to Empowerment

Students expressed a strong sense of empowerment in the class through the opportunity to contribute to the class structure and through the various dialogic opportunities. The course was grounded in large group discussions, small group discussions, one-to-one sharing, and sharing circles. Students felt that the ways to participate in the class were all student-centered approaches. As an example, often the class began with a sharing circle. The professor invited each student to take a few minutes to share any reflections about class material, to pose any relevant questions about the class or to simply express what was on their minds. If students did not wish to share at that moment, then they were not obliged. The professor always indicated that they could pass on the opportunity. One student felt this was a democratic approach to talking and sharing in the class. She commented that “it was democratic because everyone had the opportunity to speak or pass as we went around the circle in the class”.

Another student found this atmosphere encouraging and comfortable as a way to commence the class. Referring to the habitual sharing circles, she noted:

Once in a while being approached to speak without having to go out of your way to say something really facilitates everyone. You are not pressured to speak and listening to what everyone is saying often makes you think of something that you had not thought of before and it gives everyone time to speak.

Most importantly, the student felt the sharing circle played an integral role by harmonizing the class atmosphere.

The sharing circle puts everyone on the same page before you actually get into a more profound class discussion or activity. Other professors might just ask students if you have any questions to pose to them, but you feel limited to what you should say or you don’t sometimes get an equal turn to speak.
All of the students interviewed felt empowered from the first class where they, along with the professor, collectively established rules for the class. The collective effort to establish rules emphasized the expectation to adhere to them. For example, one student recalled “we had to raise our hands when we wished to speak and we were reminded to respect our classmates by not interrupting them while they were speaking”. This approach reminded the student of early years of schooling, yet at the same time she realized it established an atmosphere of respect, equity, and trust for all voices in the classroom. Similarly, another comment was:

We participated in coming up with the class constitution. With the rules of conduct in the first class, we were assigning democratic values to how we wanted to see the course run as opposed to the teachers saying don’t do this, don’t do that. At first, this approach struck me as unnecessary, but I realized we were talking about respect for each other. The professor was providing us with a good example of democracy.

Another student-centered activity in which individuals felt empowered was their role as discussant leader for small group sessions. One student remarked:

In facilitating the discussions, students felt empowered because they were in control of the discussed topics based upon questions that they had put forward. It was interesting to see how someone else interrogates knowledge and what concerns they want us to discuss.

Another student commented about the role of discussant leader.

As leader there was no pressure as I have sometimes felt in doing other course presentations. We choose what we wanted to focus on and the professor did not grade us on the material we prepared for the group. It was an unrestricted opportunity to focus on and discuss our interests and ideas.

The same student compared the role of discussant leader to the role of a teacher since many of the students were public school teachers. She noted that the class leadership role de-emphasized
the teacher-centered approaches many of them were familiar with and applied in leading discussions. She said:

Being in the role of a teacher where you are always in the spotlight because it is a top-down kind of thing you are conveying what you know. But in our small group atmosphere, we all have read the same thing, we all have our own ideas and also we just spent the last hour of class talking about democracy, so I think by being put in a role as facilitator rather than teacher it translates back into not holding onto the reins and creating an engaging discussion where you share your knowledge and create spaces to hear other voices.

The student expressed that “it is very easy to get caught up in what you believe and what you are saying”. Thus, the discussant leader role made her look beyond herself and engage with the perspectives of other students.

Another student echoed this point in recognizing the value of being open to other perspectives. The comment was:

We can’t all possibly have all experiences. Each of us is coming from one approach, from our own lens, but then to hear the perspectives from someone else broadens our ability to that perspective. Just in hearing someone else had a different experience allows us to see that there is a difference among us and recognizing that difference itself breeds the idea of being critical and is therefore empowering for each one of us.

Overall, the class was structured through student-centered teaching because “it allowed the students to have a voice, be heard and hear more than the professor’s voice” as one student commented.

The professor noted that the role of discussant leader in the small groups was to create conversational spaces that were generated by and from the students. The professor discussed that
it is important to create comfortable spaces for students to dialogue about their real-life experiences which represent their identities. The professor felt the small group sessions facilitated where they were coming and what they brought to the classroom. She also mentioned that in this space they had an opportunity to unveil what they do in their workplaces or what they did before graduate school. The professor said:

This was a way to delegate authority to students that was not just sharing. This approach was meant to be centered on the students. They were very comfortable spaces because by and large no professor was looking over their shoulders, no one was marking them and the small group setting would have been intimate and empowering for students to participate.

Role of Teacher Authority

The students recognized the importance of the professor to assume authority in the classroom. According to one student, the authority of the teacher “contributes to a clear purpose of the class and what goals they are working towards”. Another comment was the authority of the teacher was necessary to establish equity among students. “The idea of rules of the class initiated by the professor reminded us what to be mindful of when participating and the impact of our voices”. At the same time, the student felt that establishing class rules was a democratic learning space rather than the professor being an authoritarian by dictating the class rules.

Another student offered a similar point. She felt that “we need the authority of the professor to remind students of controlling voices and to silence some voices for a more equitable class”. She believed that teacher authority can assist students to not only see themselves, but also to see each other in the learning process. The sense was that it is easy to become enthralled with one’s comments. She said:
The authority of the teacher is necessary to make sure that all voices are heard. Even though I had something to say all the time, I was not called upon and that was purposeful and intended. This approach said to me, “I see your hand up, but you have spoken already”. Then there were times when this was even communicated to students who were speaking a great deal.

One comment regarding the professor’s authority pointed to the teacher challenging the students to think critically. The student felt that the course did not just move from one topic to another. He felt that there was connectivity throughout the course. He remarked:

We need the professor to challenge us to say “what would the authors from the others topics we looked at say about this week’s topic”? In doing so, we are learning how knowledge is connected which allows us to see how ideas are similar and different among scholars. These are perspectives wherein we need the professor to lead us.

By comparing perspectives, the student appeared to not only have a solid understanding of democracy, but also could consider the different meanings.

The professor recognized her authority in the classroom. She expressed authority as a necessity to assist students in the critical learning process. The professor commented that critical pedagogy is “all about dialogue and different kinds of dialogue”. She said that she never does one type of dialogue in the class. She creates comfortable spaces for students to engage, but she also will make sure that there are opportunities where “they learn to disagree constructively through dialogue which in turn pushes them to be more critical. This is where I come in”. For example, she mentioned that since a democracy is about making choices, students need to be actively engaged in decision-making exercises. She stated that she asks students what they will do in particular situations or asks them a set of questions to critically compare one author’s work
to another individual’s work. She said that “it is important to make students aware of their choices and the consequences of those choices. I feel this is my role as the professor”.

The professor makes two other points regarding her role of authority. She stated that in teaching students about their social responsibility as citizens, there will be uncertainty. She commented:

You need to have uncertainty to go from the way things are to the way it could be. This is an uncomfortable process. So, the uncertainty is part of the process. It is not always positive. But, I see it as a rational and necessary space for students to learn critically. I probably create a lot of uncertainty by asking a lot of difficult questions, without answers. In this way, the students emerge realizing that they don’t know what they thought they knew. This is engaging them critically.

As a second point, the professor noted that her directive role contributes to the possibility of everyone in the large group having “talk time”. She noted that this was very important in this class wherein the majority of the students were public school teachers. She felt that it is her role to create spaces for diverse perspectives to emerge in the classroom. Also, she felt it was necessary to engage students who were involved in different projects beyond teaching. She wanted to prevent their silences and encouraged them to share their experiences. While the professor did not label her position as authoritarian, she commented that it is her job to guide, push and direct students in a motivating manner. “I don’t share equal power with the students. But I feel that is my responsibility to use my position to create multiple ways for them to have a freedom of speech and freedom of choice in the classroom”. In this way, the professor felt the class had democratic aspects. At the same time, the professor felt the class was not a true or perfect democracy. She needs to make crucial decisions and thus use authority which is necessary for a critical classroom.
Silences among Students

There was an agreement among the students interviewed that there were dominant voices heard more frequently in the classroom. Thus, not all voices were heard. But, as one student commented, “there is a difference between being silent and being kept silenced”. The student acknowledged that one way to participate is to listen and reflect internally on what is being heard or taught. All of the students interviewed also talked about the many participatory opportunities in the class which would have granted a voice. They believed that students could have felt comfortable in the class due to the different approaches to dialogue. Another student mentioned “the professor did a great job in identifying both the louder voices and the more silence ones in that she encouraged those students who spoke frequently to allow other students to speak”.

One student felt the composition of the class created silences. The class had a disproportionate number of females compared to males. One male student felt this difference contributed to a reluctance to express his opinions. He stated:

In this sense sometimes I would bit my tongue if I wanted to say something for the fact that I thought I might be scrutinized for my views as a male. I think that happened a lot at the beginning of the course and that as course progressed there was certainly more camaraderie in the classroom. But nonetheless, I think it was skewed to a female voice which is understandable because there were more females. But, I think I would have valued more males in the class just on the basis of relating to their perspectives and to feel a little more comfortable to express my views.

Creating a Language of Possibility or Projecting a Grand Vision of Democracy

The students were asked what they acquired from the course and how the course impacted them at this point. Many students felt that the course created a language of possibility for democracy. They expressed an interest to further understand the meanings and implications
of the democratic imperative. The students also expressed that they were more committed to applying this understanding to the outside world. In other words, they noted that they were starting to see themselves as active participants in fostering democracy. There were different ways that the students connected with an understanding of democracy. One student reflected:

The class made me a more critical thinker in terms of what I read and about what’s being said. I have learned to not take what is in print as fact and to challenge what I read and what an author is saying. The class has led me to start deconstructing the idea of being a student and what does academia mean in terms of me recognizing my role in the learning process. I realized that my ideas are valuable. I have a responsibility in defining what democracy means.

Some other students were also impacted in a more personal way beyond the theoretical or academic meanings of democracy. They appeared to grasp the social meaning of democracy. They began to question how they, as individuals, and society as a whole prevent the democratic imperative. In this way, they were starting to situate themselves in an equity framework. One student commented:

It’s very obvious to me, in emerging from this course, that education is so political. We get bogged down by technical differences. We get caught up in difference and how we must have this consensus in ideas and perceptions. I realize that we need to become less threatened by difference and be able to consider our function in the process. We need to learn to work through conflict and difference. It’s frustrating to see how conflict is so muted in our society. If we can get over that, then I think we could be more functional. The educational environment is a good place to start to talk about these things.
A second student mentioned that individuals have to question their actions and attitudes in the system, but to reach that point is challenging. She felt that this class instigated that questioning process for her. She remarked:

I walked into the class taking a lot of things for granted. It made me question how do we educate for democracy and that streams into other things such as “how do we educate teachers for their roles with democracy”? I started to question all of these things I took for granted and started looking at things with a much different lens. Also, you start to question your operations in the system and you start to question “what am I doing in this and how can things be difference”? This is the only way that you can be critical. But that is difficult process to reach.

The students were expressing that individuals cannot assume higher education to be a democratic sphere. In doing so, they were acknowledging how power and difference impact the teaching and learning context. As the former student commented:

We need to acknowledge where democracy is going. We need to acknowledge what students think about democracy because if we mute students, then how can they address issues of democracy as adults? It’s as though you are automatically thinking when students become adults that they will be educated for democracy, but that’s a wrong assumption.

Another student felt that the course helped her understanding of the role of being teacher. She said that the course encouraged her to think about standardized teaching practices that she followed blindly in her classroom. The student felt that this course assisted her to incorporate a different lens that would situate learning around students’ identities and experiences.

The professor saw her role, as critical educator, to create spaces wherein students could see their identities and experiences reflected in the course. By creating spaces for them to start
thinking about their actions and attitudes, she created a language of possibility for democracy. She noted:

It is not the responsibility of any teacher at any level to tell people what to think. But it is the responsibility of a teacher at any level to give people opportunities to develop the capacities to understand how to move around in the world, to be able to speak up for themselves, to come to understand people different from themselves, to make decisions and to make collective decisions. This is democracy.

At the same time, the professor referred to critical pedagogy as learning to communicate and interact with other individuals--individuals who are situated socially, culturally and politically different. She said that students need to understand that democracy extends to thinking critically, reading critically and speaking openly. She stated passionately, “democracy is a tool for life”. She further explained:

In teaching democracy, your students learn to speak up for themselves and they know that they can and must speak up. They learn how to agree and disagree without making it a conflict. By the end of the course, they take all of these ideas and apply it to a real project. I get to see that application of critical teaching and learning in order to foster democracy. This is most rewarding as I learn just as much as they do.

Overall, the professor envisioned her role as unique in the critical classroom. She has an obligation to guide students, yet collaborate with them in fostering the democratic imperative. Through this course, democracy was conceived as a part of everyday life. The professor attempted to integrate this perspective into with her teaching and her classroom.
Community Education Course

Experiences of Standardized Teaching and Learning

A large number of students in the class have been working or volunteering in the area of community education. For this reason, many of their graduate courses focused upon community education with a critical perspective. However, similar to the students of the Democratic Education course, the students in this class expressed that higher education, in general, has not paid sufficient attention to critical teaching and learning. One student acknowledged that in the cases when higher education attends to critical perspectives the “academy has become specialized by addressing race, gender, class and disability independently rather than seeing the whole and its related parts”. He expressed that the academy has an agenda in addressing critical perspectives.

Students are caught in the trap of just going through the motion of being critical about certain issues. Higher education needs to incorporate the tools that sustain critical development. I think that there is a fear if you empower students all of a sudden there will be change that cannot be controlled and there will be this anarchy in society. In essence, the student suggested a lack of attention placed upon critical development in the university.

Another student commented that her interest in specialized programs with a social justice focus developed a critical perspective. Yet, she remarked that this perspective was driven by professors in particular disciplines or departments and not representative of higher education as a whole. Referring to previous learning experiences, she stated:

Some professors would say this is what you’re reading. So, it’s what you are reading. You can’t say I don’t feel like reading this. What’s different here in this course is the negotiated course content with students. This approach reflects a democratic approach.
A student who taught environmental education in Costa Rica through the public school system recalls her teaching experience which reflected critical teaching. The student discussed the dimensions that ground critical development. She emphasized that even though the application of critical development may change to suit the educational level, particular dimensions create a humanizing experience that can empower any type of learner. The student commented:

In critical teaching that empowers students, it’s not about choice. I mean choice is a part of it. But you can’t just walk in and say do what you want to do. You have to provide a framework. You have to provoke an analysis among your learners. How I begin is with a diagnostic of the situation. You can do this with any learners. You find out what is the problem. My experience was teaching young children environmental education in Costa Rica. I asked them to draw what their communities looks like. I will get flowers, birds, gardens and trees. I worked in a very poor, marginalized area, so then I have to say, “is this what you see, what your community looks like when you walk down the street”?

Then they say “no”. Again, I probe them further to tell me what they see in their community. They say “garbage”. So, my response is “where is the garbage in your picture”? Their comment is “we can put the garbage in the picture”? I tell them of course you can and ask then what else do they see. They respond that they see grafitti, drunks, drug addicts and holes in the road. Then all of this comes out. So, the point is that you have to provoke people to think in a more critical and analytical way, but in a way that is empowering. You have to have faith in your learners. You have to believe that they are intelligent people with knowledge, skills and values.

A third student interviewed felt that students become engaged with critical learning only later on during their education. She noted that at the end of high school she pursued critical
material on her own—outside of the classroom. She said that “doing that on my own questioned and confused everything I had learned to that point. So, why have someone go through that instead of teaching students how to analyze things from the beginning of the educational system?” This student’s comment raises the concern in terms of how critical learning is being valued within educational institutions.

The professor structured her class as “an experience wherein students can have an open space to see themselves in the classroom”. She recognized that schooling is very institutional and to counter that culture she believes in “acknowledging people’s skills, knowledge, interests and passions”. She defined critical pedagogy as students applying their own analysis to course material. But, at the same time she realized that this is difficult in the graduate context because quality scholarly work is highly valued. She commented:

I told the students that they need to know the academic work in community education. It’s not the case that I think it is not valuable. I respect it. So, the students need to situate their thinking in the literature and know that their thinking is framed within a particular school of thought. But this is only a part of developing critical learning.

The professor felt that students also need to define their democratic projects by aligning with the work of various community activists. She said that, “this is how students can understand the politics of the situations and can begin to ask questions that can lead to making change”. The professor expressed that the university has to work for a better integration of theory and praxis. She said, “I don’t like the separation. It’s a delusion. Academia must acknowledge that the community is crucial for learning and explore ways for this idea to be supported in institutions”.

*Student-Centered Teaching as a Means to Empowerment*

This course incorporated film in each class as a means to illustrate stories of oppression from local and international perspectives. Prior to each class, students had the opportunity to
come early to the class and watch a film. All of the students interviewed commented that they
had a keen interest in the films. The films were opportunities to learn through a different
medium—a visual component. As one student remarked, “the films provided a different way to
convey the material. The course has so much reading, so the films allowed for a different way to
learn that is not apparent through readings”. She added:

The use of films moves away from the traditional way of learning we are so familiar with
and exposed to. By using this mechanism, the professor is telling us that you are not just
reading another article or writing a paper. Personally, it is a good way for me to learn
through watching.

Another student mentioned that using a visual dimension had not been done in his
previous learning experiences. Yet, the student believed that fostering critical thought through a
visual medium develops students in a different way. He said:

I’m a visual learner. Therefore, the film helps me to locate or place a particular issue or
struggle in a particular time and place. Here we are reading articles about oppressions and
struggles and combining what we are reading and discussing with what we are viewing. I
don’t think a lot of classes approach higher learning in this manner. Using film is very
attentive to students’ interests and learning abilities.

A third student felt that using films forwarded critical development more than other
aspect of the class.

With discussions and hearing so many comments, it is difficult in those moments to
internalize what is being said and then be critical. But, in watching the films we are not
only hearing people’s stories, but also can visualize their experiences. This speaks to
being more reflective as a critical tool.
The professor perceived that the films could engage the students with course material in a different way. She felt the films gave the students a sense of both history and personal struggles with oppression. The professor hoped to instill a commitment for social change. Through films, she attempted to illustrate how students can make decisions and choices that facilitate a vision for social change. The professor felt that it is very important to move beyond teaching academic knowledge. She believed that in order to create a possibility for agency, films could resonate with them in a more personal and engaging manner. She said:

 Instead of talking the talk about community education, I wanted to demonstrate to the students what I meant by having a vision. I picked these films because they all have a vision for change. They are all about the spirit of struggle and the capabilities for resistance to power. I believe that it is important to dialogue in the class. But in illustrating these visions for change, the students can place themselves in the process for change through their own projects or personal lives. This connection is empowering.

**Role of Teacher Authority**

In this class, two issues arose among students with the role of teacher authority. One concern pertained to the perspectives projected in the course. A few students felt that the professor presented and taught from a particular critical perspective rather than allowing students to explore the nuances of the critical perspectives. As one student stated, “I felt the professor’s interests were played out. All perspectives, in terms of experience and in terms of the intensity of oppressions, were not reflected or brought into the class”. Specifically, the student would have preferred if the class discussions focused on perspectives from a racial viewpoint. At the same time, the student admits this focus was his particular interest. He felt that the readings explored multiple perspectives, but they were not engaged in the class discussions. He added that if he was teaching a similar course that he would have focused on other perspectives. “This was not a case
of being right or wrong, but the course could have been done differently to provide other perspectives”.

Another student makes a similar point about the professor’s critical focus. She acknowledged that the class was organized around discussions that were interesting and brought in students’ voices. However, she felt it was difficult to facilitate these discussions with many voices when there is an agenda. She said, “It’s not the case of a bad agenda, but there is an agenda. I think our class conversations got limited because there was a point of view that was supposed to be foremost”. The student explained that she did not feel the professor was conveying there is only one way to think about oppression and democracy. However, she believed that the conversation was sidetracked by the professor’s stance. The student felt that approach impacted what was taught and learned in the course.

The second issue raised by students pertained to the nature of instruction. One student expressed a need for more guidance from the professor. She remarked:

The professor preferred to create the course as we went along. Some people wanted a clearer sense or more certainty about what was to come, the topics of discussion and expectations for assignments. There was some discomfort with the lack of structure. I felt as though some students had difficulty adjusting to that style. It’s interesting with the greater flexibility and openness students were not always comfortable.

Another student also describes a concern about the lack of guidance in the class. The student felt that a strong facilitation seemed to have been diluted in order to create spaces for dialogue. She recognized that the many opportunities to share in the class were empowering for students. But she expressed strongly that there also has to be connectivity between dialogue and critical analysis. The students believed that the critical democratic classroom cannot remain as sharing stories, there must be greater purpose. She said:
You can get lost in sharing stories. You can take up huge amounts of time with things that don’t necessarily go anywhere. People like to talk about their experience and what they’ve done. So, where’s the limit in bringing that back so it actually informs something? I appreciate knowing what other people have done, learning what has worked for them and what has not worked for them because it informs praxis. What I think is important is a strong facilitation that goes with the stories. I don’t think that we had a strong facilitation about being able to take the stories, frame it and reframe it in whatever framework or whatever analytical method. How do we bring this back to the role of the educator, organizer and activist? Is it an educator’s role, an organizer’s role or an activist’s role or are they all the same role”? So, you have to bring it back. If we are sharing our experiences, it’s a great thing to empower students and it’s democratic. But if you are encouraging students to provide stories, there has to be a guide about how and why we are using them. You need to link the stories to an issue, bring it back to the issue or a framework in order to understand that experience differently. There has to be some pedagogy, otherwise it’s just talking and one can get lost in that.

Silences among Students

There were several comments from all students interviewed about instances of silences in the class. Students conveyed that particular voices dominated the class. As a result, there were silences from other students during discussions. Since the class did not frequently employ small group discussions or one-to-one sharing, some students felt that there were not opportunities for all voices to be heard and students to feel comfortable. In recognizing the silences, one student felt that they can signal critical thinking in a different way. As an example, another student said that there were some students not openly participating in the class. But, the student felt that they were processing the dialogue in a different way and thus this approach is critical. She said:
I don’t take silences as not having anything to say. It doesn’t mean you’re disengaged. Many times people can’t relate to what is being said. People deal with issues differently. They are not able to come forth to voice them or some people prefer to be more reflective in discussions. So, in not speaking, people might be actually listening and are engaging in an internal thought process.

Another student not only acknowledged the silences in the class, but also discussed the need to interrupt silences in the classroom. The student felt more could have been done to create spaces for silent voices in the class. She said:

I noticed a lot of silences in the class. I think it’s really important to pay attention to that. There were people who did not speak because they were shy or did not speak because they were not comfortable in participating. I think people did not speak because they did not want to engage with the particular issue or they were absorbing the information differently. Some students may have been disinterested and wondering why I am here. It is really important to figure out why people don’t respond and find a space for them to be responsive. It is important to look at the people who are feeling alienated or marginalized by the whole class process and to understand what is the issue that is going on here. Why do people feel there is not a space to respond or participate? This is something that was not done very well in the class and often not very well done in general in the pedagogical process.

Creating a Language of Possibility or Projecting a Grand Vision of Democracy

It was believed that the course projected a grand vision of democracy. One student noted that the course should have examined how democracy can be woven through and can be prevented in institutions. The student provides an example to clarify his point.
We tend to look at oppression, such as racism, from a broad, romanticized perspective in Canada or in the U.S. regarding how it has been dealt with. But to understand racism, we need to see ourselves in its practices and how we reproduce it within institutions. The student expressed that we can talk about our experiences concerning racism, but identifying the systems that perpetuate racism can bring individuals closer to the democratic imperative.

Another student echoed the importance of students seeing themselves in the process of oppression. She felt the deconstruction of oppression can create “possibilities for social change” as opposed to only speaking about “the ideal of democracy”. The student added:

There was dedication in the course to pay attention to the way oppression plays out in people’s lives. This came out in the readings. Also, there were multiple opportunities to share our experiences as they related to those stories. However, I think that you can hear a million personal stories and say a million different things and it’s important to hear those stories, but it doesn’t necessary force you to really think about things unless you really engage with it by seeing your own roles in those situations. Stories are really important, but there has to be an analysis behind it as well as a discussion. This is how you understand who were the actors involved, why did the situations happen, what roles do I play in these situations and how could have the situations been different. To me, this is critically analyzing something for the possibility of change and the possibility of democracy. Otherwise, the stories are talking about democracy in a detached and generalized way without connection to people.

A third student felt that the class did not provide a critical framework to situate the oppressions that they addressed. The student was referring to the films. She felt a lack of connectivity between them and a critical discussion.
While the films were examples of struggling for democracy and were inspiring, there wasn’t sufficient engagement with us in the class about the actions and attitudes that contribute to and prevent democracy. I think that we need to move beyond hearing stories which sometimes I think masks the idea of being critical and democratic. I think when you hear other experiences it really can validate your experience and this can be motivating and empowering. But, complete validation comes from revealing your roles, assumptions and attitudes. I think we needed more of this connection in the course because the component of sharing experiences was present.

The professor fostered a generalized perspective of democracy. She felt that students need to situate themselves and their democratic projects in a vision for change. She did not project the systemic relations of oppression, but rather projected an idealized goal of democracy. Overall, the professor equated critical teaching and learning with students pursuing the social change that they wished to pursue accordingly. As she remarked, “having a vision of democracy is really something that can provide social change”. She connected a grand vision of democracy with fostering social justice and human rights issues. She felt that students would be enabled to champion social causes through a democratic vision.

Multicultural Education Course

Experiences of Standardized Teaching and Learning

All the students commented that the open class structure was quite unique compared to any other graduate courses. As one student remarked, “we had the opportunity to negotiate the whole class and participate in forming the class syllabus”. Another student commented “the entire course was an experience of democracy from the outset because we had a lot of choice to take the course where we wanted to”.
In comparison to other university experiences, a third student noted this course was different because the professor “started from what students know”. The student recognized the opportunity as different because she felt that most professors act in more directive ways. She noted “they will tell you this is the important stuff that you need to know. This is the state of the field and if you’re in this field then this is what you must know”. By beginning from their experiences, students can feel empowered to make decisions based on where they are coming from and where they are going with knowledge base. The student added that the difference with this approach was the freedom to discuss and debate their own topics. She said:

I think what gets in the way of doing critical thinking is the hierarchy that we have in our culture and in places such as the classroom. We still have much less hierarchy than other cultures, but I think it is very difficult for professors to really relinquish the power even if they want to. I think it’s a far more subconscious thing than a conscious thing. I also think the way universities are structured and the way our whole schooling is structured from the beginning to end does not lend itself to critical pedagogy. So, we fall into norms of standardized teaching and learning. The professor gave us the freedom to find our own road, instead of saying “just read these things”. So, that’s a scary thing for a student when you have had this experience and then the professor says “read what you find, put it together and we’ll have a class discussion on it”. My first reaction to the class was I want to hear from the professor, what he’s saying. I was a bit put off when I did not hear from him and by the way he structured the class. But I realized this reaction was a product of being conditioned to learn in particular ways.

Thus, the student points to the idea of social conditioning and normative behavior. She felt that individuals blindly accept knowledge without a critical questioning of how things could be different in education and society as a whole.
In speaking more generally about learning, another student stated:

Schools tend to create safe spaces because in safe spaces you have to hear everyone’s voice and not make value judgments on anyone. But, the reality of it is that in order to question dominant structures, there has to be value judgments. There must be a deconstruction of attitudes. The teacher always provided a different perspective, so he wasn’t there to create a safe space. He was there to guide the discussion in order to show the other side.

At the same time, the student felt exposing different perspectives needs to be accompanied by critical questions and probing. She felt the debates did not maximize this dimension of the critical approach.

The professor employed critical pedagogy as a way to challenge established ways of teaching and learning. He talks about the limitations in Western institutions to educate for democracy because of normative practices. For him, student input is important to the critical process. As he stated, “it is important to teach students that they have a responsibility to define their own learning and make their own choices. So, I teach from the standpoint of their interests”. He noted that this approach is confusing for students who expect to be told what to think and how to learn from the teacher. He also mentioned that having students make decisions about class content not only provide them with choices, but also shares power with them in structuring the class. The professor recognized standardized educational practices through the nature of evaluation. He mentioned that he de-emphasizes assessment and assigning grades. “I would be more comfortable in assigning pass or fail grades, but again, we are restricted by the norms of our educational system and remaining competitive in that way”.

Student-Centered Teaching as a Means to Empowerment

Similar to the other two classes, this class incorporated student-centered teaching as a defining component of the course in order to empower students. The professor employed debates as a mean to engage students critically and provide a space for them to voice their perspectives. The debates allowed for different perspectives to be presented regarding issues of multicultural education. A student described the debates.

The debates served to show that within this subject matter, things aren’t black and white. In listening and dialoguing, I realize that there is so much of the other side that can be presented as well, so something that seems clear to you, has so many other dimensions.

Another student also talked about how the debates can balance one’s perspectives. She said:

I think what was very valuable about this class and where a lot of learning took place was around the debates. You have to choose a pro or con side. But then the professor was always so good at balancing the debates, about guiding us to have a balanced perspective through discussion and really then making us see there is nothing one-sided.

Elaborating on the professor’s role in the debates, the student felt that at the end of each debate he always gave a summary that showed how all the students’ perspectives offered valid points. The professor would then present a different perspective on the debate topic. While the student acknowledged that the professor created a space for multiple sides of an argument, she felt that there was a lack of probing with the different perspectives. The student, instead, felt that by just summarizing the students’ viewpoints and then presenting another perspective diluted both the critical rigor of the topics and the critical lens applied to the debates as a whole.

A third student also reacted to the professor’s role in the debates. The student questioned how critical the debates actually were in the class.
With so many different perspectives and personal backgrounds in the class, the professor provided his opinion at the end to further challenge our thinking—not to convince us to think a particular way or according to his way. However, in thinking back, we did not critically debate the alternative perspective. It was not perceived that the professor attempted to control or direct the students’ opinions. Nevertheless, there was concern if merely sharing ideas through debates was being defined as critical engagement. Other students believed that the professor should have taken a more directive role in developing a critical perspective and in shaping the direction of the classroom overall. They did not equate the critical classroom as a space to simply exchange perspectives. They expected the professor to assume more of a lead with critical teaching and learning.

**Role of Teacher Authority**

The open structure of the class was discomforting for the students during many moments of the class. The student said:

> When some of us asked how long the essay should be, the response was, “it’s up to you”. While a lot of graduate courses allow for an openness of topics and subjects for essays, you are still told some requirements and specifications. I first thought there was a lack of direction in this class because I had questions about how I was doing in the course. So, in this class I felt a bit awkward. But then I realized that I only felt awkward because I am so used to something else that has been so defined and normative.

It was emphasized how conditioned students have become with the teacher’s role and practices, especially when they are not exposed to other approaches.

Another student who has taken other courses from this professor said she has become familiar with his open teaching style. But, she also experienced a sense of discomfort initially
because “his very open teaching approach leaves students with so many questions about specific expectations that a top-down approach would answer for you”.

A third student remarks:

There are some things in this class that even though you could respect the professor for doing made you feel uncomfortable such as not knowing what your mark was or not being given specific expectations about assignments. These things are so normative. We have been raised that way and then all of a sudden being twenty-eight years old and in university and have this completely different pedagogy--it’s a bit uncomfortable.

In essence, the openness in the class made students feel awkward. The students felt awkward with self-direction or self-discipline. They conveyed that there was a lack of comfort because they did not receive the expected authority from this professor that they normally would have received in other classes. They wanted or expected more direction from the professor.

*Silences among Students*

All the students interviewed mentioned that particular voices were heard more frequently than others throughout the class. They noticed that many minority students, predominately Oriental, did not participate in the class discussions. Most of the students believed that they were not comfortable speaking openly. But, at the same time, they acknowledged the opportunities for all students to speak in the class. Thus, they did not feel that the class was undemocratic in this way. As one student reflected:

We had such a diverse class. I think there were some people in the class who weren’t really vocal in sharing their stories, but had the space in the class to do that. So, there were people in the class who you would not be able to learn as much from since they did not feel comfortable to speak. But there was the opportunity in the class for everyone to speak. Also, it doesn’t mean that students were not participating in their heads. Silences, I
think, do not mean you don’t understand or are not paying attention or not interested. Our professor never forced anyone to talk. He left it up to the students to participate and feel comfortable.

Another comment about the silences was:

There will always be dominant voices and there will always be voices not heard. We can expect this as a characteristic of critical pedagogy. In this class, yes there were silences, but the professor provided the spaces and opportunities for all voices to be expressed.

While these two students point to the opportunities to speak in the class, other students were concerned why the minority students were not participating openly. As one student remarked, “we have to think of the messages being given to and conveyed by those students who don’t speak.” One point was that the class dialogue would have been more complete through greater participation. Another point is that some students insisted that the silent voices must be deconstructed.

The professor felt that it was not his responsibility to pressure a student to speak, but to create conversational spaces. He remarked:

I don’t feel like it’s my job to make someone speak if they are not participating. At the same time, I have the expectation that everyone will participate. I hoped that the debates created a type of space where everyone may feel comfortable. My approach is not to use my authority, but to create spaces to encourage participation.

As an example, the professor discussed the conference website offered through the course as a way to facilitate participation. He felt this option allowed students who were not comfortable in participating in the debates to voice their opinions through another medium. The professor did not discuss the silences among the minority students.
Creating a Language of Possibility or Projecting a Grand Vision of Democracy

The students expressed that the course projected a grand vision of democracy. The reason given for this attitude emerged from the professor focusing upon personal experiences without deconstructing for further meanings. The students appeared to define critical pedagogy solely through personal experiences. As one student commented:

The professor began the class from what we already know and linked it to what we are learning. I felt that the professor linked what we are learning to our lives outside the ivory tower. Previously, I never really had things related to the external world in this way. The placement of my experiences in the class allowed me to understand how things work in life and where I am located in that. I think critical teaching and learning can create a huge bridge between knowledge and experience.

Specifically, the student began to think what can be done differently in education based upon hearing stories.

Students felt that the course inspired them to bring about social change in their communities and workplaces. But, this feeling was instilled by having a passion for change without addressing the issues that contribute to and prevent the democratic imperative. A student recalled his experience teaching in an international school. He felt his role was to implement the Canadian curriculum in a non-Canadian context. Reflecting on that experience, he has started to question how intelligent students are expected to change and adjust to a different learning system that may not suit their culture, abilities or identities. While the student felt that the course helped him question the standardization of education, he also felt that the underlying issues of democracy were not probed in the class.
Another student commented that her teaching outlook changed based upon hearing different perspectives in the class. The student felt that sharing experiences constructed a critical lens. She remarked:

I went into the class with certain ideas. But by hearing other opinions on the issue I realize how other perspectives offer a more balanced viewpoint on the topic. For example, I thought assessment was a negative thing, but by looking at other understandings of assessment, I see it can be a positive and useful tool. Also, in terms of a debate about integration and segregation in schools, I situated myself solely with the integration perspective. But my looking at the issues from others’ perspectives, I realize that it is not a realistic because the class actually can oppress and marginalize a lot of groups of students.

By hearing different perspectives, the student felt an understanding for the issues of democracy in education. She based her role as a critical educator upon sharing experiences.

The professor discussed the impact that he hoped to make on students with critical teaching. His focus in teaching involves giving student a voice to share their experiences. The professor stated, “I feel a responsibility to have them start to see their function in understanding how education is or is not democratic”. He believed that the dialogic exchange through debates would expose students to the democratic imperative in education.

In sum, the professors’ teaching approaches and the students’ experiences revealed the pedagogical climate in the critical classrooms. By examining the teaching approaches and the experiences together, a sense of the classroom dynamics was apparent. The professors’ and students’ accounts demonstrate that critical pedagogy can work to overcome the directiveness or top-down approach from teacher to student, but at the same time, the teaching ideology is not
without gaps and challenges. Based upon the themes, it is necessary to bring meaning to them by understanding the classroom dynamics.
Chapter Six: Understanding the Professors’ Teaching Approaches and the Students’ Experiences

Following a description of the professors’ teaching approaches and the students’ experiences, the study aims to interpret the critical classrooms. The professors’ teaching approaches and the students’ experiences reveal the classroom dynamics in each course. Paulo Freire and Ira Shor argue that critical pedagogy must pay attention to not only a democratic vision, but also must be grounded in understanding classroom dynamics which point to both the issues of power and difference. Thus, the chapter explores classroom dynamics by examining: silences and tensions, openness of the course, relations of domination and power and difference.

Understanding Classroom Dynamics

To begin with, in order to understand classroom dynamics, there must be an understanding of pedagogy. Lusted (1986) states:

Pedagogy addresses the “how” questions involved not only in the transmission or reproduction of knowledge but also in its production…it enables…asking under what conditions and through what means we ‘come to know’. How one teaches… becomes inseparable from what is being taught and, crucially, how one learns. (cited in Gore, 1993, p. 4)

In essence, Lusted (1986) defines pedagogy as “the process through which knowledge is produced” (cited in Gore, 1993, p. 4). In response to this definition, Gore (1993) summarizes:

This meaning is not the same “how” of pedagogy that is often associated with “methods” courses in teacher education programs….it is a kind of focus on the processes of teaching that demands that attention be drawn to the politics of those processes and to the broader political contexts within which they are situated. (p. 5)

By defining critical pedagogy only through teaching methods, this focus operates as a contradiction to the democratic imperative. There is a serious call to move beyond teaching
methods and understand power and difference in the classroom which both construct an equity framework. Critical scholars, along with feminist scholars, have argued that power and difference create inclusionary and exclusionary practices in the classroom. Thus, they insist upon probing classroom dynamics beyond teaching methods.

Silences and Tensions

The classroom dynamics in the Community Education course and the Multicultural Education course revealed similarities. Both professors focused upon the application of teaching methods. The two professors did not pay attention to both issues of power and differences in the classroom. Without this awareness, the professors followed a generalized critical approach grounded in a grand vision for democracy. The Community Education and Multicultural Education professors presented their critical teaching approaches with neutrality. Specifically, both professors did not deconstruct the tensions and silences in their classrooms.

The professor of the Multicultural Education course did not attend to the silences of the minority students in the classroom. He remarked that he does not force anyone to speak. While the professor’s intentions can be respected, he needed to address the silences that were very prevalent in the class. Perhaps reasons for the silences were, as Ellsworth (1992) identifies, a lack of comfort to speak openly or a reluctance to share unconventional ideas and perspectives. It is a challenge to understand the reasons for the silences because there was no attention to them from the professor. There is disagreement with how the professor reacted to the silences in the classroom. The professor neither discussed this issue nor re-directed his pedagogical approach to interrupt the silences. The silences should have encouraged an understanding of classroom dynamics around issues of difference.

According to Ellsworth (1992), “while critical educators acknowledge the existence of unequal power relations in the classrooms, they have made no systemic examination of the
barriers that this imbalance creates for the kind of student expression and dialogue they prescribe” (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 101). Therefore, issues of power, along with difference, in the classroom must be exposed. As another example, the Community Education professor had a responsibility to deal with the tensions between her and the students. These examinations could have created uncomfortable spaces in the classrooms. But, at the same time, these spaces can expose the idea that teachers and students blindly accept ways of thinking. These spaces can also encourage how the classroom can be transformed for an equity agenda. To this end, Boler and Zembylas (2003) describe pedagogy of discomfort:

as an educational approach to understanding the production of norms and differences. As its name suggests, this pedagogy emphasizes the need for both the educator and students to move outside of their comfort zones. By comfort zone we mean the inscribed cultural and emotional terrains that we occupy less by choice and more by virtue of hegemony. (p. 111)

Thus, by not deconstructing the silences of the minority students, the Multicultural Education professor maintained the status quo in the classroom. He did not attend to both the issues of power and difference that excluded the students. In this regard, the professor did not create any discomforting moments in the classroom. However, an equity agenda was compromised. Unless teachers and students challenge “the way things are”, an attitude of apathy will develop and the democratic imperative cannot be expanded accordingly. As the Democratic Education professors remarked, “You need to have uncertainty to go from the way things are to the way it could be. This is an uncomfortable process…the uncertainty is part of the process. It is not always positive”. Therefore, discomforting moments are necessary for a critical inquiry of knowledge that individuals have accepted. A pedagogy of discomfort serves as part of the human experience to facilitate social change.
Ng (2003) recognizes the necessity for educators to acknowledge power dynamics. She “[argues] that we need to see differences as power relations that are produced in interactions” and “[discusses] how power operates in terms of race, gender, and class, and [hints] at how ability can be similarly conceptualized” (p. 207). In borrowing from Roger Simon, Ng (2003) adopts the “teaching or working against the grain” approach in order to examine power dynamics in education.

Working against the grain is to take a proactive approach to understanding and acting upon institutional relations, whether in the classroom, in other interactions with students, or in policy development. Rather than overlooking the embeddedness of gender, race, class, ability and other forms of inequality that shape our interactions, working against the grain makes explicit the political nature of education and how power operates to privilege, silence, and marginalize individuals who are differently located in the educational process. (Ng, 2003, p. 214)

In other words, it is crucial for educators to ask questions that can expose power and difference in the classroom--otherwise their teaching approaches not only conceal the politics of the classroom, but also present a neutral perspective of classroom interactions. As Ng (2003) argues, “teaching against the grain” unveils “who has the power to speak and whose voices are suppressed. It is the responsibility of the teacher or educator to show how dominant forms of knowledge and ways of knowing constrict human capacities” (p. 215). The “teaching against the grain” perspective could have enlightened the two professors in terms of exposing the silences and tensions within their respective classrooms. This lack of attention prevented hearing all perspectives and voices. Therefore, the professors’ positions with both issues of power and difference cast doubt upon their effectiveness in actualizing critical pedagogy to educate for democracy.
Openness of the Course

There is further concern with the pedagogical practices in the Community Education course and Multicultural Education course. It is evident that an open learning climate does not translate into educating for democracy. An indication that the openness did not work well was evidenced by the students’ concerns about their respective courses. In both classes, students expressed uncertainties about the nature of assignments and the weekly class agenda. The students wanted more guidance and clearer directions from their professors. Specifically, many students in the Community Education course expressed uncertainty about the purpose of the class discussions. They conveyed that the discussions, following the films, were too general and did not engage an equity analysis. Overall, students were doubtful about class expectations. As a result, many tensions arose between the professor and students. In the Multicultural Education course students expressed a lack of comfort with the openness of the course. It was a feeling that was not experienced previously. But, unlike in the Community Education course, the students internalized their feelings. The students’ reactions are concerning because their perceptions were not articulated to the professor. Perhaps the students felt that there were not opportunities to express their feelings or perhaps they feared addressing the issue openly. In any case, silences were created on the topic. In contrast, in the Community Education class, some students who had concerns voiced their opinions. The students’ concerns required the professors’ attention to classroom dynamics. Both professors did not fully attend to the politics of the classrooms.

The professors’ intentions to create classrooms built around openness can be applauded. At the same time, a critical democratic classroom is not one without guidance. As Shor (1992) argues, “the pedagogy described…is student-centered but is not permissive or self-centered” (p. 17). Hence, there is disagreement with the manner in which student-centered methods were employed in both courses. The freedom allotted to the students emerged as an awkwardness for
the students. Some students still desired and expected a more directive approach. At the same time, the students’ lack of comfort with the openness of the courses highlights the issue of social conditioning. The openness identified in these courses reveals the normative expectations of students. They expect the teacher to perform in a particular way. When the teacher does not, they assume there is a lack of purpose or focus. This thought suggests that teaching and learning need to be cast amid different parameters, namely self-direction and self discipline, rather than only through teacher authority.

In the Community Education course, for example, the students perceived the professor’s practices as disorganized. In other words, since the course was structured differently from previous experiences, some students were disenchanted with the professor. There was a strong reliance upon the professor’s expectations and directions. It was rather ironical that the professors of the Community Education course and Multicultural Education course strove for an open learning climate that could promote self-actualization or self-realization. Yet, many students had difficulties in adapting to this pedagogical atmosphere. Despite the openness of the classes to dialogue and share, democratic climates were not achieved because the classrooms were not interrogated for their challenges. Therefore, opportunities to dialogue do not only constitute a critical democratic space.

*Relations of Domination*

The tensions in the Community Education course pointed to relations of domination in the classroom. Some students believed that even though the professor did not lead the discussions, she concluded them by presenting her perspectives as a summary of the dialogues. Some students felt that no meaning was sought out for their experiences. The students were left with the impression that the professor was outlining the “correct” or “accepted” way of thinking. In the class, silences arose because students were frustrated by the professor’s strong display of her
views which over-powered their perspectives. As a result, some students removed themselves from the class discussions and remained silent. The professor’s domination in the class discussions concealed not only students’ perspectives, but also concealed how students are located differently in terms of race, gender class, sexuality and ability. The classroom was inclusive in that there were many opportunities for students to share their thoughts and experiences. However, the professor’s dominant voice removed a deeper understanding of their struggles with difference.

Dei, Wilson and Zine (2002) argue:

Through the pedagogical practices relating to the appreciation of social difference, students are introduced to texts and stories that highlight the histories, experiences and contributions of the exotic “other”. While the goals of respect, tolerance and communication are worthy, this approach does not necessarily centre marginalized groups within the dominant culture or knowledge base of schools. (p. 8-9)

Pedagogical practices require attention in terms of how inclusivity is constructed in the classroom in order to achieve equity. To this end, creating spaces for personal stories and being tolerant of each others’ stories are insufficient to understanding both issues of power and difference. Dei et al., similar to Ng, call for an integrative approach in order to acknowledge and intersect the differences that students bring to the classroom. He believes that an integrative approach embraces an equity framework and thus moves beyond general practices of inclusivity. To this end, inclusivity is more than a pluralist endeavour; it refers to an understanding of the social construction of identity. Yet, the Community Education professor’s dominant role in the classroom prevented an integrative approach to unveil students’ differences which remained hidden in the class dialogues.
There is skepticism regarding how the Community Education professor was able to draw
conclusions about the class discussions when she was not coming from the students’ positions of
race, gender, class, sexuality or ability. In sharing her classroom experiences, Ellsworth (1992)
shows that the critical teacher’s subjectivity can be counterproductive to empowering students.

I brought to the classroom privileges and interests that were put at risk in fundamental
ways by the demands and defiances of student voices. I brought a social subjectivity that
has been constructed in such a way that I have not and can never participate
unproblematically in the collective process of self-definition, naming of oppression, and
struggles for visibility in the face of marginalization engaged in by students whose class,
race, gender, and other positions I do not share. Critical pedagogues are always
implicated in the very structures they are trying to change. (p. 101)

An integral dimension of educating for democracy involves the critical teacher being open to
students’ ideas. In rejecting the teacher’s dominant voice, Ellsworth (1992) argues that teachers
need to also be students. Critical teachers:

- could never know about the experiences, oppressions, and understandings of other
  participants in the class. This situation makes it impossible for any single voice in the
classroom-including that of the professor-to assume the position of center or origin of
knowledge or authority, of having privileged access to authentic experience or
appropriate language. (p. 101)

When teachers are learning as well in the classroom, they remove themselves from positions of
domination over students. They, in essence, contribute to bring public and private spaces
together by sharing their experiences as well in the classroom. Moreover, the idea of the “teacher
as a student” develops co-intentionality between the educator and students. To this end, the issue
of power is attended to by deconstructing the top-down approach of the teacher. The “teacher as
student” perspective does not mean that the teacher relinquishes authority in the classroom. In contrast, the perspective conveys that the teacher, along with the learning context on a whole, need to interrogate student experiences beyond the sharing of personal stories.

*Power and Difference*

Hoodfar (1992) argues that critical pedagogy plays a vital role in “[challenging] practices of racism, sexism, ablism, and heterosexism in dominant society” (p. 303). In this regard, critical pedagogy can ignite a critical consciousness to challenge oppressions. Because struggles within the larger social system are reproduced in the classroom, teaching must extend beyond pedagogical methods. “By critical pedagogy, I refer to rejecting the traditional view that classroom instruction is an objective process removed from the crossroads of power, history, and social context, while attempting to encourage more critical teaching and learning methods” (Hoodfar, 1992, p. 303). Essentially, the critical teacher needs to address both issues of power and difference, both within and external to the classroom. The effort to include students by relying upon methods, through opportunities to dialogue or to participate, encourages the assimilation of students rather than the contextualization of their identities and experiences. As Hoodfar (1992) comments, “the techniques used to challenge the status quo are not themselves appreciated as genderized and racialized” (p. 303-304). The critical teacher must recognize that students do not engage equally because both issues of power and difference create dialogue and participation as raced, gendered and classed practices.

The Community Education and the Multicultural Education professors used dialogue as an approach to be inclusive, but ironically the dialogue excluded students in the respective classrooms. Thus, the effectiveness of the critical classroom relies upon more than opportunities to dialogue and share. An effective critical classroom requires an interrogation of dialogue, sharing and participation for both issues of power and difference. Even the Democratic
Education course which was a good example of critical pedagogy required further attention to identities and differences. For instance, the professor did not address the issue of silence in the classroom. One of the male students admitted being silent and reluctance to share his thoughts many times. He felt that they would not resonate with the large number of female students. The student’s silence conveys that issues of difference impact classroom dialogue and classroom dynamics.

A part of interrogating power and difference in the classroom begins with students understanding their positions in the larger social system.

Students should be assisted to locate themselves, as well as others, in the social system so as to assess the way they and others have been shaped by and in turn shape their social environments, albeit to various degrees and in different directions depending on their social positions. (Razack, 1990, cited in Hoodfar, 1992, p. 304)

As an example, students need to think about how the classroom experience and education overall has shaped their perspectives which in turn impact them in their personal lives, workplaces and communities. The critical teacher does not only grant voices for students’ experiences. The critical teacher must also create collective dialogue about how both issues of power and difference are ingrained in social interactions. At the same time, there is a serious “gap between living an experience and learning about it” (Ellsworth, 1989, cited in Hoodfar, 1992, p. 305). In other words, one may not fully understand the social relations that comprise another’s personal experiences. Thus, Hoodfar (1992) argues that “the more constructive approach would be to recognize the differences and to acknowledge that our experience of others will always be partial. Any alliances for change would have to be created on the understanding of working across differences” (p. 205). In this regard, both power and difference can be better understood by being in tune with how the issues are treated in the classroom. Razack (1990) points to:
how we hear, how we speak, to the choices we make about which voices to use, when
and most important of all developing pedagogical practices that enable us to pose those
questions and use the various answers to guide ethical choices we are constantly being
called upon to make. (cited in Hoodfar, 1992, p. 305)

The Democratic Education professor validates this idea by using classroom rules to
deconstruct issues of power. In essence, the Democratic Education professor paid attention to
classroom dynamics by recognizing relations of domination. The professor held a discussion
with students to decide rules of conduct in terms of sharing and speaking in the classroom. The
discussion of class rules allowed the professor and students to unpack their ideas about the
classroom environment. A particular tone was established between the professor and the
students. All classroom members were made aware of the manner in which they should engage
with and treat others.

The Democratic Education professor can be differentiated from the other two professors
because she was cognizant of her pedagogical practices. She provided different forms of
dialogue in order to accommodate students’ needs and excluded voices. The professor was aware
of who had spoken. She gave students whose voices were not heard an opportunity to speak in
the large discussions. By paying attention to who spoke in the classroom, there was a greater
potential for students’ differences to be revealed in the dialogue. In addition, the rules for
speaking and listening showed that the professor was attending to privilege in the classroom. She
was concerned that students understand how they prevent others from speaking and how they
should respect others.

There was some accountability for the frequency and extent of the dominant voices in the
classroom. The classroom rules created spaces for excluded voices to be heard. Moreover,
classroom rules allow for them to “be recalled and discussed when needed” (Cannon, 1990;
Ellsworth, 1989, cited in Hoodfar, 1992, p. 305). Therefore, the rules also establish boundaries that can contribute to building classroom equity with regards to dialogue and participation. Classroom rules “empower students, particularly the less-privileged, by providing boundaries within which to assess critically the classroom dynamics, the course material, and the social structure” (Hoodfar, 1992, p. 305). At the same time, the “rules promote privileged members’ consciousness of how they, by virtue of their social position, may participate in the oppressions of others” (Frankenberg, 1990, cited in Hoodfar, 1992, p. 305). In other words, classroom rules can reveal to students the differences between dominant and subordinate voices and thus can contribute to them taking roles to work towards equity. Ultimately, teachers have a responsibility to bring attention to the privileged positions of particular students in the classroom.

Such emphasis makes it possible to reflect not only on the way one is oppressed as a woman, black, native, minority, or member of working or middle class, and so on, but also on how we participate in the oppression of others. (Razack, 1992, p. 305)

In this regard, silenced voices need to be explored from the perspectives of the excluded individuals, but also from the dominant, privileged individuals.

For instance, in the Multicultural Education class, the concern arises to what extent did the dominant voices of the white students play a role in silencing the voices of the minority students? In the Community Education class, concern arises with the dominant voice of the professor in the classroom dialogue which in turn silenced many students. The role of the teacher is crucial to addressing privilege and domination in the classroom. These two professors required further perspective on their pedagogical practices in order to understand the classroom dynamics. They needed to interrogate dimensions of the classroom for both issues of power and difference. Instead, they focused on having dialogic moments as a way to be inclusive. It is not the case that the professors of the Community Education and Multicultural Education courses were not
interested in classroom dynamics. But rather, their perspectives were grounded in different ideas in comparison to the Democratic Education professor.

The professors of the Community Education and Multicultural Education courses perceived equity would be created through having opportunities to dialogue and participate in their classrooms. However, they did not address their own positions or perspectives with either issues of power or issues of difference. As Hoodfar (1992) argues, “a first step, however, is for teachers to locate themselves in the structure of…the classroom. They can then initiate a discussion of difference” (p. 304). By creating spaces for excluded voices, the Democratic Education professor used her position to elicit student differences in the classroom. Also, the professor frequently used a sharing circle at the beginning of some classes. She told students to express anything on their minds pertaining to the course or concerning any personal thought. The professor, in addition, paid attention to who she called upon to speak during the large discussions. These approaches served to unveil difference and contributed to equity in the classrooms. Teachers can use their positions of privilege in the classroom in order to work with difference in that students do not only tolerate others’ experiences, but also feel impassioned about inequity and thus contribute to social change. Thus, the teacher’s privilege can show how power can be used positively and can contribute to ideas of democracy.

In sum, in all the graduate classes, understanding how both issues of power and difference influence classroom dynamics should have received more attention by the professors. Hoodfar (1992) argues that critical pedagogy projects a concern for “subject position matter”, but “this attention to race, sex, gender, and sexuality has not carried over into the practice of critical pedagogy” (p. 303). The key point is that social inequities manifest through classroom dynamics. Thus, the emphasis upon sharing experiences is insufficient to address both issues of power and difference. The classroom experience cannot be the same for all students nor can all students be
treated the same. In this regard, classroom dynamics must be explored for the complexities of the classroom environment and the diversity among students’ experiences.

The success of teaching for change depends on our ability to develop a holistic and fluid pedagogy that can accommodate the dynamic interaction of a complex matrix of students, teachers, and subject matters, a matrix with a built-in ability to allow the less central voices, whether of teachers or students, to be heard and incorporated in the collective without being forced to assimilate. (Hoodfar, 1992, p. 315-316)

Critical teachers cannot pursue the democratic imperative through intentions to project a social vision for democracy and inclusive practices, yet not attend to the challenges in the classroom. Based upon the difficulties within the Community Education and Multicultural Education courses, critical pedagogy displays challenges that must be unveiled to understand how individuals are impacted by the teaching perspective. The intentions of the critical teacher may be to include everyone through an open learning format. However, this type of appeasing classroom climate can devalue the contributions of critical pedagogy and create the impression that the teaching approach is without purpose.

Recalling Shor’s perspective, teachers do not need to be authoritarians in their classrooms nor do students solely determine the nature of the classroom. The Democratic Education class revealed that critical pedagogy is better actualized through a negotiated approach between the teacher and students—as evidenced through the classroom rules. The effectiveness of the class can be attributed to the attention to relations of domination. Hence, dimensions of critical pedagogy such as dialogue, participation and empowerment need to be framed within a discourse of power and difference in order to bring meaning to the critical classroom. Ellsworth (1992) effectively summarizes the problem with critical pedagogy. She states:
Key assumptions, goals, and pedagogical practices fundamental to the literature on critical pedagogy—namely, “empowerment”, “student voice”, “dialogue”, and even the term “critical”—are repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination…when… attempted to put into practice prescriptions offered in the literature concerning empowerment, student voice, and dialogue…produced results that were not only unhelpful, but actually exacerbated the very conditions we were trying to work against, including Eurocentrism, racism, sexism, classism, and “banking education”. To the extent that our efforts to put discourses of critical pedagogy into practice led us to reproduce relations of domination in our classroom, these discourses were “working through” us in repressive ways, and had themselves become vehicles of repression. (p. 91)

Critical pedagogy can be found to be at a similar fault as traditional education by overlooking the educational experience in terms of attention to classroom dynamics. Thus, critical teachers can only distinguish their practices from other approaches by claiming both empowerment and grand visions of democracy as they attend to the workings of the classroom in specified ways. After interpreting the professors’ teaching approaches and the students’ experiences, it is warranted to identify the factors that contribute to critical pedagogy in educating for democracy.
Chapter Seven: Actualizing Critical Pedagogy

This chapter will examine my second research question “what is the pedagogical climate of the critical classroom that contributes to educating for democracy?” Understanding the climate is based upon examining the professors’ teaching approaches and the students’ experiences, as described in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, in relation to Shor’s agenda of values—values that develop a critical democratic classroom. Thus, the factors can be identified by illuminating the congruency between actual critical classrooms and Shor’s agenda, as a conceptual model of critical pedagogy. In addition, exploring the pedagogical climate also engages a comparison of the similarities and differences of the professors’ teaching approaches and the students’ experiences among the three graduate classes.

The students’ experiences varied not only because of the different methods that each professor used to actualize the democratic imperative, but also because of the social experiences that they brought to the classroom. Thus, critical pedagogy cannot be categorized as only a teaching methodology. The ideology does not view teaching through an objectified lens whereby the teacher uses pedagogical methods to disseminate knowledge to students in a technical manner. As Kincheloe (2004) states:

Proponents of critical pedagogy understand that every dimension of schooling and every form of educational practice are politically contested spaces. Shaped by history and challenged by a wide range of interest groups, educational practice…is shaped by a plethora of often-invisible forces, and can operate even in the name of democracy and justice to be totalitarian and oppressive. (p. 5)

Kincheloe (2004) continues, “as teachers gain these insights, they understand that cultural, race, class, and gender forces have shaped all elements of the pedagogical act” (p. 5). Thus, the factors that contribute to using critical pedagogy in educating for democracy must acknowledge education as an intersection of history, social context, and power. Thus, through this study, the
pedagogical climate emerged as: (1) implementing student voice, (2) constructing a political
discourse, (3) striving for social change and (4) using teacher authority.

Implementing Student Voice

Many students, in all three classes, expressed that higher education does not fully teach
students to think critically and often aligns with standardized practices. As the students did not
fully discuss the “politics” experienced in the university, it is clear that the issue requires further
critical examination. Most of the students commented that the graduate courses were structured
around dialogue which created a space for their voices. Indeed, the courses began from the
students. The centrality of student voice demonstrated that personal experiences were a major
part of the classroom knowledge.

The plurality among the students’ stories and perspectives showed that there cannot be a
universal perspective for understanding human experience. Referring to diverse identities, Fraser
(1994) states a single public sphere:

would be tantamount to filtering diverse rhetorical and stylistic norms through a single,
overarching lens. Moreover, since there can be no such lens that is genuinely culturally
neutral, it would effectively privilege the expressive norms of one cultural group over
others, thereby making discursive assimilation a condition for participation in public
debate. The result would be the demise of social equality. (p. 86-87)

The diversity among the students’ voices validates the need of multiple publics to challenge a
single perspective in producing knowledge. It must be realized that the idea of multiple publics is
about creating a democratic process of expression and participation, not about challenging each
others’ perceptions and values.

Student voice can also mobilize individuals to participate in democracy. Quaye (2005)
discusses his experience as a graduate student that shows a connection between student voice and
participating in democracy. He recalls an open dialogue at his institution on the topic of higher education and its role as a public good in order to foster democracy. Quaye (2005) felt that the discussion lacked the perspective of student experience. The gap made him realize “that not affording students their right to speak in the classroom precludes them from being full participants in democracy” (p. 306). Furthermore, he asks:

How can we expect students to fulfill the aims of responding to the needs of people in society if their educators have not asked them to tell their stories? How can students respond to and develop compassion for the needs of others if they have not had opportunities to hear their peers’ views in the classroom? To become full participants in the democracy, students must interject their voices into classroom discussion (developing voice) to build up their skills necessary to challenge neoliberalism’s basic tenets (developing resistance) and respond to the public good. This process is essential in enabling them to cultivate their voices and resist the passive and acquiescent method of education that is commonly expected of them. (p. 302)

Quaye (2005) acknowledges that his silence in the discussion placed him in a subordinated position. He further remarked:

I now realize that by remaining quiet, I did not foster the opportunity for others to hear my voice and allowed the discussion to be dominated by those in academe who are regularly heard—the faculty….As a student, it is essential that I contribute to this dialogue and not continue to allow my voice to remain unheard….One of the paramount ways to realize higher education’s charter to society is to provide the space for students to develop their voices as a means of also participating in the public good. (p. 305)

Student voice reveals personal struggles with race, gender and class issues. However, implementing student voice requires direction in the critical classroom. This direction, in
essence, constructs a critical democratic classroom. The difference among the three classes emerged whereby student voice was used to just share stories as opposed to bring meaning to student voice. Indeed, student voice was a main factor in all three courses. However, student voice emerged most effective in the Democratic Education course because the class served the democratic imperative through attention to power relations and an ethics of concern. The other two classes experienced many challenges with student voice.

In the Multicultural Education course, the debates facilitated students’ voices in the classroom. The debates contributed to producing knowledge in a respectful way. Students had to listen to each others’ opinions. If there was disagreement in the debates, the students had to deconstruct each others’ ways of thinking, identify ways to articulate their viewpoints more effectively, and at times construct alternative viewpoints. In this way, student voice was connected to critical thinking. However, the professor’s role in the debates weakened the critical dimension of students’ voices. Recalling a student’s remark, “the professor was so good at balancing the other side, about guiding us to have a balanced perspective through discussion, and really then making us see there is nothing black and white”. But, even though the professor provided alternative viewpoints, he did not connect a series of critical questions to his viewpoints. Thus, the purpose for using student voice was diluted in the class. Even though the debates created speaking opportunities, there was not a critical lens applied to the classroom dialogues. Thus, student voice, through the debates, was problematic because there was the idea that having dialogue is a guarantee for constructing a critical perspective.

In addition, in the Multicultural Education course, silences from the minority students reveal concerns with implementing student voice. The minority students did not participate in the class debates and class discussions. According to Shor’s agenda of values, the critical classroom becomes democratized by representing knowledge from a multicultural perspective. In order to
prevent a universal view of knowledge, a cross-section of issues along the lines of race, gender, sexuality, class, ability and ideology need to emerge within the classroom. By not hearing the minority students’ voices, the class was not exposed to their perspectives and issues. The voices heard in the classroom were mainly those of white students. Thus, the experiences and perspectives of the white students formed the dominant way of thinking in the classroom. The exclusion of the minority students’ voices reveals that classroom dialogue can be impacted by issues of difference. In discussing dialogue through the agenda of values, Shor (1993) argues that it is not true that students who are silent are uncomfortable and require more directive teaching approaches. He notes:

deficits of skills, language, and knowledge do not hold the disadvantages down. Whites do not learn more than minorities, and men more than women, because their speech, skills and knowledge are superior. Rather, the skin color, gender, English dialect, and job connections of some groups have been historically privileged over those of others. (p. 104)

The inequity with student voice required an examination of both issues of power and difference in the classroom. The silences may have resulted because students had a fear to share their stories, perceived their knowledge as inferior, believed their views did not conform to dominant perspectives or felt uncomfortable to speak openly. The lack of attention to silences in the classroom situated them as individual concerns rather than being a common concern.

Ellsworth (1992) addresses the inequities with voice in the classroom. She states that there is not an equal opportunity to speak in classrooms because:

power relations between raced, classed, and gendered students and teachers are unjust.

The injustice of these relations, and the way in which those injunctions distort
communication, cannot be overcome in a classroom, no matter how committed the teacher and students are to overcoming conditions that perpetuate suffering. (p. 108)

Ellsworth’s comment requires clarification. While unjust power relations occur in the classroom, they can be challenged. A student in the Community Education class suggested that it is crucial to dismantle silences in terms of why they are occurring and in terms of their relations to dominant voices in the classroom. Integral to deconstructing silences, teachers need to acknowledge that silences are occurring in their classroom. Li (2004) captures this point.

In classroom settings, it is common for teachers to devalue silences and promote speech making. Teachers often enlist “participation” as an evaluation criterion. But, they do not recognize “silent active listening” as a legitimate form of participation. As teachers attend to students’ speech making, they frequently fail to acknowledge the significance of the silent interactions between teachers and students that reveal human desires, interests, and power relationships. (p. 82)

In terms of awareness, the professor of the Multicultural Education course did not openly acknowledge the silences nor acknowledge that students were engaging in “silent active listening”. He only mentioned that he does not force students to speak in the classroom. The silences required attention in a more directive way. By not deconstructing the reasons behind the silences, the silences were legitimized.

According to Ellsworth (1992), “…inequalities must be named and addressed by constructing alternative ground rules for communication” (p. 108). Indeed, both Ellsworth (1992) and Li (2004) deal with silences by advocating for other forms of participation in the classroom. Ellsworth (1992) adds, “educational researchers attempting to construct meaningful discussions about the politics of classroom practices must begin to theorize the consequences for education of the ways knowledge, power and desire are mutually implicated in each other’s formations and
deployments” (p.108). In attempting to understand the classroom, there is a need to think about what meaning of education will be projected based upon how individuals perceive each other’s identity and perspectives. To this end, it is important to probe what silences and other classroom conflicts covey and deconstruct why they occur accordingly.

Boler (2004) recognizes the necessity to understand silences. She comments that the classroom, as a distinctive public space, is a unique space that can unveil subordinated voices.

What does it mean to recognize, in the educational practices of college and university classrooms, that all voices are not equal? The solution is neither to invoke an absolutist sense of free speech, nor to prohibit simply and absolutely all hostile expressions. The uniqueness of classrooms is that, ideally, they provide a public space in which marginalized and silences voices can respond to ignorant expressions rooted in privilege, white supremacy, or other dominant ideologies. Unlike many public spaces in which one may encounter hate speech, on a street or in a shopping mall—the classroom is one of the few public spaces in which one can respond and be heard. (p. 4)

The classroom needs to more than a space to grant or control speaking opportunities. The classroom needs to facilitate critical dialogue within an equity framework perspective in order to challenge excluded voices and dominant perspectives. It should be obligatory for the classroom to pursue this role. The classroom can be a safe place to express one’s beliefs and views which cannot be guaranteed in other public spaces. Thus, creating dialogic opportunities for silent voices is insufficient; discourses serving their perspectives need to be included.

Student voice was also problematic in the Community Education course. The students expressed a lack of clarity with the classroom dialogues. As a result, the students felt frustrated because of this uncertainty. Most of them expressed that the sharing of experiences was not applied through critical dialogue. They identified a critical dialogue to examine inequities which
are a part of their experiences. Also, they expressed that the dialogues resulted into a sharing of stories. Students expressed that the professor did not sufficiently contextualize the dialogues. They expected the professor to draw this connection. Recalling a students’ remark:

You need to link the stories to an issue, bring it back to the issue or framework to understand the experience differently. There has to be some pedagogy, otherwise it’s just talking and you can get lost in that.

The use of student voice begins with sharing experiences. But experiences must be expanded to identify its meaning.

The critical democratic classroom is not only about monitoring dialogue. The critical dialogue also requires attention to what is being said and how the dialogue unfolds. Shor’s agenda of values is a starting point to pay attention to probing knowledge and classroom dynamics. He argues:

dialogue is neither a freewheeling conversation nor a teacher-dominated exchange. Balancing the teacher’s authority and student’s input is the key to making the process both critical and democratic. Dialogic teachers offer students an open structure in which to develop. This openness includes their right to question the content and the process of dialogue, and even to reject them. (p. 28)

The Community Education course revealed that opportunities for dialogue are insufficient. The classroom required guidance and direction in order to place meaning to the experiences and issues that the dialogue elicited accordingly. The students in the Community Education course could not see themselves represented effectively in the course. In this way, their issues of difference were not addressed through sharing stories. As one male student, an African-Canadian mentioned, it would have been meaningful to see his ethnicity represented in the classroom knowledge. The student was conveying that he made sense of knowledge in light of his identity,
specifically as an individual of color. Therefore, it is important to unveil issues of difference in order to bring meaning to the dialogue. Without deconstructing student voice for the meaning of differences, dialogue is not framed with a critical discourse in order to assist students to understand their struggles and foster the democratic imperative.

The Democratic Education course offered meaning for student voice because of the professor’s role. The professor’s awareness of how students were participating created direction with student voice. In contrast, with the Community Education and Multicultural Education classes, there was a lack of attention to the dynamics around student voice in terms of tensions and silences. By having different structures for dialogue, the professor attempted to unveil voices that may have remained silent. The various forms of dialogue--small group, large group, one-to-one dialogue and a sharing circle--deconstructed power differences by creating equity among student voices. The professor felt that different forms of dialogue would challenge dominant voices in the class. The idea was not about monitoring dialogue.

The Democratic Education professor hoped to create safe spaces for all voices to be heard in the classroom. The students, for instance, recognized that small group work allowed them to dialogue independent of the professor. The sharing circle, at the outset of the class, established a respectful class environment. These opportunities revealed student voices in a free and open exchange. Furthermore, the classroom rules exposed student voice effectively by developing a concern for others. Implementing student voice thus needs to bring attention to understanding the dynamics around dialogue. The insertion of dialogue into the critical classroom does not guarantee hearing all student voices. Without attention to the dynamics around dialogue, the classroom masks the meaning of students’ experiences.
*Constructing a Political Discourse*

The professors engaged multiple perspectives in their classrooms which constructed a political discourse. Each graduate course explored a combination of anti-racist, feminist, anti-colonial, indigenous, and queer perspectives. The perspectives collectively contributed to a political discourse by exposing how difference manifests through power in social institutions and society as a whole. Dei and Calliste (2000a) remark:

> We examine how contemporary representations of race, class, gender and sexual differences connect to a broader power politics of authority, morality, knowledge and speech that denies people (particularly minoritized groups) their agency as resisting and creating subjects. (p. 12-13)

The context and dynamics of power which engulf difference must be confronted and not concealed or denied. As Dei and Calliste (2000a) starkly argue, “our society is colour-coded. The acknowledgment of racial differences per se is not the problem. It is the power behind the construction of these differences and the interpretation put on the perceived differences that are at issue” (p. 14). A lack of attention to the context and dynamics of power situate difference as “academic theory” which “is simply not enough to challenge the workings of multiple oppressions” (Dei & Calliste, 2000a, p. 11). This idea is similar to leaving the graduate students’ experiences as personal stories without further equity analysis. In reflecting upon the perspective of Dei and Calliste, a political discourse is warranted in order to expose how power operates in social institutions, such as education, to maintain the status quo.

The feminist perspective constructs a political discourse by unveiling how patriarchy, along with race and class issues prevent equity for women. hooks (2000) calls for a political discourse in order to move women’s oppressions beyond a personal problem. “We must now encourage women to develop a keen, comprehensive understanding of women’s political reality.
Broader perspectives can only emerge as we examine the personal that is political, the politics of society as a whole, and global revolutionary politics” (hooks, 2000, p. 26-27). In other words, she believes that a political discourse allows women to understand their struggles, encourages collective concern and fosters social change. Also, Shiva’s (2001) advocacy for indigenous knowledge illustrates the abuse of power that devalues traditional ways of knowledge through patriarchal and colonial viewpoints. She believes that the commodification of such knowledge by Western, corporate systems necessitates an understanding of politics. In sum, Rezai-Rashti (1995) discusses that transformative theorists such as Paulo Friere, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple and Stanley Aronowitz “view schools as social institutions where critical thinking and radical ideas can be developed” (p. 5). But, at the same time, she argues that the democratic imperative also requires perspectives from marginalized individuals who can expose political constructions from a subjective point of view, rather than from an objective one. Marginalized individuals discuss the issue of power based upon lived realities. In this way, understanding individuals in their lives encourages a possibility for hope and social change.

The struggles that women, minorities, and other oppressed peoples are engaged in within schools open a “project of possibility” that could have positive repercussions in societal change. Real democracy is seen as the outcome of a critical pedagogy that is essentially political. (Rezai-Rashti, 1995, p. 5)

Specifically, in constructing a political discourse, the workings of privilege must be taken up through race, gender, class and sexuality. Each professor included multiple perspectives in order to bring attention to the issue of privilege. This examination has to be probed from outside a Eurocentric, masculine, middle-class, heterosexual viewpoint. The multiple perspectives provided a way to challenge a dominant way of thinking. Yet, while the graduate courses explored power, privilege and difference through multiple perspectives, this interrogation was
not cast thoroughly upon the students’ experiences. In order words, power, privilege and difference were explored in abstract and in an isolated manner. The students’ experiences were not fully deconstructed with respect to power, privilege and difference and thus remained as sharing stories. In this manner, the critical classrooms created a boundary between the multiple perspectives, that being academic knowledge, and personal experience. In order for the democratic imperative to be expanded, as Shor’s model projects, personal experience must be woven through academic knowledge.

In adopting the feminist perspective, in order for the personal to become political, there must be public concern for oppression. Until the critical classroom challenges the public-private division, only then can a political discourse be formed to facilitate social transformation. For public concern, attention is needed in terms of how race, gender and class experiences are understood. As an example, Dei and Calliste have focused upon how race is interpreted. They argue that society must distinguish the difference between multiculturalism and anti-racism.

[Multiculturalism] is an ideal of a democratic pluralistic society that recognizes a community and advocates empathy for minorities on the basis of a common humanity. Anti-racism, on the other hand, views as suspect the whole nation-building enterprise as pursued by the dominant, together with the underlying assumptions of empathy, commonality and goodwill. (Dei & Calliste, 2000a, p. 21)

Multiculturalism, according to Dei and Calliste (2001a), create a false image of the democratic imperative. While this perspective may be contested, it clear that being responsive to differences must extend beyond granting rights, being inclusive and celebrating traditions.

Anti-racism shifts the talk away from tolerance of diversity to the pointed notion of difference and power. It sees race and racism as central to how we claim, occupy and defend spaces. The task of anti-racism is to identify, challenge and change the values,
structures and behaviours that perpetuate systemic racism and other forms of societal oppressions. (Dei & Calliste, 2000a, p. 21)

By framing difference within the perspective of equity work, a political discourse can be constructed by exposing the context and dynamics of power. A political discourse, in this way, allows for social injustices to be identified and named. “Anti-racism troubles the manifestation of the problem as bias, discrimination, hatred, exclusion and violence” (Price, 1993, cited in Dei & Calliste, 2000b, p. 21). Hence, a political discourse breaks the silences surrounding issues of difference by not placating individuals with their struggles and instead confronting those struggles. As Dei and Calliste (2000a) conclude, in order to be politically engaged with difference, society must shift from “education-sharing and exchange of ideas” to developing “fundamental structural/societal change” (p. 21).

Overall, through multiple perspectives, the professors embraced alternative ways of knowing as mainstream viewpoints in the classrooms. As Dei (2000b) argues, “all knowledges cannot be dismissed as mere localized phenomena. Such knowledges extend across cultures, histories, and geographical spaces, as well as across time” (p. 4). Using the example of indigenous knowledge, Dei (2000b) believes that the denial of alternative ways of knowing “[establishes] deliberate practices of hierarchies of knowledge” (p. 4). He adds:

Knowledge forms are usually privileged to construct dominance, and can be ‘fetishized’ so as to produce and sustain power and inequities. Fetishized knowledges are assigned or come to acquire an objectified, normal status, the status of truth. Thus they become embedded in social practices and identities, as well as in institutional structures, policies, and relationships. (p. 4)

The alternative ways of knowing in the classrooms contributed to a political discourse by students recognizing that there is a relationship between knowledge and power. By including
multiple perspectives, the professors shifted away from only patriarchal, Euro-centric formations of knowledge offering a valid knowledge base. To this end, the professors paid attention to the workings of power that validate some knowledge forms while dismissing others. The professors included different perspectives to illustrate the discursive practices of knowledge production which in turn exposes the challenges for the democratic imperative to be fostered in education.

**Striving for Social Change**

Using critical pedagogy to educate for democracy also requires a commitment to social change. Shor (1992) highlights activism as a means to strive for social change. He argues:

Critical education and democratic activism in school….can support transformative projects in society at large, challenge the socialization of students into an equal status quo, and democratize the education system. At some moments, education projects can propel activism in society, creating the potential for larger changes. (p. 198)

Many students in the graduate classes could identify discursive practices in either their educational experiences or workplaces. For all the professors, social change meant students recognizing oppressive circumstances and encouraging them to act upon oppressions. However, a sense of social change emerges through a connection with critical questioning and critical discourse.

Both the Community Education and the Multicultural Education courses suffered from grand visions for social change because situations of oppressions were not connected to dialogues about power and difference. A sense of social change will remain as an abstract and idealist goal by not deconstructing oppressive experiences. For instance, by “understanding” individuals in their oppressive situations only through films or hearings stories, one cannot strive for social change. In contrast, an individual is left with grand ideas of empowerment and democracy. In order to strive for social change, individuals need to understand their roles in
facilitating social change. In the Democratic Education course, students felt connected to social change because of an engagement with critical questioning. The professor and course helped students to ask questions about the way things are and how they might be different. In essence, the professor hoped that the students would probe what they assumed was “truth”. Recalling a student’s comment,

I walked into the class taking a lot of things for granted. It made me question how do we educate for democracy….I started to question all of these things…and started looking at things with a much different lens. Also, you start to question your operations in the system and you start to question “what am I doing in this and how can things be different”? This is the only way that you can be critical.

Another student spoke about the “standardized teaching practices that she followed blindly in her classroom” as a teacher. The students were given the tools to examine identities and experiences which in turn acknowledge power and difference. As the Democratic Education professor argued,

it is the responsibility of a teacher at any level to give people opportunities to develop the capacities to understand how to move around in the world…to come to understand people different from themselves, to make decisions and to make collective decisions. This is democracy.

Weiler’s (2001) criticism of Friere’s generalizations in understanding oppressions sheds light upon how social change can be instigated through critical discourse. She argues that without addressing issues of race and gender, individuals are not fully located in the complexities and realities of human lives. Weiler, along with other feminist thinkers such as Manicom, hooks, Martindale, Mohanty and Fraser, passionately argue for attention to intersecting axes of difference. They contend that this attention validates the differences among personal experiences
and thus challenges the essentialism of individuals. Thus, the feminist perspective approaches social change through an exploration of difference. Critical pedagogy has employed the feminist perspective in terms of deconstructing both dialogue and student empowerment. Therefore, in striving for social change, critical pedagogy can be further strengthened by borrowing from the feminist perspective.

Both Manicom and hooks have commented that the feminist perspective does not only advocate for women’s rights. In contrast, the perspective advocates for social change by challenging oppressive relations of power in the classroom and the broader social context. As Manicom (1992) comments, “in classrooms where feminist pedagogy is practiced, the aim is both to develop an analysis and critique of relations of domination, and to construct visions of the social world that might emerge if relations of domination were to be interrupted” (p. 368).

The feminist perspective is a source of inspiration for social change because the stance highlights where subordinated individuals are coming from which in turn unveils power relations. Weiler (2000) criticizes “Friere’s…inspirational but generalized language” as it “[obscures] the conflicts that emerge from the specificity of oppression, the internal contradictions of political projects, or the ambiguities of history” (p. 83). In other words, there needs to be an awareness of individuals in the totality of their lives in order to bring about social change. Manicom (1992) argues that feminist pedagogy facilitates social change by recognizing everyday experiences through “making visible women’s actions, achievements, and concerns” (p. 268). Borrowing from the feminist viewpoint, critical pedagogy needs to be more fully located in human lives for a deeper comprehension of experiences and thus to strive for social change.

hooks (2000) also argues that the feminist perspective serves more than women’s rights. She recalls, during the earlier stage of feminism, there was a climate of white supremacy as
racial differences were not acknowledged among all feminist thinkers. The change occurred when “individual women began to break free of denial, to break free of white supremacist thinking” (p. 58). Following concerns of particular non-white feminists, racial differences were recognized in order for not only equity for women of color, but for society. hooks (2000) notes:

Feminist movement, especially the work of visionary black activists, paved the way for a reconsideration of race and racism that has had a positive impact on our society as a whole. Rarely do mainstream social critiques acknowledge this fact. As a feminist theorist who has written extensively about the issue of race and racism within feminist movement, I know that there remains much that needs to be challenged and changed, but it is equally important to celebrate the enormous changes that have occurred. That celebration, understanding our triumphs and using them as models, means that they can become the sound foundation for the building of a mass-based anti-racist feminist movement. (p. 59-60)

The feminist perspective can positively contribute to how critical pedagogy facilitates social change by examining the systemic impacts of racism, along with sexism and classism, in society.

The attention to discursive relations of power represents a radical vision that critical pedagogy can adopt in order to unveil issues of difference. hooks (2000) argues that a “radical visionary feminism encourages all of us to courageously examine our lives from the standpoint of gender, race, and class so that we can accurately understand our position within the imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (p. 116). Essentially, as hooks professes, feminism projects a vision for the larger society. Critical pedagogy needs to extend beyond simply hearing oppressive stories. This idea translates into examining individuals in their everyday lives, through both issues of power and difference, as a way to contribute to social change.
While the idea of social change was important in each graduate class, because dialogue was not fully deconstructed in the Community Education course and Multicultural Education course, issues of difference were left obscured. As a result, a discourse about difference, stemming from the students’ experiences, was not developed in the courses. In contrast, because the Democratic Education course paid more attention to the dynamics around dialogue, a greater attention to differences emerged to bring deeper meaning to the classroom discourse. The Democratic Education course reflected that striving for social change has to move beyond a idealism for democratic roles and a grand vision for the democratic imperative.

The idea of striving for social change emerges by modeling change in the classroom. In other words, the teacher’s role is not to express the desirable goal of transforming social relations without transforming classroom practices.

Freire insists …the critical teacher must also be a democratic one. If the teacher criticizes inequality and the lack of democracy in society, and then teaches in an authoritarian way, she or he compromises her or his credibility. The empowering education Freire suggests…it is, instead, a democratic and transformative relationship between students and teacher. (Shor, 1993, p. 27)

An awareness of democratic classroom practices requires attention to power relations. The idea of social change is devalued if teachers voice a grand vision for democracy, but do not deconstruct tensions or silences. Since the Community Education course and the Multicultural Education course did not deconstruct the tensions and silences in their classes, they projected the democratic imperative without understanding the teacher-student power dynamic. In addition, classroom practices that serve the democratic imperative cannot be confused with an application of methods built around dialogue and participation. Bartolome (1999) calls for pedagogy to
move beyond methods and to have students understand the power relationships between the teacher and students.

Student experiences were the central component of each graduate class. In this way, the learning contexts were built around opportunities for students to share their experiences. The intent was to create pedagogical climates that were mutually negotiated between the teachers and students. But, the dynamics around dialogue also require attention. The role of the teacher with classroom dialogue and opportunities to dialogue are two different issues. Moreover, how the teacher handles tensions and silences contributes significantly to the meaning of both the classroom experience and the democratic imperative.

Using Teacher Authority

The use of authority was an important factor in terms of how each professor served the democratic imperative. As Gore (1993) notes, “the ways in which the teacher (as agent of empowerment) uses authority differs among the various proponents of critical pedagogy” (p. 97). Yet, despite these differences, there is a common belief that democracy necessitates the use of authority. Friere states that “without authority it is difficult for the liberties of the students to be shaped. Freedom needs authority to become free. It is a paradox but it is true” (Shor & Friere, 1987; cited in Gore, 1993, p. 94). Despite that authority can project a negative meaning, it has to be understood in a different light. This alternative perspective reflects the purpose of using authority to foster the democratic imperative. According to Giroux (1988), “the dominant meaning of authority must be redefined to include the concepts of freedom, equality, and democracy” (cited in Gore, 1993, p. 94).

The relationship between democracy and authority has emerged controversial. Democracy has been perceived as placing no control over individuals. Using authority has been perceived as an individual being an authoritarian. To bring clarity to the connection between
authority and democracy, the following analogy may be useful. A police officer is referred to as an individual with authority. If he or she does not use authority, society will be laden with chaos. Here, authority is used to serve the goal of democracy through peace, order and security.

Similarly, to create a democratic classroom, a teacher uses authority in attempt to establish an atmosphere that is safe, equitable and respectful for all students. As Ng (2003) states, “authority…is formal power granted to individuals through institutional structures and relations. Thus, the police have legal authority to take certain courses of action. Teachers have authority over students as a consequence of their ascribed role in the educational system” (p. 208). In either case, authority is not intended to subordinate individuals. Authority represents a responsibility or obligation to use one’s position of expertise to reach the desired outcome of democracy.

Being an authoritarian constructs a hierarchy in which an individual dominates over others in order to create subordinate positions. Using authority, an individual can have control, but that control does not necessarily refer to the intention of domination. By contrast, in using authority, an individual can be cited as an expert and thus gains the privilege for others to adhere to their knowledge. Using authority can operate without the intention to quell individual freedom of thought and action which is the intention of the authoritarian. Therefore, the difference between using authority and being an authoritarian rests with one’s intentions. Kanpol (1999) states that authoritarianism operates upon “control mechanisms” (p. 50) whereas using authority “can be redefined in the name of establishing social relationships that are not only critical but are also a lens for creating spaces for redefining what authority can be, both in personal and private lives” (p. 51).
It has been argued that the teacher can never be separated from the use of authority. The teacher’s authority is employed to achieve freedom for others; the teacher’s authority is not employed to pursue a personal agenda. Friere states:

For me the question is not for the teacher to have less and less authority. The issue is that the democratic teacher never, never transforms authority into authoritarianism. He or she can never stop being an authority or having authority….The question nevertheless is for authority to know that it has its foundation in the freedom of others, and if the authority denies this freedom and cuts off this relationship, this founding relationship, with freedom, I think that is no longer authority but has become authoritarianism. (Shor & Friere, 1987, cited in Gore, 1993, p. 97)

Furthermore, Shor and Friere (1987) explain:

The teacher has a plan, a program, a goal for the study. But there is the directive liberating educator on the one hand, and the directive domesticating educator on the other. The liberating difference is a tension which the teacher tries to overcome by a democratic attitude to his or her directiveness. (cited in Gore, 1993, p. 97)

In other words, the teacher, as a liberating educator places directiveness in a positive and meaningful light. This approach means using authority to attend to classroom dynamics that can foster the democratic imperative. Henceforth, the purpose for which authority is used impacts the teacher as either a liberating educator or a domesticating educator.

The degree to which each professor used authority varied which in turn produced different outcomes in educating for democracy. To begin with, the manner in which the silences from the minority students of the Multicultural Education course were treated relates to the professor’s authority. The professor did not use authority in order to pay attention to the classroom silences. By commenting that he does not force anyone to speak, the professor
maintained silences in the classroom. The lack of attention to deconstructing the silences gives the impression that the mere presence of critical pedagogy guarantees voice and participation. If pedagogy does not account for both the realities of the classroom and the realities of students’ lives, then educating for democracy is a pretentious goal. Even though many students in the course agreed that participation can occur in many ways, one of which is inner reflection, the recurring silences required attention. As students in the class recognized the opportunities to dialogue, others felt this effort was insufficient. They expressed an obligation to deconstruct the silences. This idea validates having a sense of social responsibility. With the professor not giving attention to the silences, they were not deconstructed accordingly.

None of the minority students who remained silent volunteered for an interview, thus making it more challenging to understand their feelings and thoughts. While it is difficult to draw definite conclusions about the reasons for the students’ silences, it is evident that the silences indicate dynamics of power occurring in the classroom. Ellsworth (1992) explains this point.

White women, men and women of color, impoverished people, people with disabilities, gays and lesbians, are not silences in the sense implied by the literature on critical pedagogy….they are declining/refusing to talk at all, to critical educators who have been unable to acknowledge the presence of knowledges that are challenging and most likely inaccessible to their own social positions. What they/we say, to whom, in what context, depending on the energy they/we have for the struggle on a particular day, is the result of conscious and unconscious assessments of the power relations and safety of the situation. (p. 105)

Ellsworth’s (1992) comment reveals that power relations create silences and impact participation in the classroom. The silences of the minority students were not a random or meaningless occurrence. The minority students had views about participating that prevented their voices to be
heard in the class. These perceptions may have been issues of safety, respect and trust related to speaking in the classroom and sharing their ideas with the professor and students.

Another strong indication that critical pedagogy does not guarantee voice or participation in the classroom was evidenced by the fact that the minority students sat together at one end of the classroom. Those who participated frequently, mainly white students, sat at the other end of the class. Again, the professor did not use his authority to address this structure. The lack of discussion by the professor about the disengagement of the minority students further exacerbates the silences. By not unraveling the silences, the issues underlying the silences remained with the students, rather than being a larger concern for the classroom members. This lack of attention prevented the full realization of democracy in the Multicultural Education course. The minority students’ ideas about the democratic imperative were left untold. Even through critical pedagogy challenges domesticating education, the pedagogy requires a more complete understanding of its function in order to better unveil concerns such as silences.

In actuality, the Multicultural Education course was not a true indication of critical pedagogy based upon the use of authority. Students were concerned about the overall lack of directiveness from the professor. The freedom granted to the students made some of them feel uncomfortable. They expected more guidance from the professor. The openness of the professor’s approach created a lot of uncertainty about his expectations. Shor’s (1980) viewpoint on the use of authority is rooted in the “withering away of the teacher” (cited in Gore, 1993, p. 97). Based upon the work of Shor and Friere (1987), Shor also mentioned that “in a liberating classroom, the teacher seeks to withdraw as the director of learning, as the directive force” (cited in Gore, 1993, p. 97). The idea of giving up authority is skewed because it suggests that the teacher’s role diminishes in empowering the student. In contrast, the critical classroom functions
effectively when the teacher’s authority is not diminished, but rather the teacher uses his or her position to recognize and respond to student experiences, interests and needs.

The Community Education class also exhibited problems with the use of authority. This difficulty cast doubt upon its effectiveness to engage critical pedagogy. The course was problematic with authority in two ways. First, the students felt the course lacked direction. Second, the students felt that the professor’s opinions dominated the classroom dialogue. To begin with, there were many opportunities to share experiences and dialogue in the class. But, as one student strongly conveyed, dialogue requires direction and meaning of which she felt lacked in the course.

Having a direction and meaning for dialogue can contribute to empowerment by shifting from a language of critique to a language of possibility. Gore (1993) discusses this shift as “one which enables power to be used for productive purposes…hence, in critical pedagogy discourse empowerment has been constructed in ways that take the productive moment of power further, and so go beyond resistance” (p. 96). Furthermore, Wexler (1987) states that “this movement to a language of possibility is part of a general shift in critical educational discourse toward acknowledging that education has played a role in social movement and not just in social reproduction” (cited in Gore, 1993). In other words, dialogue has to contribute to more than challenging ideas by giving a sense of one’s transformative roles. There needs to be agency attached to dialogue, otherwise the critical discourse only attends to discussing inequities without facilitating social change. The dialogue in the Community Education course emerged as just sharing ideas and feelings. The result was a lack of deconstructing the meaning of differences in terms of race, gender, class and sexuality. Thus, a shift from a language of critique to a language of possibility in the course was problematic.
The Community Education class also lacked direction through the use of films. The professor hoped for students to be empowered through the use of films because they demonstrated plights with oppressions and injustices. But, similar to no direction being assigned to the class dialogue, there was no follow-up to the films that provided a greater meaning of democracy. Thus, the professor used the films to advocate for agency and hope without holding discussions that could contextualize oppression. Without contextualizing the films, there was insufficient attention to both issues of power and difference that engulfed the racial groups, gender groups, and class groups that were presented in the films. The professor did not deconstruct the individual experiences.

The films were an excellent way to develop a critical discourse of democracy. However, the films remained as a teaching method, rather than a foundation to a critical discourse. The professor used the films to understand oppression with a general perspective, that is, particular groups of people experiencing injustices and being disadvantaged. Overall, the professor exemplified a domesticating educator approach based upon her use of authority. With a domesticating approach, the professor was not engaging the students critically in the classroom and was not working with them in understanding the films. According to Friere, the domesticating approach challenges “the teacher and students [to] develop co-intentionality, that is mutual intentions, which make the study collectively owned, not the teacher’s sole property” (Shor, 1993, p. 26).

Another example of the professor’s use of authority, as a domesticating educator, emerged with summarizing the class discussions with her perspective. The professor was not an authoritarian in her critical approach; her intentions were not to subordinate the students. The missing component from the professor’s critical approach was reflectivity of her practices. As hooks (1994) comments, the empowering educator has to embrace self-actualization with respect
to teaching practices in order to liberate students. This self-awareness or self-realization for one’s teaching approach moves the educator from engaging domesticating education to engaging liberating education. While the critical teacher brings an agenda to class, there has to be flexibility with that agenda that respects the identity, voices and experiences of students. It appears that greater flexibility with the teaching approach could have diffused the student tensions in this class. This notion of self-awareness has been reflected in Shor’s belief that the teacher is also a learner. The “teacher as a learner” notion directly impacts teacher’s authority. As Shor (1980) states, “the teacher needs to come to class with an agenda, but must be ready for anything, committed to letting go when the discussion is searching for an organic form” (cited in Gore, 1993, p. 105). Shor is suggesting that the critical teacher must be flexible in order to understand where students are coming from accordingly.

The Democratic Education professor had more effective use of authority and thus engaged critical pedagogy more appropriately for the democratic imperative. Specifically, the Democratic Education professor used authority as a liberating educator. The course embraced the idea of the professor and students working together to explore meanings of knowledge. In this regard, the professor’s authority evolved as a facilitator. She brought her knowledge to the classroom, but also created spaces for the students’ viewpoints. The professor had a specific plan for the course, but that plan was open to change. The Democratic Education professor demonstrated that critical teachers do not give up authority in their classroom. The professor admitted that she held authority in the class. The critical teacher uses authority in order to create equity in the classroom such that all students can have a voice. In this regard, the Democratic Education professor demonstrated how power can be used to create a democratic space.

The way that authority was used in the Democratic Education class points to the goal of empowerment. Gore (1992) discusses challenges with the conceptualization of empowerment
since power is understood as “property, something the teacher has and can give to students. To
em-power suggests that power can be given, provided, controlled, held, conferred, taken away” (p. 57). Foucault’s perspective on power criticizes the definition as “property” and instead encourages a shift in the perception of power. Referring to power, Foucault (1980) states that it is “exercised, and…only exists in action” (cited in Gore, 1992, p. 58). Foucault (1980) later comments:

power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which
only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here of there, never in
anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. (cited in Gore, 1992, p. 58)

In other words, power must be understood in terms of the manner by which it is used; instead of how it is given to an individual. In fact, power cannot be given to another individual. Thus, by focusing upon the application of power, individuals can understand how the dimension can be used effectively.

The Democratic Education professor, for instance, used her authority in order to call upon students who showed an interest to speak, but did not have the opportunity to be heard. The professor limited those students who spoke frequently during class discussions. As Gore (1992) states, “given Foucault’s conception of power as ‘circulating’, ‘exercised’ and existing ‘only in action’, empowerment cannot mean the giving of power. It could, however, mean the exercise of power in an attempt (that might not be successful) to help others to exercise power” (p. 59). In this way, the professor used her authority to teach students how to treat others fairly and thus understand how to use power equitably.

Also, having class rules was another example of the professor exercising authority in order to show students how power can be used positively. To this end, power was used to make
students feel comfortable and respected in the classroom. The professor’s authority was an attempt for students to have an equal opportunity to speak and to give voice to those students who may not have been heard. The use of authority attended to the classroom dynamics. Gore (1992) states the:

[conception] of power as exercised points immediately to the need for empowerment to be context-specific and related to practices…discourses of critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy have tended to ‘decontextualize’ empowerment. Their concern for context at the broad level of societal relations and institutions and ideologies…leads to totalizing or universalizing tendencies which imply their concern is for “all teachers” or “all students” or “all women”. Understanding power as exercised, rather than as possessed, requires more attention to the microdynamics of the operations of power as it is exercised in particular sites. (p. 59)

This idea gives rise to the fact that the critical teacher cannot give up power because authority affords a contextualization of classroom practices which in turn can uncover inequities. The Democratic Education professor commented that there cannot be equal power between her and the students. But, at the same time, she was fully aware that her role is to use authority for the purpose of pushing students to probe and to question, not to dominate them.

In sum, implementing student voice, constructing a political discourse, striving for social change and use of teacher’s authority contributed to the use of critical pedagogy for educating for democracy. With each of these factors, the role of the professor was a crucial factor. There seems to be a paradox concerning critical pedagogy and the use of power. In critical pedagogy, there may be the perception that the open pedagogical climate warrants little or no authority from the teacher. When hooks (1994) discusses the need for the critical teacher to give up some control in order to attend to self-actualization and the well-being of students, she is not referring
to teachers having no authority. hooks (1994) is attempting to ensure that the critical teacher is not an authoritarian with students. Hence, critical pedagogy requires the use of authority to foster the democratic imperative. The key point is to understand the manner in which it is used and for what purpose. Moreover, a classroom without inequities cannot be guaranteed. However, there must be attempts to restructure the classroom in the direction of equal relationships. This effort requires the use of power in positive ways.

The Democratic Education course was a good example of how authority can be used respectfully in a critical classroom. The challenges with authority in the Multicultural Education course and the Community Education course reiterate that authority is required in order for the critical classroom to foster the democratic imperative. It is necessary to recognize that authority and freedom do not need to be at odds with each other, but can exist together through a negotiated process between the teacher and students. The Democratic Education course reflected this balance rather than an antagonism between authority and freedom. According to Gore (1992; 1993), authority in the classroom requires constant negotiation. Thus, authority should not be defined as a dimension that is either gained or lost by the critical teacher. A shift is required from understanding authority in negative terms to understanding how authority can impact classroom dynamics positively.
Chapter Eight: The Aims of the Critical Teacher in Educating for Democracy

This chapter will address my third research question, “what is the purpose of actualizing critical pedagogy in order to educate for democracy”? In other words, it is meaningful to understand the aims of the professors who use critical teaching to attend to the democratic imperative. The professors endeavored to construct a multiple public sphere and to develop the teacher-student relationship in their respective critical classrooms. Thus, the chapter will explore the dynamics related to both purposes.

**Constructing Multiple Publics**

Each professor constructed a multiple public sphere by creating spaces to hear the students’ ideas and perspectives. Specifically, each class was grounded in dialogue that could potentially unveil the students’ voices. Recalling Fraser (1994), a single public sphere cannot account for the diversity among individuals’ ideas and perspectives. She argues that a multiple public sphere affords marginalized individuals “to invent and circulate counterdiscourses which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (p. 84). In other words, a multiple public sphere creates voices from the individuals’ own perspectives.

While issues of difference were insufficiently attended to in the classrooms, the professors’ intentions must be recognized. The graduate classrooms provided the opportunity for students to share their ideas and perspectives. The professors envisioned the classrooms as open spaces wherein students could feel comfortable to express themselves and have their voices heard. Unfortunately, because the teaching approaches were not fully teased out, specifically in the Community Education course and Multicultural Education course, limitations and challenges arose subsequently. However, the professors’ intentions cannot be denied.
In constructing a multiple public sphere through student voices, the professors developed a concern for others. Thus, the purpose of the graduate classrooms was to think beyond the individual self and recognize the struggles that other individuals face accordingly. The classrooms exhibited a humanizing and compassionate vision. Moreover, constructing multiple publics aligns with a radical perspective of democracy which recognizes that individuals are not the same based upon their histories and identities (Trend, 1996). In this way, boundaries can be erased by not privileging some individuals while disadvantaging others and by bringing private lives into the public arena, that being, the classroom.

The concept of multiple publics can be problematic, however, if they are contextualized as merely inclusionary spaces. The Community Education course and the Multicultural Education course both reflected this concern. Because dialogue was not contextualized effectively to account for issues of differences, the dialogue in the two classes was actualized as inclusionary practices. Therefore, constructing multiple publics to only share perspectives and experiences is insufficient to serve the democratic imperative. Fraser (1996) negates radical democracy taking on this inclusionary approach because it “goes by the name of multiculturalism” and “cultivates a positive view of group differences and groups identities which it seeks to promote” (p. 203). She further argues that this viewpoint of radical democracy constructs “one-sided views of identity and difference” (p. 203) and thus “the multiculturalist view is celebratory...it sees all identities as deserving of recognition and all differences as meriting affirmation” (p. 203).

While multiculturalism serves to include all individuals, the perspective does not interpret difference along the context and dynamics of power. By creating a multiple public sphere, difference can be dealt with by exposing inequities or oppressions through relations of power. To this end, multiple publics can distinguish understanding difference from a multicultural perspective to an equity framework. As discussed:
[Multiculturalism] advocates empathy for minorities on the basis of a common humanity, envisons a future assured by goodwill, tolerance, and understanding among all, but it also breeds complacency, creating the illusion that we live in a raceless, classless, and genderless society. For example, Dei points out that, while a raceless, classless, and genderless society is an ideal that we all aspire to and work towards, we must remember that, at present, such a society is a luxury that is only possible for people from a certain racial background, namely white people. (Beckett, 2004, p. 3)

Thus, since the Community Education and the Multicultural Education professors did not invoke a broader equity analysis, the opportunities created to hear students’ experiences invoked the values of humanness and open-mindedness and thus aligned with the multicultural perspective.

It is important to recognize that inclusivity only partially contributes to the democratic project. It is equally important to probe the meaning of difference. The perception may be that judgments in terms bias will be made about social identity. Yet, judgments, with a productive purpose, can instigate social change. Fraser (1996) states:

The multiculturalist view of a multiplicity of cultural forms is yet another unsurpassable gain. But this does not mean that we should subscribe to the pluralist view of multiculturalism. Rather, we should develop an alternative version that permits us to make normative judgments about the value of different differences by interrogating their relation to inequality. (p. 207)

Fraser (1996) concludes that radical democracy requires a connection of “a cultural politics of identity to a social politics of justice and equality” (p. 208). To this end, struggles with race, gender, class and sexuality must be connected to a politics for social change.

The differences that were embedded in the students’ stories needed to be explored through a wider scope, that being, an equity framework built upon a discourse of power and difference. A student in the Community Education class effectively captured this idea. She
insists that personal experiences cannot be meaningful without being structured in a broader discourse. The student’s emphatic remark must be recalled.

You can get lost in sharing stories. You can take up huge amounts of time with things that don’t necessarily go anywhere. People like to talk about their experiences and what they’ve done. So, where’s the limit in bringing that back so it actually informs something…If we are sharing our experiences, it’s a great thing to empower students and it’s democratic. But if you are encouraging to provide stories, there has to be a guide about how and why we are using them. You need to link the stories to an issue, bring it back to the issue or a framework to understand that experience differently. There has to be some pedagogy, otherwise it’s just talking and one can get lost in that.

The Democratic Education class more effectively framed the students’ experiences in a politics of social change. While a more profound contextualization of identity was still required in the classroom, there was pedagogy applied to the students’ stories that in turn connected personal experiences to an equity issue or framework. The class exposed students to an understanding of politics in terms how they see themselves and the social world.

Referring to the students’ comments, one individual in the Democratic Education course remarked:

It’s very obvious to me that through the course education is so political. We get bogged down by technical differences. We get caught up in difference and how we have to have this consensus. I realize that we need to become less threatened by conflict and difference and be able to consider our function in the process. It’s frustrating to see how conflict is so muted in our society. If we can get over that, then I think we could be more functional.

The educational environment is a good place to start to talk about these things. The student identifies the politics in education and the need for education to be an arena to dialogue about politics. She focused upon the need for individuals’ to understand their roles in
dealing with difference by not being fearful, reluctant or silenced by difference, but instead to embrace difference through critical dialogue.

Again, recalling another student’s comment in the class:

I walked into the class taking a lot of things for granted. It made me question how do we educate for democracy and that streams into other things such as how do we educate teachers for their roles with democracy? I started to question all of these things I took for granted and started looking at things with a much different lens. Also, you start to question your operations in the system and you start to question what am I doing in this and how can things be difference? This is the only way that you can be critical, but that is a difficult process to reach.

Similarly, this student realizes that critical questions must be asked about why things exist in society as they do. The student believes that individuals need to understand their roles in the normative ways of society.

Both students’ comments support the idea that the purpose of the critical classroom reaches beyond sharing ideas and perspectives. By the professor’s own admission, she admitted that her role was to push the students to think critically. The professor’s line of probing contributed to the students’ interpretations of their struggles through issues of power and difference. This idea validates the meaning of multiple publics as coined by Fraser. To this end, the professor acted to erase the boundary between personal experience and public knowledge. The classroom existed as a space to build collective concern for struggles and to think together about social change. Thus, in sum, the professors’ aims to create multiple publics reveal that students’ voices need to be attended to for issues of power and difference in order to educate for democracy.
The Teacher-Student Relationship

The purpose of actualizing critical pedagogy to educate for democracy is also to develop the relationship between the teacher and students. Specifically, developing the teacher-student relationship moves the classroom experience beyond an application of pedagogical methods. Osborne (2001) discusses ten broad components of educating for democracy. The fourth component pertains to teaching and learning.

The democratic classroom is too easily equated with any teaching strategy that can be said to be activity-based and student-centred. If students have some sort of say in what they are learning, and if they are involved in something more active than listening to their teacher or filling out worksheets, then they are considered to be learning democratically…This one-to-one equation of democratic education with student-centred pedagogy is far too simple. (Osborne, 2001, p. 47)

There is agreement with Osborne’s comment; opportunities for student participation do not only determine educating for democracy. Osborne (2001) further argues that “what matters is the spirit in which teachers use their various teaching techniques and the purpose for which they employ them” (p. 47). To this end, there needs to be a connection between applying teaching methods and how they impact students not only academically, but also socially.

The Democratic Education professor used classroom dialogue to build relationships with her students. The sharing circle evidenced this attention. The professor attempted to understand the students’ concerns, whether related to the classroom or beyond the classroom. The professor’s focus, in this regard, attended to the well-being of the students. It was assumed that the opportunities to dialogue and to share experiences in the other two classes would form a connection between the teacher and students. But, developing the teacher-student relationship is not inherent to a classroom environment. This dimension requires attention similar to constructing academic knowledge. The question arises how can meaningful teacher-student
relations evolve? hooks (1994) calls for teachers to learn along with students and thus move the classroom away from a mini-kingdom to create a holistic learning experience. She argues that this transformation can develop the well-being of both the teacher and students. From this point, the classroom can transition from a practice of domination to a practice of freedom (hooks, 1994). As an example, hooks (1994) believes that the teaching and learning experience needs to embody a mind, body and spirit union. In essence, she is referring to uniting one’s public and private life and hence developing the teacher and students holistically.

It cannot be assumed that teachers, due to their roles and positions, will naturally be disposed to building classroom relations. To this end, developing the teacher-student relationship requires a discourse. This discourse must engage issues of power, respect, trust and safety in the classroom. The presence of such a discourse in the academy must be taken seriously. Yet, teachers are often limited by the nature of the institution and academia on a whole.

[The] truth of academia cannot be overlooked in the formation of critical pedagogy discourse. The demands of the university, such as expected levels of productivity and the quest for academic expertise which often disdains “practice”, do not encourage particularly reflexive work. Instead, academics are required to produce “new” materials for publications and presentations on a regular basis. (Gore, 1993, p. 113)

This point resonates with the idea that teachers are distinguished as only intellectuals which in turn devalues their humanizing nature. It is not the case that the teacher has to become a counselor or a therapist. Rather, the meaning of pedagogy must be expanded to allow teachers to evaluate their pedagogical approaches. In some instances, when teachers attend to developing relationships they are described as being “soft” or “weak”. There was not the sense that neither the Democratic Education professor lacked rigor nor her course lacked purpose. The course was rigorous as well as humanizing. If education is conceived with respect to serving only one
purpose, whether applying pedagogical methods or being an intellectual, there will be challenges for the democratic imperative.

Shor’s agenda of values brings attention to the teacher-student relationship. Having the teacher transgress domination in the classroom, Shor’s pedagogical climate facilitates co-intentionality between the teacher and students. Following Shor, teaching and learning domains can be enhanced by attention to this collaborative dynamic. In essence, the agenda proposes that the teacher builds classroom relationships through a deconstruction of power with students. Shor develops the teacher-student relationship holistically, that is, through both cognitive and affective dimensions. For example, he conceptualizes the classroom through students being critical, but also through affective or emotional development (Shor, 1992).

The Democratic Education professor developed the teacher-student relationship better as she was cognizant of students’ reactions to her pedagogical practices, continually modified her practices and ultimately paid attention to the power dynamics in the classroom. For instance, if particular students dominated the class dialogue, then the professor created spaces for the silenced voices. It is not the case that the Community Education professor and the Multicultural Education professor were not interested in unveiling silences or tensions. The professors felt that their teaching approaches could address classroom conflicts by reaching all students positively and equally. They relied upon the methods. Despite the open-ended atmosphere and the many dialogical spaces, particular voices were never heard and tensions surfaced in these classrooms. Osborne’s (2001) perspective holds true; student participation in the structure and function of the classroom cannot dissipate silences and tensions. The critical classroom requires attention to power dynamics in order to unpack silences and tensions. To this end, there must be further deconstruction of dialogue. This exploration needs to show that dialogue is shaped by silences and tensions and needs to account for the cause of these dynamics.
Shor describes how the teacher-student relationship can work effectively or positively. However, he does not address the challenges with the relationship. Understanding the teacher-student relationship requires a complete examination of its dynamics. Shor’s agenda of values establishes a discourse for the teacher-student relationship, but that discourse can be extended considerably. Feminist pedagogy contributes to the discourse on the teacher-student relationship. Feminist teachers argue that pedagogy is as much an academic engagement as a social one that needs to build relationships between the teacher and students. By examining power relations, feminist teachers discuss how privilege or domination and silences or subordination impact the teacher-student relationship.

Litner, Rossiter and Taylor (1990) contend that “in contrast to typical university classes, where relationships are accidental outcomes, we propose a deliberate structure actively to promote relationships” (cited in Briskin & Coulter, 1992, p. 258). Moreover, it is crucial to understand the underpinnings of classroom relationships. Thus, Briskin and Coulter (1992) continue that “what is apparent…is that teachers’ ability to promote these relationships depends upon a recognition of—indeed, an engagement with—the power dynamics among students” (p. 258). Feminist pedagogy develops the teacher-student relationship by not universalizing the classroom experience. In other words, the classroom, from the feminist perspective, has been examined beyond the “happy, positive moments” between the teacher and students.

The feminist perspective recognizes that teachers may face challenges in making connections with students. Specifically, Hoodfar (1992) who approaches critical pedagogy through a feminist lens discusses that often visible minority teachers experience resistance from students in their classrooms. As a result, teachers struggle to have their voices heard because the views presented are “voices from outside the dominant social groups and ethnicities” (Hoodfar, 1992, p. 303). Feminist teachers also express that despite that their classrooms are built upon
sharing and collaboration, there can be silences that prevent the teacher from building connections with students. Manicom (1992) states:

In contrast to a view of the feminist classroom as a place of nurturing, cooperation, and collaboration, comes a view of that classroom as a place where resistances exist and relations of oppression operate….Questions demand to be asked: Who shares? Whose sharing is blocked? What is shared easily and what with difficulty? When is sharing empowering and when is it disempowering? (p. 376)

Similarly, it should not be assumed that the three graduate classes, with the aim to actualize critical pedagogy, were nurturing and negotiated spaces.

As feminist teaching reveals, in order to develop the teacher-students relationship, there must be questions related to classroom dynamics. Specifically, critical questions need to address “the issues around experience, sharing and authority” (Manicom, 1992, p. 382). An essential part of developing the teacher-student relationship is reflection upon pedagogical practices. As an example, Briskin and Coulter (1992) point to the experiences of particular teachers. They argue:

Indeed, the power of students, especially white, middle-class heterosexual male students, to shape classroom dynamics may not be easily amenable to intervention by teachers, especially those teachers-minority women and men, and white women-who may face additional challenges to their authority. Teachers must accept the limits on their individual ability to shape their classrooms at the same time as they take up the challenge to work with the classroom as an environment collectively produced by teacher and students. For the teacher, this will mean developing interventionist strategies that “interrupt” and bring to consciousness classroom power dynamics. (p. 258)

To this end, the teacher has an explicit role in order to address power differences. For teachers who experience conflicts in the classroom, their relationships with students will not be developed
by simply adding more dialogical spaces. “This means techniques alone cannot solve the power imbalance in the classroom” (Briskin & Coulter, 1992, p. 258).

The relationship must be approached from a different perspective that addresses the question, “what is the role of teachers and of students in shifting classroom power dynamics?” (Briskin & Coulter, 1992, p. 258). The feminist perspective explores the teacher-student relationship more holistically by accounting for tensions, resistance, silences and safety. Critical pedagogy can be expanded to include such issues between the teacher and students. Shor’s agenda takes a universal or generalized tone for developing the teacher-student relationship. Similar to critical pedagogy, the feminist perspective defines teaching and learning as a humanizing experience. Thus, critical pedagogy should borrow from feminist pedagogy in order to develop the teacher-student relationship.

There is not notable research that traces the development of the teacher-student relationship. Some key pieces of Canadian scholarly work on developing the teacher-student relationship has been written mainly by feminist scholars such as Linda Briskin, Rebecca Coulter, Homa Hoodfar, Ann Manicom and Kathleen Martindale during the early 1990’s. However, few articles addressing this topic have surfaced in almost two decades later. This gap begs the question why educational research is not attending to the topic and urges a greater emphasis. It is essential to shift the discourse on the classroom experience from inclusionary practices to understanding issues of power and differences. Unless scholars and researchers undertake this direction through their investigations, the democratic project will remain cast in a utopian light and hidden from exposing its challenges.

In sum, by unveiling a multiple public sphere and developing the teacher-student relationship, the critical classroom can exhibit a deeper meaning beyond the act of sharing. To this end, opportunities to dialogue do not guarantee equity in the critical classroom. They emphasis inclusionary practices rather than interrogate experiences which in turn contributes to
teaching for social change. Also, allowing students to contribute to the organization of the classroom does not guarantee equity in the critical classroom. There are conflicts and challenges among the teacher-student interactions that require attention. Both purposes for actualizing critical pedagogy reveal that the critical classroom needs to be explored further. The sense that the critical classroom empowers students has lead to an idealistic perception which in turn obscures serious concerns. Following the factors of critical pedagogy that contribute to educating for democracy, along with the purposes discussed in this chapter, conclusions can be made about the teaching perspective in order to provide a more complete picture of the critical classroom.
Chapter Nine: Conclusions

This chapter provides conclusions regarding professors who actualized critical pedagogy to educate for democracy in graduate classrooms. Democracy, in this study, was conceptualized beyond a political process. Democracy was understood as “a way of life” (Dewey, 1958). Thus, the meaning of democracy extended to a social dimension—having a concern for others in terms of the public good. Educating for democracy engages a questioning of inclusionary and exclusionary practices from a critical perspective along the lines of power and difference. The chapter summarizes the key areas in using critical pedagogy to educate for democracy. They are: (1) a concern for social relations, (2) the issue of power, (3) a general vision of critical pedagogy, (4) the reciprocal relationship between democracy and education and (5) the future direction of the university. The chapter also outlines the limitations and implications of the study as well as addresses areas for future research.

A Concern for Social Relations

The study is concerned with higher education being commodified through neoliberal capitalist ideology. In commodifying higher education, there is a lack of attention to social relations because students become essentialized as consumers. As consumers, students focus upon acquiring a job and competing with each other. This focus removes a concern for social relations in terms of inclusionary and exclusionary practices. With the neoliberal regime having a strong impact upon education, the question arises how can there be concern for social relations?

The critical classroom is grounded in dialogue. However, all students do not participate equally in dialogue since both issues of power and difference arise through sharing. A concern for social relations is needed in order to understand classroom dynamics in the form of dominate and subordinate relations. As Ng (2003) argues:
attention needs to be directed toward how dominant and subordinate relations (be they based on race, gender, class, or ability) permeate these contexts and intersect in complicated ways to produce inequality and marginalization. The frequently used and well-meaning phrase, “I treat everyone the same”, often used by teachers and administrators to indicate their lack of bias in a diverse educational setting, in fact masks unequal power relations. (p. 214)

While teachers may have the intention to treat students equally, inequity in the classroom arises from what students bring to the classroom. The assumption that pedagogical methods can treat students equally is flawed. There must be a shift away from focusing upon pedagogical methods to addressing the social construction of identities.

The Democratic Education course emerged most effective based upon its attention to classroom dynamics. The professor attended to classroom dynamics specifically through the issue of power. The classroom rules and the alternative ways of dialoguing developed a concern for social relations. The rules reminded students to consider how they speak to each other, how they listen to each other and how they respect each other. The students began to think about interrupting positions of privilege and about the issues of sharing. The various forms of dialogue provided the opportunity for all students to participate and for all voices to be heard in the classroom. Thus, classroom rules and various dialogical forms developed a concern beyond the individual self. They developed an ethics of concern among the students. The professor’s effectiveness highlights the necessity to understand the issue of power in the pedagogical context.

*The Issue of Power*

Shor’s agenda of values constructs a critical classroom that uses power positively between the teacher and students. The agenda is built upon the idea that the teacher is not an authoritarian disseminating knowledge to students. In Shor’s agenda, personal experiences are
connected to academic knowledge. To this end, the teacher collaborates with students to explore knowledge and to establish the pedagogical climate. The misperception, according to Ellsworth (1992) and Gore (1992), emerges from the critical classroom being constructed upon freedom without any authority. As the professor of the Democratic Education course commented, “my class is not a perfect democracy. As the teacher, I have a role and responsibility to evaluate students, challenge their thinking and give directions”. Having a classroom, without teacher authority is counterproductive as it leaves the class with an empty purpose.

Borrowing from the feminist perspective, Manicom (1992) explains that teacher authority is required in order to “[challenge] dominant and oppressive ideologies” (p. 381) and “[challenge] practices of privilege and domination” (p. 381) in the classroom. Thus, the various forms of critical teaching bring attention to the idea of teacher authority. hooks (1988) argues “we must acknowledge that our role as teacher is a position of power over others. We can use that power in ways that diminish or in ways that enrich” the classroom dynamics (cited in Manicom, 1992, p. 381). Lather (1991) adds “to deconstruct authority is not to do away with it but to learn to trace its effects, to see how authority is constituted and constituting” (cited in Manicom, 1992, p. 381). The false perception often is that teacher authority is used at the cost of freedom. A shift in perspective is required to understand that authority and freedom can co-exist in the critical classroom; they must not be oppositional. Teacher authority can be facilitated in positive and democratic ways.

The Community Education course and the Multicultural Education course incurred challenges because dialogue and participation were not deconstructed by the professor. In this way, teacher’s authority was weakened in the two classrooms. Following the feminist perspective, if participatory and dialogic spaces are inserted into the classroom without unpacking the ensuing power relations, then they contribute to maintaining the status quo which is discursive to a critical democratic classroom (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1993). The two classes
left tensions and silences intact. The classrooms were constructed from a general perspective of sharing stories, without attention to both issues of power and differences. Even in the Democratic Education course, while student voices were exposed better, the voices were not fully explored for issues of difference. In this case, the dialogues were interpreted with a general tone. The professors needed to probe further for the differences that students brought to the classrooms.

The professors’ disconnect with issues of power and difference demonstrates that critical pedagogy is not exempt from limitations. As critical pedagogy attempts to challenge banking education, the ideology is often idealized. This idealization overlooks the gaps and challenges of critical pedagogy along the lines of power and difference. It is essential for critical pedagogy to distinguish what the ideology actually achieves from what is can achieve. There cannot be the assumption that since critical pedagogy investigates social inequities that the ideology is fully effective. The ideology cannot rest with this idealism. Acknowledging limitations and criticisms are part of understanding how the pedagogy operates accordingly. The lack of attention to these areas contributes to critical pedagogy developing with a general vision.

A General Vision of Critical Pedagogy

By grounding critical pedagogy in dialogue and participation, without further interrogation, the professors’ approaches can be paralleled to the approaches of Friere and Shor. Both critical scholars insufficiently deconstruct issues of differences. Friere and Shor engage issues of difference with a general vision. While Shor’s agenda of values provides some attention to issues of difference, Friere has objectified difference in understanding oppression. The generalizations with both Friere’s and Shor’s work demand further attention to personal experiences; otherwise they remain as sharing and hearing stories. Weiler (2001) agrees that the critical perspective has to steer away from a generalized language. To further underscore this point, she objects to women being defined through one category in order to foster democracy. She notes this assumption “hides the profound differences among women in terms of their race,
class, nationality, and other aspects of their identities” (p. 75). Her argument emphasizes that issues of difference need to be fully addressed in the classroom as critical pedagogy is grounded in everyday lives. Teachers must acknowledge that students do not engage equally and thus expose the differences, which if left unattended, then create silences, tensions and conflicts in the classroom.

Specifically, Weiler (2001) believes that Friere’s work does not pursue the complexity and the intersection of difference. As she states, “Friere’s work is so decontextualized” (p. 75). Indeed, Friere’s draws broad strokes by inspiring diverse groups of individuals to be concerned about equity issues. However, he does not thoroughly deconstruct race and gender differences or explore the intersecting systems of oppressions (Weiler, 2001). There is an aura of generalizations with Friere’s vision for democracy. As an example, Friere (1990) argues to “start from people’s understanding” and “[become] more and more open to feel the feelings of others, to become so sensitive that we can guess what the group or one person is thinking at the moment” (p.158). Friere’s comments are positive and inspiring, yet embedded with vagueness that question how critical discourse can be actualized for the democratic imperative. Without the contextualization of personal experiences, democracy emerges as an idealized goal.

Shor, similar to Friere, does not fully unpack issues of difference. Through his agenda of values, he has referred to issues of difference with a generalized language. Shor operates with the assumption that the democratic values create inclusivity in the classroom. But, in actuality, students will not engage equally based on issues of difference. The agenda provides a feel-good attitude for the critical classroom. Shor (1992) describes his agenda of values as contributing to an “empowering pedagogy” (p. 17). However, this atmosphere reveals only one side of critical pedagogy. Shor does not address how the values challenge or prevent the democratic imperative. He describes dialogue and participation as fundamental values because they can establish students’ voices in the critical classroom. For this reason, dialogue and participation are situated
at the forefront of the conceptual model. But, at the same time, dialogue and participation can exclude students based upon power and difference which must be accounted for accordingly.

It would have been helpful for Shor to shed light upon the possible reasons why students do not dialogue and participate equally in the critical classroom. To this end, it is essential to probe how classroom engagement is impacted by power and difference. The classroom needs to address critical questions such as: How are experiences shared? What risks are involved? Who is silenced? How is authority distributed and power relations formed during classroom dialogue? A general vision of critical pedagogy cannot validate the democratic imperative. This idea conceptualizes the classroom through granting freedom to and creating a happy, positive learning climate for all students. The critical classroom requires a more extensive examination of dialogue and participation that engages the issues of difference, power, authority and sharing.

Overall, the critical point of view needs to be probed for issues of power and difference in order to provide a more intimate understanding of oppression and democracy. The perspectives of scholars, notably minority women, such as Bhattacharya, hooks, Mohanty, Ng, Hoodfar and Dhaliwal, critically examine the intersection of power and difference. By including diverse perspectives, a generalized vision of the critical viewpoint can be diminished. These scholars connect ideas about oppression and democracy with their personal struggles with race, gender, class and sexuality. The scholars’ voices are powerful and inspiring because their perspectives come from an interrogation of power and difference. This comment is not suggesting that white critical scholars cannot contribute to the discourses of oppression and democracy. The comment suggests that a broader picture of oppression and democracy can be better acquired through individuals who have struggled with race, gender, class and sexuality issues. Following that the three professors in the study were white, it is possible that only a particular perspective of critical pedagogy was realized, that being, a generalized viewpoint.
By suggesting that Shor’s agenda be further interrogated by both issues of power and difference in order to better understand the perspectives and experiences of students in the classroom, the conceptual model for the study can be mitigated or softened. To this end, the agenda of values would not embody the notion of being a structuralist model that is built upon universal categories to define the pedagogical climate of the critical classroom. Since the study highlights the critical perspectives of anti-racist and feminist thinkers in order to bring attention to power and difference in the classroom, attempts can be made to connect the conceptual model to equity discourses which deconstruct perspectives and experiences. To this end, the model can be enhanced by being conceptualized through categories that capture the cultural, political and historical realities of individuals’ lives. The conceptual model can thus emerge with negotiated categories which exist as guidelines for the critical classroom rather than being directives for this pedagogical climate.

The Reciprocal Relationship between Education and Democracy

By examining issues of power and difference, critical pedagogy underscores the relationship between education and democracy. Dewey (1958) states, “it is obvious that the relation between democracy and education is a reciprocal one, a mutual one, and vitally so” (cited in Portelli, 2001, p. 291). In other words, education has to espouse the ideals of democracy and the perpetuation of democracy requires the domain of education. Thus, “both education and democracy rely on each other in order for both to flourish” (Portelli, 2001, p. 281). As part of the reciprocal relationship between education and democracy, Dewey (1958) explains that “democracy is itself an educational principle, an educational measure and policy” (cited in Portelli, 2001, p. 291). This idea validates education being conceived beyond acquiring a job, beyond profit-making and beyond self-interests. In this regard, education projects a broader perspective--a public good in propagating equity that can contribute to a more just society.
Dewey (1958) discusses the other aspect of the reciprocal relationship in that “democracy cannot endure, much less develop, without education” (cited in Portelli, p. 291). In this regard, he is alluding to the necessity of the teaching and learning domain in order to foster democracy. There seems to be the assumption that a sense of democracy will develop innately within individuals. In contrast, the democratic imperative needs an on-going deliberation of ideas. The graduate classes contributed to a continual dialogue on the topic of democracy. By providing alternative viewpoints, the professor of the Multicultural Education course showed that there cannot be a universal perspective with the topic of democracy. The understanding that ideas about democracy are not static stems from Dewey’s (1951) argument that “the very idea of democracy…must be continually explored afresh; it has to be constantly discovered, and rediscovered, remade and reorganized (cited in Portelli, p. 290). The university classroom can distinguish itself, in comparison to any other public space, for the possibility of this critical engagement.

Portelli (2001) expresses concern that the relationship between democracy and education has been conceived according to a linear relationship. His argument is valid in that the ideas of democracy cannot evolve through the unilateral effort of “formal education” (p. 290) that would instill a monolithic perspective and stifle critical thinking about democracy. At the same time, democracy cannot be taught by “[removing] the restrictions, etc., in formal schooling – restrictions that are incompatible with democracy” (p. 290) which creates the impression that students do whatever they want in the classroom. Portelli (2001) envisions the relationship between democracy and education as reciprocal in order to adopt Dewey’s (1958) belief of democracy as a way of life in terms of “the participation of all mature human beings in determining the values that guide the relationships among human beings in a community” (cited in Portelli, 2001, p. 290). Democracy, as a way of life, “signifies the possession and continual use of certain attitudes, forming personal character and determining desire and purpose in all the
relations of life” (Dewey, 1951, cited in Portelli, 2001, p. 290). In other words, democracy influences everything individuals do. Thus, in order to understand how democracy can be conceived in education, individuals must be recognized in the totality of their lives which in turn supports the way of life perspective. Hence, having a linear approach of a formal teaching of democracy is insufficient.

In sum, the relationship between education and democracy cannot be taken for granted. It requires serious attention in order to translate its conceptualization into the appropriate teaching approach. To this end, educators need to consider the future direction of the university in order for educating for democracy to occur effectively.

*The Future Direction of the University*

As the university adopts a corporate agenda, evidenced by research funding from large businesses, by packaging education into online and distance learning and by the demand to teach marketable knowledge and skills, economic interests are displacing the university’s role as a public good. Educators, along with students and society as a whole, must be concerned about the future direction of the university. The commodification of the university contributes to higher education simply being a means to acquire a job which serves the individual good. This perception creates challenges for higher education to develop individuals who will be concerned about the public good.

The study supports the idea that the aim of higher education cannot be for economic opportunity or personal gain. Teaching and learning must be framed in a broader context, that being, social responsibility and equity work. Magnusson (2001) summarizes as neoliberal capitalist ideology has restructured higher education along a corporate agenda, “higher education must be restructured once again, but this time through expansion of a populist discourse that is formed within imperatives of social justice and democracy” (p. 112).
At the macro level, it seems impossible to challenge neoliberal capitalism. The influence of neoliberal capitalism has been astonishing. It has infiltrated personal values. It has infiltrated major dimensions of social life. It has infiltrated the world on a global scale. However, the possibility of hope for the democratic imperative points to the teaching and learning domain. To this end, challenging the corporate agenda can begin at the micro level of classrooms. Educators need to facilitate critical discourse in order to expose capitalist practices and the discursive consequences upon human lives. Magnusson (2001) argues for the neo-Gramscian framework since the theory accounts for “the difficulties of Marxism, which was unable to address questions of identity and difference that mattered, including race and gender and ethnicity” (p. 98). She continues:

[t]he neo-Gramscian framework situates the changes in Canadian higher education within a much broader political-economic discursive formation that is strategically being reshaped to emphasize neoliberal globalizing strategies that serve, in an unregulated way, the corporate interest rather than the public interest. (p. 108)

The university must be exposed for the manner in which democratic discourse and equity work are challenged. This idea warrants an understanding of the university beyond the possibilities of inclusion, that is, beyond creating the “possibilities of pluralistic democracy” (Magnusson, 2001, p. 100).

It is only when educators acknowledge and address the grave impact of neoliberal capitalist ideology that the democratic imperative can be effectively woven through higher education. The counter situation is that other values--neoliberal values--will define the purpose of education and the minds of students. As Morrison (2001) writes:

If the university does not take seriously and rigorously its role as a guardian of wider civic freedoms, as interrogator of more and more complex ethical problems, as servant
and preserver of deeper democratic practices, then some other regime will do it for us, inspite of us, and without us. (p. 278)

The university classroom, specifically the pedagogical climate, is a pivotal area for the future direction of the university. This area of study has not been sufficiently addressed in the literature of higher education. Thus, the study ventured into unchartered waters by exploring teaching approaches of professors and students’ experiences in graduate critical classrooms. With diverse student populations, the university is engulfed by many social, cultural and political dimensions that influence its organization and function. This context should strongly instigate an interrogation about how identity and difference is accounted for through classroom practices and educational discourses. In sum, the future direction of the university must be to develop the institution as a public good for collective concern, not only for individual concern.

**Limitations of the Study**

Being exploratory research, it is necessary to recognize the parameters that frame the study. Specifically, it is important to consider the following limitations: course selection, participant profiles, sampling approach, sample size and depth of data.

The data was collected during one academic session at the institution. Thus, there was the limitation of course selection. The availability of courses provided a hindrance. Perhaps there were other graduate courses at the institution that reflected a critical perspective or were more conducive to a critical perspective. Other graduate courses may have expanded the understanding of critical pedagogy and provided a more holistic exploration of the critical classroom.

Issues of difference emerged as a contributing factor to understand students’ experiences in the critical classrooms. In other words, what the students brought to the classroom in terms of identities were part of their experiences. It was hoped that the topic of identity and difference would have been engaged based upon the interview questions. However, the study could have better profiled the students’ identities, along with their issues of difference. A more detailed
understanding of identity could have highlighted the connection between issues of difference and
the classroom dynamics of dialogue, voice, participation and sharing.

The purposive sampling was another limitation of the study. The students volunteered
for the interviews. The study, therefore, cannot apply their experiences and perspectives to the
experiences and perspectives of other students. The study did not represent the experiences of all
students in the three critical classrooms. Thus, there can be no generalizations or no absolute
conclusions drawn about students’ experiences in critical classrooms. Also, because follow-up
investigations did not occur with the students after the courses, understanding the full impact of a
critical classroom is limited. There may be more profound understandings of critical pedagogy if
students are contextualized in their lives, workplaces and communities subsequent to the courses.
In addition, I approached specific professors to participate in the study based upon course
descriptions that I felt reflected a critical focus. There may have been other suitable courses that
were less evident as having a critical focus because of their descriptions. The study, thus,
provides a snapshot regarding the pedagogical climate of a critical classroom.

The sample of three graduate courses was relatively small. In this regard, it is not
possible to extrapolate the results of the study to have a broad perspective about critical
pedagogy. The study offered a picture about how critical pedagogy is actualized to educate for
democracy. A selection of more courses could have provided a more comprehensive
understanding of this engagement. A larger pool of courses would have also offered more
accounts of professors’ and students’ experiences in critical classrooms. In this regard, a better
understanding of the issues that engulf the critical classroom, such as authority, power, sharing,
silences and tensions, could have been identified.

The study was restrictive through the depth of the data. The professors who participated
in this study were all white educators. As issues of difference play a role with critical pedagogy,
professors with different backgrounds may have actualized the teaching perspective differently.
Thus, there may have been variations in the pedagogical climate and the classroom dynamics with non-white educators. Scholars, mainly feminists, discuss that minority teachers and female teachers can experience further challenges in the critical classroom, namely with authority. Thus, accounts by such teachers could provide more depth about critical pedagogy. At the same, more accounts were limited by the availability of courses and the interest of professors to participate in the study.

**Implications for Theory**

Based upon the literature invoked in this study, theoretical implications need to be addressed in order to contribute to a more complete understanding and a better conceptualization of using critical pedagogy to educate for democracy.

The study adopts Shor’s agenda of values as the conceptual model for the critical classroom. The agenda constructs the critical classroom by bringing together the public sphere and the private sphere. This connection restructures the teacher-student relationship in that both the issues of power and difference are the transformative dimensions between them. However, Shor’s agenda contextualizes power and difference with a general tone. He describes the critical classroom with respect to the teaching and learning dynamic being engaging through particular values. While this aspect is necessary, Shor does not explore the classroom when the values cannot be engaged effectively. Thus, he does not explore the tensions, silences and risks which are realities of the critical classroom. One theoretical implication is that other models could have captured the pedagogical climate of the critical classroom more thoroughly.

Critical pedagogy has been critiqued through feminist teaching principles. Both pedagogical perspectives hold the same goals: to transform the classroom, to challenge oppressions and to seek equity for marginalized individuals. Yet, feminists scholars have questioned how critical pedagogy accounts for personal experiences and classroom practices. As feminist pedagogy overtly questions relations of domination and issues of differences, critical
pedagogy can be theoretically expanded by borrowing from the former. The feminist teaching perspective addresses the complexity of personal experiences. Critical pedagogy requires this attention in order to prevent the pursuit of the democratic imperative from a general viewpoint.

In exploring the principles of feminist pedagogy, as Manicom (1992) endeavors, its usefulness to a larger audience can be identified subsequently. She notes:

we do need to begin in people’s experiences, we do need to discuss these experiences in order to collaborate in building an analysis of (and action against) shared forms of oppression, and we do need to think about authority and power in classroom settings. (p. 382)

Specifically, feminist pedagogy provides a foundation for an equity audit which in turn implicates the teacher’s contemplation about classroom practices. Manicom (1992) argues that “continuous reflection on and attention to issues of classroom practice are required” (p. 382). Furthermore, Lather (1991) adds that feminism’s recognition of the complexities of personal experiences establishes “the material ground for the development of practices of self-interrogation and critique” (cited in Manicom, 1992, p. 383). In order for critical teachers to address personal experiences, they must also address issues of authority, sharing, collaboration and voice to fully expose and deconstruct those experiences. The feminist critique must not create an antagonism between the two teaching perspectives, but rather strengthen their mutual goal to bring about transformation in the classroom and in the world.

Critical pedagogy exhibits gaps because the perspective often leaps from acknowledging oppressive circumstances to making broad claims for the democratic imperative. The lofty and idealistic vision for social change that has been projected through critical pedagogy illustrates this idea. The feminist teaching perspective has effectively attended to the operations of power and privilege. Thus, feminist pedagogy can address the gaps in critical pedagogy because the former explicitly examines how power and privilege cause silences, tensions and risks in the
classroom. The meaning of the critical classroom cannot become blurred through inclusion and pluralism. In contrast, explicit dialogue and discourse must emerge in order to challenge the operations of power and privilege.

The critical teacher is not to simply create sharing moments in the classroom. The critical teacher is not to simply moderate classroom discussions. The critical teacher has a greater responsibility—to interrogate personal experience which provides the foundation for interrupting relations of domination.

According to feminist scholars, “the image of the feminist teacher” has changed “from that teacher as midwife…to teacher as translator…to teacher as interruptor” (Manicom, 1992, p. 381). In adapting this transformation, critical pedagogy can be theoretically expanded by feminist pedagogy. By being more than a facilitator, the teacher can take a more directive role with deconstructing power and difference. Thus, there can be a more profound understanding of “privilege and domination” which can “forge alliances across difference” and “challenge forms of domination outside and the classroom” (Manicom, 1992, p. 381).
The contribution of feminist pedagogy highlights the idea that theoretically critical pedagogy can be also expanded by other perspectives. Manicom (1992) argues that “clearly, feminism must be anti-racist and anti-classist in its pedagogy, in its analysis, in its political project” (p. 382). Indeed, critical pedagogy can be developed through other perspectives— even beyond race, gender and class. By more carefully examining relations of domination and issues of difference, critical pedagogy needs to engage feminist, anti-racist, anti-classist perspectives, along with anti-colonialist, indigenous and queer perspectives. In order for the critical classroom to not remain as a space to merely hear personal stories, meaning must be assigned to personal stories through critical perspectives. The necessity to include multiple perspectives is heightened as many dominant critical scholars are white males. Despite their vision for humanity and their demand for social justice, the views of white males will be insufficient in exploring the struggles of minorities, women and the oppressed. This point conjures the image of critical pedagogy as a colorful quilt being assembled by multiple perspectives that reflect the complexity and diversity of human experience.

In order to move beyond the generalization of critical pedagogy, a more solid foundation has to emerge through contextualizing experiences and addressing classroom practices. As Manicom (1992) summarizes:

What is the feminist project? Feminism is about transformative politics, working to ending oppressive relations of class, of gender, of race, of heterosexism. In discussing this essay with me, a feminist community activist said…that the central question surely had to be: ‘Why are we teaching?’ And the answer surely had to be: ‘To change the world. That’s what’s at the centre of feminist pedagogy. (p. 383)

Ultimately, a shift in thinking must emerge for the feminist perspective that holds the larger purpose of social transformation and thus not only for women’s issues.
At the theoretical level, the feminist critique unveils some of the gaps of critical pedagogy. Even though critical pedagogy challenges traditional teaching, it is not without limitations and challenges. It became apparent through this study that often the vision to seek social change can be translated into an abstract goal. There is a need for a more holistic understanding of critical pedagogy. The principles of feminist pedagogy can be invoked in order to examine critical pedagogy due to their similar visions. A more comprehensive understanding of critical pedagogy that includes its limitations and challenges can bring greater meaning to the tradition and move beyond its idealism.

Implications for Practice

There is also a call for the practical implications of this study. In order words, based upon the study’s findings and analysis, educators, administrators, researchers and students need to consider and envision ways in which teaching and learning can to be transformed in order to foster critical pedagogy in educating for democracy.

One of the greatest challenges that universities face today is transformation into centers for job training. The study illuminated that the university has been encroached upon by market values that shift its attention from public interests to emphasize private interests. It is unsurprising that market values have impacted the university. It is expected that students will focus upon preparations for their futures and the university will require financial support based upon government cutbacks and growing competition. But, the greater concern rests with the university’s role to emphasize social responsibility and equity work.

The students of the Democratic Education class felt a sense of social responsibility for two reasons. The students engaged with a line of critical questioning that made them question what they have come to accept as “truth”. Also, personal experiences were deconstructed in relation to academic knowledge. Personal experiences, in this setting, did not remain as sharing stories. Therefore, a practical implication of the study is to bring the learning space and personal
lives together. In essence, this idea connects the public sphere with the private sphere. By bringing the two spheres together, a sense of social responsibility can be formed by students framing personal experiences in the contexts of power and privilege as well as subordination and exclusion. To this end, students can begin to ask critical questions such as: Who is included? Who has voice? Who is silenced? This critical knowledge can help students to develop a sense of social responsibility.

In the Community Education class, students expressed that when critical questions are not connected to personal experiences, the outcome is a retelling of stories. Critical questioning allows students to understand both issues of power and difference in their lives. Ultimately, critical questioning can lead to transformation in personal lives, workplaces and communities. The university classroom needs to be imagined in ways that address social responsibility and equity work. As a way to support this critical vision, a practical implication is for departments and faculties to encourage equity forums, to develop centers for transformative projects and to build community partnerships. Also, academic resources and support are needed in order to develop and expand critical teaching. If departments and faculties can pursue some of these areas, there is a greater possibility for institutions, as a whole, to serve the public good rather than only the individual good.

The study rejects the idea of a general vision of democracy which overlooks issues of difference. In contrast, the democratic imperative must account for the differences that students bring to the classroom. While education has to develop discourses in order to engage issues of race, gender, class and sexuality, education has to also attend to its practices that exclude students based upon these premises. Specifically, educators need to recognize that dialogue is a raced, gendered and classed practice. The opportunity to share in the classroom does not deconstruct social inequities that engender dialogue. Therefore, as a practical implication,
educators need to address the issues that prevent students from sharing equally which in turn challenges classroom equity.

Moreover, educators need to not only find ways to expose the perspectives of silenced individuals, but also to understand the issues related to their silences. Even among the students who shared their perspectives through the interviews, issues of difference were rarely acknowledged, thus situating them as a personal concern. Thus, the entire topic of difference must be extended beyond inclusionary practices; differences must be interrogated along the lines of silences, tensions and risks. Paulo Friere and Ira Shor offer a starting point to understand the climate of critical pedagogy. But, further exploration is needed in order to illuminate directive questions about identity and difference in the critical classroom.

Critical pedagogy is rooted in concern for more than the individual self. As a practical implication of the study, developing relationships are fundamental. As market values impact the university, developing relationships can become threatened. Teachers and students are now building connections through the medium of technology rather than through face-to-face interactions. But, direct interactions ground education as a humanizing act. Shor’s agenda of values develops a pedagogical climate that contributes to the formation of relationships. By attending to interactions, students can be understood from a social perspective, rather than from an economic perspective as consumers in the educational process. The commitment by educators to develop academic knowledge has to be balanced with a commitment to develop positive, meaningful relationships in the classroom.

Another practical implication engages the issue of authority. The impetus for transformation in a critical classroom begins with teacher authority in the classroom. The critical educator does not give up authority; the critical educator is neither an authoritarian. The critical teacher uses authority to attend to voice, dialogue and participation. Therefore, authority is used in a positive light and is relational to students’ identities and experiences. To this end, the
pedagogical climate is directly impacted by the role of teacher. The professors of the graduate
courses perceived that their classrooms reflected a critical tone because they, along with their
students, mutually collaborated to develop the classroom climate. Thus, as a practical
implication, the teacher’s role is a crucial point in the critical classroom.

*Future Research*

Based upon the study, a key theoretical dimension of critical pedagogy requires future
research. There is a misperception with the meaning of empowerment. In the Community
Education course and Multicultural Education course, the professors and the students perceived
that empowerment occurs through the opportunity to dialogue and participate. But,
empowerment cannot be conceptualized with this general tone. As discussed, issues of difference
prevent sharing equally in the classroom. Moreover, following Michel Foucault, power must be
interpreted according to how the dimension is used because it cannot be given to an individual
(Gore, 1992). Individuals can learn to use power discursively to exclude others or to use power
positively to foster democracy. Therefore, by the professors creating dialogic and participatory
moments, the students did not have power nor were they given power. Thus, further research is
warranted that can account for the issues and dynamics related to empowerment.

Recalling Gore (1992), she probes the reason for empowerment. She asks the question,
“Empowerment for what?” (p. 59). The conceptualization of empowerment “for human
betterment” and “making one’s self present as part of a moral and political project that links
production of meaning to the possibility for human agency, democratic community, and
transformative social action” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 307) creates vagueness for the purpose of
critical pedagogy. Gore (1992) summarizes “but what does all this mean at the level of the
school or classroom? And how are teachers to turn this ‘macro’ vision into the ‘micro’ of their
daily practices in classrooms?” (p. 59). Indeed, Gore’s comments encourage further inquiry that
can address: What does human agency mean? What constitutes a democratic community? What
does transformative social action facilitate? Both Gore’s and Ellsworth’s comments show that a profound exploration is needed in order for empowerment to move beyond its abstractions and to be in sync with the realism of individuals’ lives.

The study examined how graduate students were educated for democracy by actualizing critical pedagogy. Thus, I was interested in understanding the impact of critical pedagogy upon students. But, to explore the complete impact, a research study needs to be more holistic by tracing how individuals’ lives are influenced after being in a critical classroom. In other words, future research needs to contextualize students in their personal lives, their workplaces and their communities. Similarly, future research should follow-up with teachers who employ critical pedagogy in order to understand how their teaching practices evolve accordingly. Through follow-up investigations, there could be a more profound and more complete understanding of critical pedagogy. Also, in understanding critical pedagogy, an inspirational and feel-good theme often emerges. However, the ideology is not without gaps and challenges. Tensions, silences, resistances and discomforts are embedded within critical pedagogy. Thus, in order to understand the impact of critical pedagogy, future research must examine the limitations of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy focuses upon the intersection of academic learning with personal experiences. The critical perspective ignites questions about why power and privilege structure society as it does and how society can exist differently which in turn engages an equity framework. A central point for such critical questions is to examine the impacts of capitalism upon education and society as a whole. Educators and students, along with researchers, need to acknowledge and dissect how operations of capitalism shift away from serving public interests to serving private interests. Critical pedagogy cannot remain as a call for democracy without this attention.
McLaren describes how…critical pedagogy has been a widely discussed project of educational reform that challenges students to become politically literate so that they might better understand and transform how power and privilege works on a daily basis in contemporary social contexts. As a project of social transformation, critical pedagogy is touted as an important protagonist in the struggle for social and economic justice, yet it has rarely ever challenged the fundamental basis of capitalist social relations. Among the many and varied proponents of critical pedagogy…Marxist analysis has been virtually absent….unless class analysis and class struggle play a central role in critical pedagogy, it is fated to go the way of most liberal reform movements of the past, melding into calls for fairer resource distribution and allocation, and support for racial diversity, without challenging the social universe of capital in which such calls are made. (Ross & Gibson, 2007, p. 18)

By interrogating the practices and relations of capitalism, this attention unveils the workings of power and privilege that prevent the democratic imperative. To this end, critical pedagogy has to expose capitalism which has been disguised as granting an all-encompassing freedom, but has caused social and economic injustices upon human lives, institutions, communities and the environment. Ross and Gibson (2007) view education as the vehicle to transport the idea that capitalism is counter-productive to social responsibility. They comment that “a key issue…is how forms of critical consciousness adequate to the task of terminating the destructive social relations of capitalist society can be engendered throughout society via schools” (p. 12).

In order to educate for democracy, perspectives beyond the dominant voices of society need to be exposed accordingly. In other words, the perspectives of minority individuals, along the lines of race, gender, class, sexuality and ability, must be included in mainstream society--through education, workplaces, communities and the media. To this end, a radical democratic
perspective must be called upon in order to recognize difference. Critical pedagogy needs to be effectively actualized in order to account purposefully for difference. Wrigley (2008) states that McLaren “critiques versions of critical pedagogy which dilute its radical potential; it has become domesticated into celebrating ethnic holidays and respecting difference” (p. 241).

The liberal democratic perspective is often invoked in order to include all individuals and their perspectives. But, individuals cannot be treated the same because of both issues of power and difference that prevent equity with participation and voice. McLaren (2007):

argues that forms of critical pedagogy have collapsed into left liberal attempts by progressive educators to remediate the educational enterprise. This has resulted in a long list of reform initiatives that include… bridging the gap between student culture and the culture of the school; engaging in cross-cultural understandings; integrating multicultural content and teaching across the curriculum … and improving academic achievement in culturally diverse schools. (cited in Wrigley, 2008, p. 241-242)

However, these attempts focus upon greater representation in the classroom without challenging dominate and subordinate relations. Thus, the radical democratic perspective is demanded in order to expose inequities. An understanding of difference cannot only be framed through the celebration of cultures, the glorification of history, the inclusion in curricula or a mandate for pluralism. A crucial part for the radical discourse is to disclose the experiences and perspectives of silenced individuals. Social institutions, such as education, and society at large must find ways to acknowledge and engage the issues, opinions and values of minority individuals; otherwise society will continue to only celebrate differences and thus reinforce the divisions among individuals.

Critical pedagogy emphasizes concern for the public good. To this end, the teaching perspective weaves critical consciousness through education in that students develop social responsibility. At the core of critical pedagogy, teachers and students must become public
intellectuals who are politically engaged to address the human condition and challenge social inequities. The struggle for democracy requires education, as a public space, to develop a community of teachers and students who strive for the democratic imperative. Critical pedagogy can achieve what John Dewey’s professed for education, that being, taking students on a personal journey that develops their character, their values and their critical thinking.

While critical pedagogy aims to infuse humanistic values, such as tolerance and respect, into education, the ideology has to delve deeper by exposing the perspectives of excluded individuals to the knowledge base of mainstream society. In other words, critical pedagogy needs to be anchored to more than appeasing each other. A more accurate understanding of the teaching perspective stems from attention to both issues of power and difference and how they impact education. At times, critical pedagogy may seem lofty, uncomfortable and challenging. Nevertheless, educators cannot be reluctant or be fearful to pursue its course. The alternative is the educational experience being translated into a commodity as opposed to addressing equity issues. While critical pedagogy ultimately aims to transform the broader social world, its success can be attributed to equity in the classroom as a starting point to embody the possibility of hope for a more just society.
Dear ,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education at OISE/UT. I am currently planning a research project that will involve professors and graduate students of your institution. I require your written consent in order to begin the project.

The purpose of the study is to examine how critical pedagogy is actualized in order to educate students for democracy in the graduate classroom. Professors’ teaching approaches and students’ experiences will be explored accordingly. Graduate courses, reflecting a critical pedagogical perspective, will be selected from the institutions’ departments. The study involves the syllabi of the graduate courses as documents to be acquired from professors. In addition, observations of the graduate courses will occur. Interviews with professors and students of the observed classes will be conducted subsequently. Participants will be well-informed about the nature of the study and their participation in advance. They will be assured that they may withdraw at any time during the study. Subjects may request that any information, whether in written form or audi-taped, be eliminated from the project. Participants will at no time be judged, evaluated, or be at risk of harm.

The information gathered from the documents, observations and interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location. All information will be reported in such a way that the institution, individuals, departments and courses cannot be identified. All data collected will be only used for the purposes of a PhD thesis. All raw data (ex. fieldnotes, transcripts, coded data, audiotapes and disks) will be destroyed immediately after the completion of the study.

If you agree, please sign the letter below and return it to me in the provided envelope. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 647-290-3840 or at rgoomansingh@oise.utoronto.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Berta Vigil Laden at 416-923-6641 (ext. 2503). Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Romona Goomansingh

_____________________
Administrator’s signature

_____________________
Date
Informed Consent Letter (for documents; to be written on OISE/UT letterhead)

(date)

To Professor __________________,

I wish to acquire your syllabus for course__________________________ as apart of a research project. The purpose of the study is to examine how critical pedagogy is actualized in order to educate students for democracy in the graduate classroom. Based upon course information, your course has been identified as demonstrating characteristics of critical pedagogy. For this study, it is desired to use your course syllabus to examine how its components reflect educating for democracy. At this time, your participation involves the provision of a written copy of your course syllabus to me as the principal investigator of the study.

This study will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Berta Vigil Laden, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT).

Following content analysis of your syllabus, observations of classes that reflect critical pedagogy to educate for democracy will be conducted. Also, interviews with professors and students will be held to discuss their experiences and perceptions. The information gathered from the documents, observations and interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location. All information will be reported in such a way that the institution, individuals, departments and courses cannot be identified. All data collected will be only used for the purposes of a PhD thesis. All raw data (ex. fieldnotes, transcripts, coded data, audiotapes and disks) will be destroyed immediately after the completion of the study.

Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time. You may request that any information be eliminated from the project. At no time will value judgments or evaluations be made on your effectiveness as a professor. You are entitled to ask any questions about this study and about your involvement with the study. Finally, you may request a summary of the findings of the study.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Romona Goomansingh  Dr. Berta Vigil Laden
PhD Candidate  Professor
Theory & Policy Studies in Education  Theory & Policy Studies in Education
OISE/UT  OISE/UT
Telephone: 647-290-3840  Telephone: 416-923-6641 (ext. 2503)
Email:rgoomansingh@oise.utoronto.ca  Email: bvladen@oise.utoronto.ca
By signing below you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above. Please keep the copy of this letter for your own record.

Name: _____________________________  Department: ________________________
Signature: _________________________  Date: _____________________________

Please initial if you wish to have a summary of the findings of the study upon completion: ______
Informed Consent Letter (for observations; to be written on OISE/UT letterhead)

(date)

To the participants in this study,

I wish to invite you to participate in a research project that examines how critical pedagogy is actualized in order to educate students for democracy in the graduate classroom. Professors’ teaching approaches and students’ experiences will be explored. Three graduate courses at this institution will be a part of the study.

This study will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Berta Vigil Laden, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT).

The entire duration of your class will be observed between a minimum of three to six times during the term. It is anticipated that this frequency of visits will allow me to understand how critical pedagogy is used to educate for democracy. During the observations, I will be sitting in a corner of the classroom and taking fieldnotes to describe responses, behaviours and activities. The fieldnotes will be transcribed immediately after the observations and coded later for data analysis. As the observations proceed, I will not be participating in any class activities or interacting with any class member.

The information obtained through the observations will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location. Only my faculty supervisor and I will have access to the data. All information reported will not identify any participants, departments, courses and the institution of the study. All raw data will be destroyed immediately after completion of the study. The data is being collected only for the purposes of a PhD thesis.

Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time and in that case, observations of your class will cease subsequently. You may request that any information be eliminated from the project. There will be no value judgments or evaluations made on the effectiveness of professors. There will be no value judgments or evaluations placed on the students’ responses. You are entitled to ask any questions about this study and about your involvement with the study. Finally, you may request a summary of the findings of the study.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Romona Goomansingh  
PhD Candidate  
Theory & Policy Studies in Education  
OISE/UT  
Telephone: 647-290-3840  
Email:rgoomansingh@oise.utoronto.ca

Dr. Berta Vigil Laden  
Professor  
Theory & Policy Studies in Education  
OISE/UT  
Telephone: 416-923-6641 (ext. 2503)  
Email: bvladen@oise.utoronto.ca
By signing below you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above. Please keep the copy of this letter for your own record.

Name: ___________________________    Department: _______________________
Signature: _________________________    Date: _____________________________

Please initial if you wish to have a summary of the findings of the study upon its completion:
____
Informed Consent Letter (for interviews; to be written on OISE/UT letterhead)

(date)

To the participants in this study,

I wish to invite you to participate in an interview for this research project. The purpose of the interview is to ask you about your opinions, perceptions and feelings related to a class that actualizes critical pedagogy in order to educate students for democracy. Eighteen interviews will be conducted; three professor interviews and fifteen student interviews.

This study is being conducted under the supervision of Professor Berta Vigil Laden, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

The interview will be approximately 40 minutes to 60 minutes in duration. The format of the interview will be a structured format. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed immediately after its occurrence. I will be taking notes during the interview to assist my understanding of your comments. Interviews will be held in a private room at your institution.

The information obtained through the interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location. Only my faculty supervisor and I will have access viewing the data. All information reported will not identify any participants, departments, courses and the institution of the study. All raw will be destroyed immediately after completion of the study. The data is being collected only for the purposes of a PhD thesis.

Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from the interview at any time. You may request that any information be eliminated from the project. At no time will value judgments or evaluations will be placed on your responses. You are entitled to ask any questions about this study and about your involvement with the study. Finally, you may request a summary of the findings of the study.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Romona Goomansingh
PhD Candidate
Theory & Policy Studies in Education
OISE/UT
Telephone: 647-290-3840
Email:rgoomansingh@oise.utoronto.ca

Dr. Berta Vigil Laden
Professor
Theory & Policy Studies in Education
OISE/UT
Telephone: 416-923-6641 (ext. 2503)
Email: bvladen@oise.utoronto.ca
By signing below you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above. Please keep the copy of this letter for your own record.

Name: ___________________________  Department: ___________________________
Signature: ______________________  Date: _______________________________

Please initial if you agree to have your interview audio-taped: _____
Please initial if you wish to have a summary of the findings of the study upon its completion: _____
Professor Interview Questions

1. Describe your teaching philosophy.

2. How do you define critical pedagogy?

3. In identifying your course as employing critical pedagogy to educate for democracy, what are some reasons for teaching with this purpose?

4. What teaching approaches did you utilize in this course that addresses educating for democracy through critical pedagogy?

5. How is your teaching different from traditional pedagogical approaches?

6. What significance do you attribute to student dialogue and student participation in your class?

7. How does putting forth a critical pedagogical perspective personally impact you as a teacher?

8. The class was situated largely around opportunities for students to share their personal experiences. What is the benefit of that approach for them?

9. A central part of your course was group work (Democratic Education), film (Community Education) or debate (Multicultural Education). What role did this activity play in terms of contributing to critical teaching and learning?

10. What are your perceptions about the silent voices in the class despite that student participation was an integral aspect of the courses?

11. Do you believe that courses that put forth a critical perspective are sustaining the interests of those who are already concerned about in democratic goals rather than engaging the larger student body?

12. How can there be greater attempts to integrate critical perspectives for a vision of democracy into university teaching?

13. What are your overall reflections about the courses?

14. Do you have any questions?
Student Interview Questions

1. What is your understanding of the term critical pedagogy?

2. What meaning do you attribute to “educating for democracy”?

3. Do you believe there was a relationship between critical pedagogy and educating for democracy in your course and if so, in what manner?

4. What role did student participation and dialogue play in the class?

5. Is this graduate course different from other graduate courses that you have taken and how?

6. Why did you take this course?

7. I repeatedly observed a sharing of personal experiences in the class. What impact does this sharing have upon learning?

8. While there were many opportunities to share in the class, there were many individuals who did not openly participate. What are your perceptions of those silent voices?

9. An integral part of the course was group work (Democratic Education), film (Community Education) and debates (Multicultural Education). What role did that activity play in terms of contributing to critical teaching and learning?

10. The course provided a considerable amount of choice and openness. How did that make you feel?

11. As you have completed the course, how has it impacted you?

12. What do you wish to see different or changed in higher education after being exposed to a critical pedagogical perspective?

13. What are your overall reflections about the course?

14. Do you have any questions?
References


the corporate university: Culture and pedagogy in the new millennium (pp. 112). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.


transformation power of critical power (pp. v-vi). Cambridge, MA: Harrvard Educational Review.


Newman, J. H. (1907). The idea of a university: Defined and illustrated; I. In nine discourses delivered to the Catholics of Dublin. II. In occasional lectures and essays addressed to the members of the Catholic University. London: Longmans, Green.


