EXPLORING THE BACKGROUNDS, VISIONS, AND PRACTICES OF SIX LITERACY TEACHER EDUCATORS WITH A CRITICAL STANCE

by

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Abstract

This study investigated the backgrounds, visions, practices, and pedagogies of six literacy teacher educators with a critical stance. In this qualitative research study, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant over a three-year period. Several significant findings emerged from this research study. First, the early life experiences of the literacy teacher educators significantly affected them, and as a result, directly influenced their stance as literacy teacher educators. Their early schooling experiences, which revealed to them how intertwined socio-political issues were in the roles of teaching and learning, influenced their practice as literacy teacher educators. Second, the literacy teacher educators with a critical stance held broad and expansive definitions of literacy. These definitions transcended traditional notions of literacy such as literacy as a set of autonomous skills (e.g., reading, writing) to include expansive notions of literacy including out of school literacy practices such as home literacies and community literacies. The literacy teacher educators modeled valuing expansive conceptions of literacy by including a wide range of texts in their courses, including: videos, blogs, spoken word, spaces (e.g., transit), and children’s and young adolescent literature. Third, exploring issues of equity in a deliberate manner was a
strategy to help student teachers appreciate the complexity of education and arrive at the understanding that literacy and schooling are not neutral practices. Implications for literacy teacher education courses include incorporating a range of texts and genres, which model expansive understandings of literacy, while modeling for student teachers how to effectively integrate them into literacy teaching. Implications for pre-service teacher education programs include building partnerships in the community including both traditional (e.g., schools) and non-traditional (e.g., community centres) learning spaces. Implications for future research include exploring how literacy teacher educators use the affordance of digital technologies to enact a critical stance in their teacher education courses.
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Chapter 1:  
INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

Those of us who have the privilege and responsibility of teaching literacy teachers are charged with designing learning experiences that support their development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to work confidently with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This charge has never been more pressing (Rogers, 2013, p. 7).

My personal introduction to critical literacy was in the classroom as a public school teacher; I just did not know it at the time. It was not that I taught critical literacy; rather, my students and I engaged with each other and texts in a way that felt necessary. Coming to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), I learned about the theory of critical literacy and acquired a vocabulary to describe the complex practices of teachers. Critical literacy is a term in that conceptual vocabulary that resonates with me, as it has the potential to reimagine literacy education. In the middle-school classroom, using what I can now describe as critical literacy pedagogy, I was able to honour and value the knowledge my students brought to the classroom. As I will describe later in the chapter, these moments were transformational to both my own development as an educator and my students’ as literacy learners.

Described as, “the linchpins in educational reforms of all kinds,” (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 5) literacy teacher educators (LTEs) play a key role in the re-imagination of literacy education; they have the ability to enact pedagogies of critical literacy by addressing issues of power, namely language, race, class, and equity. Rogers (2013) asserts, as noted in the opening quote, that these issues are addressed in the learning experiences which LTEs have the “privilege and responsibility” to design. Although critical literacy has been described as
“big and messy” (Christensen, 2000, p. 53), LTEs must work with student teachers to seek clarity around the theory and practices of critical literacy.

**Why Teach With a Critical Literacy Perspective?**

Educators and researchers alike have called for the cultural and linguistic practices of students to inform literacy instruction in schools (Heath, 1983; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). When students are able to link literacy practices to their existing language practices, they are able to better relate to texts and make meaningful connections. Critical literacy pedagogy calls for students’ cultural and linguistic practices to be used when constructing curriculum (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002; Vasquez, 2013). Beyond making connections to texts, using students’ cultural and linguistic practices provides possibilities to use literacies from their communities to question inequalities, imagine solutions, and position themselves and others in new ways, while transforming their daily realities (Gutierrez, 2008; Hall & Piazza, 2008). These powerful practices allow for literacy education to be both re-constructed and co-constructed by teacher and student.

Teachers play an essential role in supporting critical approaches in the classroom; however, research has shown that teachers often struggle to cultivate students’ critical practices when they themselves have not been immersed in these practices (Albers et al., 2008; Hall & Piazza, 2008; White, 2009). For this reason, teachers should be aware of issues related to power while positioning themselves and others within larger social systems, and before they commence critical literacy work with their students (Edelsky, 1999 in Albers et al., 2008). While this refers to the work done in K-12 classrooms or pre-service classrooms, it aligns with the work of LTEs.
LTEs have the opportunity to invite student teachers to position themselves within larger social systems and social issues. This is important because text is never neutral. Researchers, such as Vasquez (2013), suggest LTEs adopt a critical stance in their teacher education classrooms. Rogers (2013) echoes this sentiment: “[LTEs] must work to examine the material and discursive structure of social practices …[to] be more responsive and responsible to our students, their families and our communities” (p. 16). Allowing space for student teachers to engage in critical practices will encourage them to do the same in their future classrooms (Rogers, 2013).

**Personal Background**

There were turning points in my personal and professional journey that led me to pursuing my doctoral degree in critical literacy and teacher education. Growing up, I had not the slightest idea I would pursue a career as an educator, but looking back I am clearly able to connect the dots of my journey and make sense of the decisions I have made. In the section below, I describe my personal background and offer vignettes from my classroom teaching as a way to provide insight into my belief and commitment to the significance of a critical literacy perspective in teacher education programs.

**My Influential Summers**

From the ages of eight through sixteen I spent my summer holidays in the Bronx, New York with my cousin and her friends. Although they were older than me, we connected immediately. During these two-month periods I caught glimpses into, what felt like, an alternate universe. Although I had experienced racial diversity growing up in suburban Toronto, the diversity I experienced in the Bronx was more complex. Beyond racial diversity,
my friends in The Bronx came from a range of socio-economic backgrounds; used a variety of home languages; and had varied family structures (e.g., extended families; single-parent households; foster homes). Although most were only a year or two my senior, their lived experiences made it feel as though they were decades older than I was. All had responsibilities (in addition to being students) that I could not fathom taking on at that age. Several were the primary caregivers for their siblings, while others had to work eight-hour shifts immediately after school. Over the years I witnessed my friends face hardships (e.g., teenage pregnancies, peer pressure, alcohol abuse, financial stress), which left a lasting impression on me. Serendipitously, years later, I found myself back in New York City as an educator. I was grateful to be back in the city that opened my eyes to the adversity many youth endured.

**My Teaching Background**

I entered the teaching profession after a few years in the corporate sector. I did not attend a traditional teacher preparation program; rather, I joined an increasingly popular alternative certification program, New York City Teaching Fellows (NYCTF). This program was targeted at second career individuals who were interested in becoming teachers in “high needs communities” across New York City’s five boroughs. After seven weeks of teacher education and one two-week long practice teaching placement (taking place over one summer) I secured a full-time position in a middle school teaching English Language Arts (ELA) and Social Studies. That September I stood in front of a class of 32 seventh graders feeling, justifiably, overwhelmed.
My school context.

Like many schools in the South Bronx, the school where I taught was deemed a Title One status. This referred to a school in a low socio-economic neighborhood, in which students qualified for free and/or reduced lunches. My school had approximately 430 students enrolled in grades five through eight. Bilingual instruction was offered for all grades.

The student demographics were as follows (taken from New York City Department of Education website):

- 55% male and 45% female
- Hispanic: 68%
- Black: 29%
- Unknown: 3%
- Eligible for free lunch: 81%
- Eligible for reduced lunch: 4%

Students at my school, like those at many schools in similar neighborhoods, were from homes where their primary language was not English. For instance, students with familial ties to Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic had Spanish as their dominant language, while students from West Africa (Ghana, Guinea, Côte D’Ivoire, Nigeria, and Senegal) and Haiti spoke French predominantly at home. Additionally, many students were identified coming from low socio-economic households, as represented by their free or reduced lunch eligibility.
My classroom context.

I was a grade seven and eight ELA and Social Studies teacher at my school. Although each learner was unique and brought something distinctive into the classroom, there were a few consistencies across the student population I served. The student demographics mentioned above were reflected fairly consistently in my classroom. In addition, approximately 25% of my learners, on any given year, had an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). The average reading grade levels in my classes ranged from 4.5 to 5.0 over the years that I taught. This meant most students were at least two grade levels behind in reading according to the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), which was used as a diagnostic for reading comprehension. Given the level of reading skills school-wide, all literacy teachers were strongly encouraged to help their students reach the reading goal of “1.5 years growth in 1 year.” This lofty goal set by our administration was daunting for many reasons. First, most of us were novice literacy teachers from alternative certification programs (NYCTF or Teach for America). This meant we all went through a seven-week teacher education program before entering into the classroom full-time. At M.S. 325, the most experienced literacy teacher had been teaching for five years. I, like many of my colleagues, simply did not have the experience or the knowledge to help my students move through reading levels so quickly.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, my students were disengaged in the classroom; lateness and absenteeism were commonplace. Many had been held back a grade, so they were repeating the seventh grade while their friends were in grade eight or had moved on to high school. Others had responsibilities outside of school (e.g., taking care of younger siblings; caring for a parent in the hospital; working part-time jobs). My first year in the classroom I was often reminded of my childhood friends from the Bronx. I remembered
how they would speak about school and their teachers; they did not connect or feel
stimulated by either. So as a brand-new teacher, my first goal was not to raise their reading
scores by 1.5 grade levels; rather, I made it my goal to have my students trust me. I felt that
my students would not learn unless they knew they were safe in my class. In order to build
this sort of relationship I knew I had to better understand my students’ lives outside of the
classroom.

This decision to focus on the students as individuals led to several key experiences,
which consequently led to an awakened critical consciousness. Two significant incidents are
described as follows.

**Incident #1: Studying the Taino People**

When asked by my principal to teach Social Studies (embedded within the ELA curriculum),
I was slightly apprehensive. Growing up in Canada, I was not familiar with the seventh grade
curriculum, which focused primarily on U.S. history. To prepare, I spent hours familiarizing
myself with the curriculum and content. The seventh grade Social Studies teachers had
access to a total of two textbooks from which the curriculum was designed. Lessons
included: the day in the life of a pioneer; the timeline of Christopher Columbus’ journey; and
the struggle of the Puritans. Hardly mentioned were the lives of the people indigenous to the
land of the ‘Americas.’

Sensing boredom and indifference from my students, I realized the curriculum had
not been aligned with my students’ backgrounds, interests, or experiences. For instance, in
the textbooks the history of colonization was told from the perspective of the Europeans; the
adversity they faced, the successes they celebrated. As a first year teacher, I was nervous to
omit sections or deviate from the curriculum, but I also did not feel comfortable following the laid-out curriculum for the next ten months. So, I decided to cover the traditional curriculum but also create supplementary assignments I thought would resonate with my students. For example, when studying European exploration and early colonization of the Americas, students were given the assignment of creating a timeline of events. I created a supplemental assignment to include another perspective of European exploration; students studied the Taino people who were indigenous to Hispaniola, the first European colony founded by Christopher Columbus.

Hispaniola is the current-day islands of Haiti and Dominican Republic; countries from where over half of my student population had direct familial ties. Students engaged in research to uncover the voices of the Taino people from the island of Hispaniola. After much research on-line and in public libraries, students were invited to create a counter narrative to the early colonization of the Americas by writing multiple journal entries from a Taino member’s point of view. I found students were genuinely curious to learn more about the Taino people, with many mentioning that they had never heard of this group before. Several students went above and beyond the scope of the assignment: they conducted further research at home on the internet; they shared new knowledge with their parents and siblings; and they invited their parents to the final gallery walk of published journal entries. Although all students did not have lineage to former Hispaniola, they communicated an appreciation for engaging in something “different” and learning material beyond the life of Christopher Columbus, which many mentioned they had learned “a million times!”

When I told students we would be engaging with a supplemental curriculum, it opened up a rich discussion and students began to question and discuss textbooks. I posed a
few questions to start discussions, such as “Who gets to decide what is included in textbooks?” “Why do you think some perspectives are included while others are excluded? “What may be some reasons for this?” Through discussion and problem posing, students named factors they thought contributed to the organization and content of traditional textbooks. They mentioned “money”, “power”, and “race” as three main factors contributing to what was included (and excluded) from traditional textbooks. Observing my students engage in this sort of politically charged conversation was a turning point for me. I witnessed students, who were otherwise disengaged, participate in group discussions. I watched students vigorously wave their hands in the air, eagerly waiting their turn to share their opinion. The classroom and the content felt alive.

Incident #2: Taking Action on the “Stop and Frisk” Phenomenon

During the second term of 2009, there was an unexpected yet palpable tension in my classroom. For over a week, my young male students of colour were entering the classroom visibly upset. Detecting this was an emerging pattern and not an isolated incident I asked a few students what was upsetting them. They described the newly implemented protocol at subway station platforms where police officers, accompanied by dogs, singled out “suspicious” looking people at random and searched their belongings, including backpacks, purses, and pockets. This protocol later became known as “stop and frisk.” Within a few weeks of implementation, media sources reported this initiative as a form of racial profiling. Young men of colour in the boroughs of the Bronx and Brooklyn were being disproportionately singled out for searches. Some of my students were those being targeted.
For students to better understand their rights, I decided to move up the civics unit that was scheduled later in the year. This was a perfect opportunity for my students to use their own lives to make meaning of the constitution and amendments. Students were asked to identify a form of injustice they experienced. Topics included “stop and frisk” subway searches, gun ownership, and the use of social media in schools. After studying the history of the constitution, students wrote letters to their local Congressman. Their letters described their personal experiences, cited relevant cases from newspapers, and argued for a change of some sort in accordance with the constitution. The letters they wrote moved me. Below are a few excerpts:

Did you know that the 4th amendment of the U.S. constitution is broken on a regular basis? The amendment states that unreasonable searches and seizures are prohibited without search warrants based on probable cause. However, on my way to school when leaving the subway I have been searched a number of times. The police officer, who had a huge dog besides him, told me to take off my backpack and empty my pockets. In your eyes, is this justice? Was there a probable cause? (Marcus, 2009)

**********

I believe that living in the hood people need guns to protect themselves. I am against stricter gun control because it’s necessary to have a gun for protection and it is supported by Amendment # 2 in the Bill of right….The second amendment says that people have the right to have guns. If someone tries to steal from a house people inside of the house can protect themselves. This is important
to me because I live in the Bronx and I know innocent people get murdered here a lot. This is why I am against stricter gun control. (Edgar, 2009)

Marcus felt empowered when he learned that he had reason to feel angry and violated. Marcus followed the “stop and frisk” initiative in the news and became the class’ (perhaps even the school’s) expert on the controversial issue. He shared updates with classmates and friends on a regular basis. Random subway searches violated the constitution. Edgar used his letter to question stricter gun ownership policies. He was worried about recent talks in media of stricter gun ownership policies. He had experienced a lot of violence in his life in the Bronx. He shared with me that most adult members in his family owned a gun as form of necessary protection. Edgar felt stricter gun control laws would threaten the safety of his family. Like Marcus and Edgar, many students wrote about issues close to home. A month after the letters were sent, we received a thick package from the office of Congressman Jose Serrano. He had written each of the students a letter in return. Although the letters were generic in nature, the students were ecstatic that they each received an individualized response in an envelope marked with their name on it. They had spent several weeks researching and writing about a topic they felt passionately about, and so they felt that their efforts had been recognized. The letters from the Congressman were displayed outside of our classroom door for the remainder of the year.

These and other like experiences with my students remained with me throughout my time as a classroom teacher and during my doctoral program at OISE/UT. My responses to the established curriculum came somewhat intuitively; however, it was when I came to OISE/UT I was able to name critical literacy as the perspective from which I worked. I found working from a critical literacy perspective put the student at the centre of my teaching, and
thus students found the content relevant and engaging. However, I recognized that not all teachers at the school where I taught were working from such a perspective. This is not surprising, as our brief teacher education training did not make mention of critical literacy theories or use its approach. Reflecting back on my teacher education experience, I realized that a worrying gap existed; critical literacy practices were absent from our teacher preparation program. This combined with my keen interests in critical literacy practices developed in my classroom led to my interest in studying teacher educators with a critical stance. I wanted to know: Who are critical LTEs? Why do some LTEs take a critical stance in their work? What do these critical literacy practices look like in the teacher education classroom? This dissertation aims to better understand a group of LTEs with a critical stance.

Description of the Study

This study examined how six LTEs with a critical stance engaged in critical literacy practices in their teacher education courses. This study was situated within a large-scale SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) study entitled *Literacy Teacher Educators: Their Backgrounds, Visions, and Practices*. The principal investigator of this study was Dr. Clare Kosnik from the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto. I designed the study to explore how the LTEs enacted a pedagogy of critical literacy, but first aimed at understanding how their personal experiences and perspectives influenced the work they did in their courses. This was accomplished in three phases of study. The first phase of the study drew attention to the literacy teacher educator’s backgrounds, views, influences on practice, and professional identities. The second and third phases of the study aimed to understand the pedagogical approaches, shifting literacy conceptions, and critical literacy practices used by the LTEs.
This research is premised on the notion that literacy teacher educators should engage with their student teachers in examining the socio-political aspects of literacy. I approached my work with strong beliefs and assumptions, which I adopted from my time in the classroom in New York City and courses I took during my doctoral program at Ontario Institute of Studies in Education. LTEs must approach literacy, and thus literacy teacher education, as a social practice which is not neutral (Shor, 1987) so they can incorporate multiple viewpoints and lived experiences (Luke & Freebody, 1997) into their teacher education courses. The opportunity to consider multiple perspectives will allow student teachers to create and understand the power of counter-narratives (Farrell, 1999; Lewison et. al, 2002), disrupt the dominant discourses found in schools while moving away from a deficit model of teaching and learning. When teacher educators help student teachers shed deficit perspectives, they begin make room for the funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992) their student teachers and future pupils bring to the classroom. When teacher educators are able to help student teachers engage with literacy in these complex ways, student teachers are empowered to reimagine literacy education through a social justice lens. These notions of critical literacy are further unpacked in Chapter 2, the Literature Review chapter of my dissertation.

This dissertation describes the backgrounds and practices of six LTEs who enact critical literacy pedagogies in their teacher education courses. The efforts made by these teacher educators contribute to reimagining literacy teacher education and promoting a critical consciousness when approaching teaching and learning, which I lacked before entering the classroom as a teacher.
Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of LTEs with a critical stance, a unique group of professionals currently and previously under-researched. This in-depth qualitative study will explore their backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, and pedagogies.

Critical literacy education enables students to propel from consumers of text to producers of text (Freire, 1970) as it, “holds the potential to deepen our awareness of language and power and cultivate the valuing of diversity,” and so, “supports the development of culturally and linguistically diverse pedagogies,” (Rogers, 2013, p.9). Because of a disconnect between and among students, families, and communities and teachers and teacher educators (Ladson-Billings, 2005a), a critical literacy approach serves to form ties with students and their communities to teachers and teacher educators. Schools today have been “called to serve a more ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse student population” (Ladson-Billings, 2005b, p. 229). Teacher education programs must critically engage their student teachers in critical literacy practices, which respond to the needs of today’s student population. It has been argued that “literacy is more than linguistic; it is a political and social practice that limits or creates possibilities for who people become as literate beings” (Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006, p. 199).

Although there has been a push towards addressing critical issues of diversity and multiculturalism in teacher education courses, many scholars have documented this effort to be artificial (Dixson & Dingus, 2007; Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005). Researchers have identified several reasons for this shortcoming: teacher educators who do not identify with this work are being forced to teach it (Ladson-Billings,
teacher educators are using an “add-on” approach to teaching because they are simply appeasing a call to action (Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005); and/or student teachers are resistant to engaging with this work (Dixson & Dingus, 2007, p.645). LTEs play an integral role in the development and implementation of a critical literacy focused curriculum in teacher education. The way in which teacher educators approach critical literacy may largely affect student teachers’ attitudes and learning. And so, this study aims to gain an understanding of the motivations and pedagogies of LTEs with a critical stance by studying their backgrounds, experiences, and practices.

Rogers (2013) believes LTEs must encourage their student teachers to critically analyze discourses (Rogers, 2013) in literacy education. LTEs who use a critical literacy approach are not the norm in academia, particularly in literacy, which is a historically traditional discipline. The gap that persists of how LTEs are prepared to handle tensions between critical literacy and more traditional understandings of literacy is surprising (Martinez, 2008). This study will allow a space for the voices of critical LTEs to be heard. Additionally, by studying in-depth their backgrounds, knowledge base, and experiences, an understanding will develop around the rationale behind the difficult pedagogical decisions this group routinely makes to enact their beliefs. Through a series of interviews and analyses, clarity is gained around LTEs’ understandings of critical literacy, an often ambiguously understood concept (Vasquez, 2013). Finally, the findings from this study will help LTEs and administrators to further understand multiple perspectives of critical literacy in higher education contexts. A greater understanding will encourage the refinement and integration of key critical literacy concepts and practices into induction for teacher educators and in turn, teacher education courses.


**Research Questions**

This research study will be guided by the over-arching research question:

*In what ways do six LTEs enact critical literacy pedagogy in their teacher education courses?*

These sub-questions will be investigated:

1. *What are the LTEs’ conceptualizations of critical literacy in teacher education?*
2. *In what way do LTEs’ backgrounds and experiences influence their practices and pedagogies?*
3. *What are the goals and practices/pedagogies of LTEs with a critical stance?*
4. *What challenges do they face and what supports do they receive when enacting critical literacy practices in their teacher education courses?*

My research questions will allow me to study the complex work of LTEs with a critical stance. The findings will be relevant and useful to teacher education initiatives, including curriculum, pedagogy, and induction and support processes of LTEs.

**Critical Literacy Framework**

In this section, I discuss a model of critical literacy, using a framework developed by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008). I chose to use this framework because it integrates multiple understandings of critical literacy. For the purposes of this study, I used this framework to develop interview questions and guide analysis of the data. This comprehensive and expansive framework allowed me to capture the complexity of the issues related to critical literacy.
The Four Dimensions (2008) framework offered a valuable model for examining the emphases of critical literacy’s work:

1. **Disrupting the Commonplace.** Critical literacy is conceptualized as seeing the “everyday” through new lenses. We use language and other sign systems to recognize implicit modes of perception and to consider new frames from which to understand experience.

2. **Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints.** Authors who describe the multiple viewpoints dimension of critical literacy ask us to imagine standing in the shoes of others- to understand experience and texts from our own perspectives and the viewpoints of others to consider these various perspectives concurrently.

3. **Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues.** Teaching is not a neutral form of social practice, yet often it takes place with no attention given to how sociopolitical systems, power relationships, and language are intertwined and inseparable from our teaching.

4. **Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice.** This dimension is often perceived as *the* definition of critical literacy- yet one cannot take informed action against oppression or promote social justice without expanded understandings and perspectives gained from the other three dimensions (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008, p. 7-12).

Lewison et al. (2008) believe that the four dimensions are interrelated, and thus, do not stand-alone. Each dimension is discussed in further detail, accompanied by a review of research by other researchers in the field of critical literacy in Chapter 2.
Literacy Teacher Educators

In the opening quote of this chapter Rogers (2013) reminds us that LTEs have the “privilege and responsibility” of preparing future literacy teachers, and thus, must design “learning experiences that support [literacy teachers’] development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to work confidently with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families” (p.7). Rogers (2013) statement suggests there is urgency around the work of LTEs. It is surprising how little we know about this sub-group of teacher educators. Teacher educators, in general, are an under-researched group (Murray and Male, 2005); consequently, we know even less about LTEs. However, a growing body of research has emerged on the vast amount of knowledge teacher educators require (Kosnik, Dharamshi, Menna, & Miyata, 2013; Loughran, 2006; Zeichner, 2005). Goodwin (2010) identified five areas of knowledge teacher educators need:

(1) personal knowledge/autobiography and philosophy of teaching;
(2) contextual knowledge/understanding learners, schools, and society;
(3) pedagogical knowledge/content, theories, teaching methods, and curriculum development;
(4) sociological knowledge/diversity, cultural relevance, and social justice; and
(5) social knowledge/cooperative, democratic group process, and conflict resolution.

Considering the extensive knowledge required for teacher educators, it is astonishing how little preparation and induction LTEs receive when entering academic positions in the university context (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013). LTEs generally enter the profession via the K-12 classroom (Loughran, 2006), and so they are not prepared for the additional responsibilities found in higher education contexts (e.g., conducting research, supervising
doctoral students). For this reason, many novice LTEs report feeling “de-skilled”, in a “struggle”, and of “masquerading” (Murray and Male, 2005, p. 129).

Kosnik, Dharamshi, Miyata, and Cleovoulou (2013) refer to LTEs as the “nexus point” (p. 59) for literacy education. Their role transcends the university classroom because they must determine how government curriculum is included in teacher education; guide students in unpacking their previous experiences; offer in-service courses; and conduct scholarly research (Kosnik et al., 2013). This study aimed to better understand how LTEs with a critical stance negotiate their vast number of roles and responsibilities in their teacher education courses. Exploring their backgrounds, experiences, practices, and pedagogies will shed light on their work. The work of LTEs will be further unpacked in the subsequent chapter, the literature review.

**Significance of the Study**

Through this research we will gain insight into the backgrounds and early life experiences of the six LTEs, their conceptualizations of literacy in the context of a shifting landscape, and their enactments of critical literacy pedagogy in their teacher education classrooms. As a result, the study aimed to contribute to the scholarly and professional advancement of literacy teacher education in three ways:

1. **Understanding the backgrounds and experiences of critical LTEs.**

By researching the backgrounds and experiences of LTEs with a critical stance, they are acknowledged as a unique professional group. This under-researched yet critical group (Fallon, 2006) plays a vital role in educational development of any kind (Cochran-Smith,
2003) and so, understanding their backgrounds and experiences is key to better supporting them (Kosnik et al., 2013).

2. Documenting and analyzing LTEs’ conceptualizations of critical literacy.
By documenting and analyzing LTEs’ conceptualizations of critical literacy, we will understand how it influences their pedagogy in pre-service teacher education. By studying LTEs in various educational institutions, insight was gained into critical literacy practices across educational, structural, and geographical contexts. Having an in-depth view into these LTEs’ practices will allow us to continue crafting a framework for critical literacy in literacy teacher education.

3. Highlight the joys and challenges in the work of LTEs with a critical stance.
LTEs experience both joys and challenges in their work. Understanding the joys and challenges associated with negotiating issues such as power, equity, and race into pre-service courses will reveal a nuanced look of the work of LTEs with a critical stance. In turn, capturing the joys and challenges of their work will help to better support them in the future. This research study will help teachers and teacher educators better understand the obstacles as well as the hopes and joys in enacting a critical literacy pedagogy.

Definition of Terms

In this section I define terms used throughout the dissertation. I define the terms based on how they are used in a North American context.

Student Teacher: A student teacher is an individual enrolled in a pre-service teacher education program. A student teacher must complete a certain number of university-based courses and practice teaching placement depending on the institution in which they are enrolled. Upon successful completion of the pre-service teacher education program and any
required certification exams, a student teacher would be qualified to be a sole classroom teacher.

**Pre-service Teacher Education Program:** The pre-service teacher education program, where teacher educators teach is a university-based program for the preparation of teachers. The pre-service programs described in this study are structured in one of two ways: a concurrent model or a consecutive model. In the concurrent model, a student studies an academic subject while simultaneously learning how to teach that subject. This leads to both a Bachelor’s degree and teaching credential for the academic subject studies. In the consecutive model, a student gains teaching qualifications after completing their Bachelor’s degree and obtaining qualifications in an academic subject. The pre-service teacher education programs consist of university-based coursework and practice teaching placements.

**Practice Teaching:** Practice teaching placement is a required component of pre-service teacher education programs. This placement involves student teachers going into classrooms for a determined period of time to “practice” teaching. Student teachers are assigned mentor teachers/associate teachers, who are full-time teachers, and serve as a guide to the student teachers in their practice teaching placements. The higher education institutions where the participants taught had different requirements for their practice teaching placements (e.g., everyday for 4 weeks; 2 days/per week for 4 months, etc.).

**Literacy Teacher Educator:** LTEs are individuals who teach literacy courses to prospective teachers in a university-based setting. Courses taught by LTEs include, but are not limited to, literacy methods courses, language instruction, bilingual education, writing
composition courses. In addition to course delivery, many LTEs in this study supervise student teachers’ practice teaching placement.

**Organization of Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized in seven chapters. In Chapter 1, I introduce my rationale and purpose for studying LTEs and their enactments of a critical literacy pedagogy. In Chapter 2, I provide an analysis of relevant academic literature in the field. I organize this analysis in three parts: critical literacy; teacher education; and LTEs. In Chapter 3, I thoroughly outline my methodology, including my data collection tools, and provide justification for my data analysis methods. In Chapter 4, I begin the presentation and analysis of my findings beginning with a profile of each participant. Chapter 5 continues with the presentation and analysis of findings, with a focus on the first and second dimensions of the critical literacy framework (Lewison et al., 2008) as well as an analysis of stand-alone themes. In Chapter 6, the discussion and analysis of findings continues with a focus on the third and fourth dimensions of the framework. Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation in a discussion of findings and the implications of this study in the larger research community and literacy teacher education context.

**Chapter Summary**

In this introductory chapter I provide my rationale for studying the backgrounds, experiences, and practices of six critical LTEs. I offer my personal background in respect to my research, and describe pivotal moments I experienced in the classroom that shaped my research interests. I provide a description and purpose of the study, followed by my guiding research questions. I then explain the theoretical framework, which underpins the research study. The
significance of the study, scholarly and professional advancement in literacy teacher education, is outlined. Finally, I define a list of terms that appear frequently throughout the dissertation, and I explain how the dissertation is organized. In the following chapter, I review the relevant literature that has informed this study.

My vision for a literacy curriculum is one that moves past traditional notions of literacy, which positions students as empty vessels, waiting to be filled with knowledge (Freire, 1972). Rather, I envision a classroom where students’ rich experiences outside of the classroom are invited in and valued. I envision these experiences and knowledge to be woven together to create an engaging and relevant curriculum. Finally, I envision students inquiring to become producers of knowledge rather than recipients of knowledge. From my time in the classroom, I witnessed the power producing original texts could have. For students like Marcus, writing a letter to his Congressman about his personal experiences with “stop and frisk” gave him a voice. When he heard back from his Congressman in the form of a personalized letter, Marcus felt his voice had been heard. At that moment, Marcus felt that his lived experiences were important and were valued in the classroom, something he hadn’t experienced before. The ability to develop critically literate practices amongst students’ stems from complex classroom practices such as unpacking socio-political issues, analyzing multiple viewpoints, and having opportunities to take action against injustices. For this reason, I propose that the *Four Dimensions* (2008) of critical literacy should be essential practices enacted in literacy teacher education.
Chapter 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, the focus of this study is on the backgrounds, visions, and practices of six literacy teacher educators with a critical stance. The purpose of this chapter is to review the relevant scholarly literature as it relates to the study’s guiding research questions. For this reason, my study is situated within the intersection of three bodies of literature: 1) critical literacy; 2) teacher education; and 3) literacy teacher educators. The literature review starts with an overview of critical literacy perspectives and practices in both K-12 and teacher education contexts. This is followed by an exploration of the critical literacy framework developed by Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008). The chapter continues with a brief history on the origins of critical literacy. This section is concluded with a synopsis of ways in which the field of critical literacy has widened to include various areas and levels of education.

The chapter then examines literature on selected issues in teacher education, specifically in the area of literacy education. Challenges teacher education programs face are then discussed alongside influential works conducted in the field of teacher education. Specifically, two significant challenges are explored: the differentiating qualities between a teacher and a student and dealing with the complexities and changing nature of teaching.

Finally, the chapter explores the scholarly work that contributes to our understanding of teacher educators, including literacy teacher educators. The chapter concludes by articulating the need for systematic research, which aims at better understanding the visions, practices, and pedagogies of literacy teacher educators with a critical stance.
Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is a large and complex area of study, so it does not come as a surprise that there are multiple understandings. Although there is no one approach to critical literacy, proponents of critical literacy see curriculum as “falsely neutral” (Shor, 1987), which train students, perhaps inadvertently, to “observe things without judging”; “to see the world from the official consensus”; and “to carry out orders without questioning, as if the given society is fixed and fine” (p. 12). Critical literacy practices aim to disrupt the power imbalances inherent in institutions (i.e., schools), as they have the potential to reproduce (or disrupt) the status quo. The underlying goals of critical literacy can be categorized into two perspectives on literacy: 1) what literacy is; and 2) how literacy is used.

A Perspective on What Literacy Is

As classrooms become increasingly diverse, patterns of communication continue to grow, and globalized societies become more commonplace, literacy researchers seek to gain new understandings of how literacy practices are defined in contemporary classrooms, schools, and communities. Researcher and theorist James Paul Gee asserts literacy practices must consider the larger social and cultural context from which they occur. Gee (2000) contends literacy be viewed as “a set of contextualized social practices” (p. 189) rather than a set of autonomous skills to be acquired in order to become “literate.” This perspective is maintained in the New Literacies Studies’ (of which Gee is a foundational thinker) notion of literacy as a social practice. New Literacies Studies (Gee, 1996; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003) is an emerging, interdisciplinary field of studies drawing on perspectives from linguistics, history, anthropology, cultural psychology, education, and related fields (Brass, 2015, p. 3). When considering teaching and learning in the field of literacy, New Literacies Studies asserts
reading and writing (traditional literacy practices) “only make sense when studied in the context of social and cultural (and we can add historical, political, and economic) practices of which they are but a part” (p. 180).

In regards to what literacy is, Rogers (2014) argues for a multiple literacies approach to literacy, which is influenced by the concept of Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996). This approach takes into consideration “the widening of the field of literacy studies to include those new forms of literacy made possible by digital technologies and globalized communication networks” (p.11). In a similar vein, Ghiso, Spencer, Ngo, and Campano (2013) note that research on current literacy practices reveal “expanded understandings of texts and practices to include their multimodal dimensions” (p.51). What follows are two examples of this understanding of critical literacy: what literacy is.

An example of this perspective of critical literacy is seen in Souto-Manning and Price-Dennis’ (2014) research on popular culture and early childhood education, which disrupts traditional notions of literacy by framing popular culture media “as sites to be read and rewritten” (p. 309). Their research considers how popular culture media (e.g., animated cartoons, songs, videos, video games, toys) are texts, which can be integrated into the curriculum of early childhood classrooms. In their study, student teachers explored how animated movies and cartoons (Madagascar, Little Bill, and The Proud Family) worked to “honor children’s interests and knowledge in authentic ways” when they were meaningfully integrated into the curriculum. Souto-Manning and Dennis (2014) explain, “Because the children are ‘knowers’ of these media texts in terms of stories and characters, they have ownership, agency, and voice” (p. 319). Further, they argue that including popular culture media in the curriculum opens up possibilities for inclusive and multicultural curriculum (p.
By introducing expansive texts into the classroom, students have the opportunity to reconsider the legitimacy of what counts as texts within in the curriculum.

Hull and Schultz’s (2002) work focusing on out-of-school literacy practices aids in disrupting notions of literacy beyond the traditional canon. They contend children are regularly engaged in complex literacy practices in their daily lives and communities, and so educators must continually revisit what it means to be literate. In their text, *School’s Out!: Bridging Out-of-School Literacies with Classroom Practices*, Hull and Schultz (2002) offer vignettes of children engaged in literate activities outside of the school setting. In a particular vignette the authors describe an out-of-school literacy moment when three children, at a community centre, read a parking ticket. Through discussion, problem-solving, and generative thinking, the three students are able to come to a decision on how to deal with the parking ticket. The authors note the significant literacy practices which take place in the discussion among these children outside of the school setting: “The children employ their developing language and reasoning skills to solve a material problem in their resource-scarce community” (p. 37). Schools must work to connect curriculum with children’s out-of-school worlds, and ultimately view literacy as a social practice.

*A Perspective of How Literacy is Used*

Beyond understanding literacy as an expansive perspective of what counts as literacy, critical literacy approaches use various texts to critique worldviews represented in texts and draw connections between the text and social issues. In other words this perspective is “the critique of texts and their worldviews is the object” (Lankshear, 1997, p. 44). Rogers (2014) identifies this approach to critical literacy as a genre approach: “focus[ing] on the importance of students acquiring competence in the linguistic structures of dominant discourses through the
analysis of the patterns of texts and the ways these structures carry out social functions” (p.11). Two examples of this approach include reading several biographies about one person to appreciate multiple perspectives; and reading fractured fairytales (using familiar fairy tales and changing characters, point of view, setting, or plot) to disrupt gender stereotypes (p.11).

Luke (2000) builds on this understanding, stating, “critical literacy education involves a theoretical and practical ‘attitude’ towards texts and the social world, and a commitment to the use of textual practices for social analysis and transformation” (p. 453). When literacy is used for the purposes of socio-political analysis and taking action, this aligns with a social justice approach to literacy. This approach has an explicit emphasis on working towards social justice. Rogers (2014) states that when this approach is used, student interests are used to shape the curriculum by asking: “What issues genuinely motivate and energize my students?” (p.12). Supporters of critical literacy view literacy beyond a set of cognitive skills involving decoding, reading, writing, and comprehension; rather, literacy is viewed as multi-faceted social practices that must be understood in contextualized social and cultural relations, namely, power relations. The following example demonstrates how this understanding of critical literacy aims to use literacy texts for analysis of socio-political issues.

In Soares and Wood’s (2010) research, the authors describe how literacy can be used to promote consciousness raising about issues of equity and promote social justice. By purposefully selecting texts, which address critical issues like civil rights, poverty, and migrant workers’ issues, they are able to help students engage in critical literacy practices. For example, Soares and Wood (2010) include the text Only What We Can Carry (Inada, 2000), a text centred around Japanese Americans’ experiences in internment camps during World War II. This text, “offers a wealth of information and multiple viewpoints that allow students to
explore the theme of civil rights through poetry, prose, autobiography, news accounts, government documents, and letters” (p. 488).

Before moving forward in this review of literature, it is important to clarify a common misunderstanding. Critical literacy is often mistaken with critical thinking. Though it can be argued that the two terms are related, their aims are different. Burbules and Berk (1999) argue that the two terms share some common concerns: “They both imagine a general population in society who are to some extent deficient in the abilities or dispositions that would allow them to discern certain kinds of inaccuracies, distortions, or falsehoods” (p.46) and both terms are concerned with how these “falsehoods” could limit freedom (p. 46). Critical thinking is higher-order thinking based on learning taxonomies such as Bloom’s Taxonomy (Lee, 2011). It often involves a series of steps, such as conceptualizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating; these skills are thought to be higher order skills than simply learning facts or concepts (Scriven & Paul, 1987). Burbules and Berk (1999) contend that critical thinking is concerned with the ability to adequately analyze and examine ideas, assumptions, claims, and reasoning, while critical literacy is “set in a sociopolitical context oriented toward identifying unequal power relationships and serving social justice” (Lee, 2011, p. 97). Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) further elaborate on the differences:

Critical literacy practices encourage students to use language to question the everyday world, to interrogate the relationship between language and power, to analyze popular culture and media, to understand how power relationships are socially constructed, and to consider actions that can be taken to promote social justice.... These practices are substantively different from what are commonly referred to as critical thinking approaches. Although critical thinking approaches have focused more on logic and comprehension, critical literacies have focused on identifying social practices that keep dominant ways of understanding the world and unequal power relationships in place (p. 3).

Although critical thinking and critical literacy share some commonalities of logic and
comprehensions, their socio-political aims are very different, and thus “the latter should not be reduced to the former” (Lee, 2011, p. 97).

**Critical Literacy Framework**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this dissertation uses the critical literacy framework developed by Lewison et al. (2008). In this section, each dimension is discussed in detail. Examples of these dimensions in practice are also discussed for purposes of clarity.

1. *Disrupting the commonplace.*

Critical literacies and multiliteracies are inextricably linked, as many of the same theorists contribute to these fields of study. Both share the mutual goals of “recognizing minority and marginalized voices” and “making students more aware of the ideological, political, and other forces that privilege certain literacies over others” (Rowsell, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008, p. 62). Multiliteracies (Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, Kalantzis, Kress, Luke, Luke, Michaels, and Nakata, 1996) is an approach to literacy pedagogy founded by the New London Group (NLG) grounded in seeing the “everyday” through a new lens. Multiliteracies came as a response to the increasingly researched range of linguistic and cultural differences in society as well as recent changes in our ability to communicate through information and multimedia technologies (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 61). This pedagogical model moves beyond traditional text like the printed word and traditional language teaching to include multiple modes of making meaning. Different modes of meaning (or *Design* in the terms of NLG) include: gestural, spatial, visual, linguistic, and audio (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 83). The beliefs of the NLG correspond with the first dimension of the Lewison et. al.’s (2008) critical literacy framework. The multiliteracies approach understands the growing need to “use language and
other sign systems to recognize implicit modes of perception and to consider new frames from which to understand experience” (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002, p. 383).

An example of disrupting the commonplace is seen in Vasquez’s (2004) ethnographic study with kindergarten students. Vasquez engaged with her students and examined McDonald’s Happy Meals as a form of text to problematize gender stereotypes reinforced by Happy Meals. Students raised questions about the selection of the toys for boys and girls made by McDonalds. Vasquez explored topics like identity construction by engaging pupils in a text in which they were both familiar and interested. When teachers consider how they and their students use literacies from their communities, like Vasquez demonstrated, a space is opened up for students to raise questions and disrupt commonplace thinking.

**ii. Interrogating multiple viewpoints.**

Lewison et al. (2002) describe this tenet of critical literacy work as the ability to imagine “standing in the shoes of others” (p. 383). They build upon this orientation of critical literacy by viewing literacy education as the opportunity to engage in and reflect on the multiplicity of perspectives reflecting society at large. Although these open-ended explorations can lead to uncomfortable feelings for some educators, the benefits of reflection can outweigh possible feelings of discomfort (Harste, Breau, Leland, Lewison, Ociepka, and Vasquez, 2000). When using this approach, discrepancies in perception are highlighted and “teachers might find this useful for beginning philosophical conversations about the nature of reality and how our backgrounds and beliefs influence what we see” (Harste et al., 2000, p. 511).

In Harste et al.’s (2000) book chapter *Supporting Critical Conversations in the Classroom*, the authors propose that critical literacy should engage in an attempt to make difference visible by noticing and looking out for the voices of those who have been silenced
or marginalized (p. 510). Following the requisite of making difference visible, the authors suggest a text such as Paula Fox’s *Radiance Descending* (1997). This book about an adolescent boy who is slowly learning to accept his younger brother born with Down’s Syndrome, invites conversations to locate the silenced voice of the younger brother.

Christensen (2000) and Luke and Freebody (1997) echo the views of making difference visible by seeking out and reflecting on the voices of those who are silenced. Christensen (2000) argues that each student’s “experience with language helps us to understand how society creates hierarchies that rank some languages as “standard” and others as substandard; some as educated, others as ignorant” (p. 57), while Luke and Freebody (1997) ask readers to engage in a process of probing texts by asking questions like: Whose voices are heard and whose are missing?”

**iii. Focusing on sociopolitical issues.**

More often than not, attention is not given to how our sociopolitical systems, race, class, gender, language, and power relationships are interwoven and inseparable from ourselves, and thus, our teaching. This dimension of critical literacy suggests that educators make students the subjects of their own education (Christensen, 2009), while trying to recognize the larger sociopolitical structures of which we are a part (Boozer, Maras, & Brummett, 1999).

It has been argued that if a student’s prior knowledge and out-of-school literacy practices are not invited into the classroom, the language used in the existing curriculum can be used to maintain domination (Janks, 2000). The pedagogy associated with this concept, termed Critical Language Awareness (CLA), originates from the work of Fairclough (1989). CLA posits that texts are constructed, and so, can be de-constructed to analyze the word
choices made. Janks (2000) explains, “every choice foregrounds what was selected and hides, silences or backgrounds what was not selected” (p. 176).

When inviting student teachers to influence and take part in curriculum creation, they acquire the skills for choosing texts. Understanding CLA will allow student teachers and teacher educators alike to ask critical questions about their text selection. This attention to sociopolitical issues allows for participation in and transformation of existing classroom discourses (Janks, 2000).

iv. Taking action and promoting social justice.

Critical literacy is largely rooted in the life’s work of Paulo Freire. His notion of praxis is often seen as synonymous with critical literacy. However, without the previously discussed three dimensions, social issues would not be brought to light to be analyzed and improved upon. Freire believed if educators helped students from oppressed communities to read the word and not the world, students would only gain technical literacy skills but would remain passive objects towards history, instead of active subjects (Anderson & Irvine, 1993, p. 82). Thus, this dimension encourages users of text to engage in a process of “reading the word and the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987) in order to see their position of oppression, take social action, and achieve social justice. In other words, the goal of social justice is “action and reflection: it is praxis; it is transformation of the world. And as praxis it requires theory to illuminate it. Human activity is theory and practice” (Freire, 1972, p. 96).

Elaborations of the Freirean approach are seen in the works of researcher Barbara Comber. Comber (2001) contends that when student’s varying practices can become part of a collective capacity in a classroom, they can address and take action on issues of power, privilege, and injustice to approach possibilities (Comber, 2001). As a result, she firmly
believes that the existing knowledge and practice children bring with them to the classroom regarding power relations can be used to learn about injustices.

Both Janks (2000) and Delpit (1995) emphasize the importance of non-dominant groups gaining access to the dominant discourse *without* losing value of their home language and culture. This complex task of providing access to the dominant form while valuing diverse languages and culture is what Janks (2000) termed as the “access paradox” (p. 176). Delpit (1988) responds to this concern when insisting on the use of explicit pedagogy in urban classrooms. She maintains explicitly teaching “codes of power” to non-dominant groups is a form of social justice because it promotes action; understanding how to successfully live in the culture of power is the first step necessary to a more just society (Delpit, 1988). To support this approach, Luke and Freebody (1997) developed the Four Resources Model\(^1\) of literacy, a tiered approach to literacy instruction. This approach attempts to combat a formula or a single-step method of “doing” critical literacy (Luke, 2000, p. 454).

This study acknowledges and takes into consideration both understandings of critical literacy as defined above. Questioning and expanding our notions of what literacies are and how they are used are both essential to critical literacy practices.

\(^{1}\) Four Resources Model:

1. Coding practices: Developing resources as a code breaker
2. Text-meaning practices: Developing resources as a text participant
3. Pragmatic practices: Developing resources a text user
**Critical Stance**

At the heart of the critical literacy dimensions, described above, is what Lewison et al. (2008) describe as a critical stance. A critical stance is the attitudes and dispositions essential to “way[s] of knowing and being in the world of educational practice that carries across educational contexts… that links individuals to larger groups and social movements intended to challenge the inequities perpetuated by the educational status quo” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. vii).

Lewison et al. (2008) identify four qualities of a critical stance: consciously engaging; entertaining alternate ways of being; taking responsibility to inquire; and being reflexive. These qualities are cyclical in nature, and involve the processes of renaming (Freire, 1970) and reframing (Lakoff, 2004) what it means to be literate. Kosnik, Dharamshi, Menna, Miyata, and Cleovoulou (2015) describe a critical stance as a “deliberate choice made by educators” (p.136), which is a “lifelong and constant pursuit” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 28) to becoming critically literate. Below, the four dimensions of a critical stance are defined and discussed. It must also be noted that the four aspects are interrelated, and thus, do not stand-alone.

1. **Consciously Engaging.**

   The first quality of a critical stance involves educators consciously engaging to develop a critical stance. Educators need to consciously engage by monitoring: their use and interpretation of language, and actions to see how they maintain or disrupt the status quo (Kosnik et al., 2015, p.136) Deciding *how* to respond to events in the classroom is as important as responding to them (Lewison et al., 2008, p. 13). The notion of renaming (Freire, 1970) and the concept of reframing (Lakoff, 2004) are two ways in which to respond to
events. Kosnik et al. (2015) draw on Skerret’s (2009) work with pre-service students to provide an example of reframing: “Skerrett (2009) responded to neighborhood inequalities by having her student teachers examine ‘how social class was constructed in relation to race and gender and how social class was evidenced in the infrastructures and political capital of their neighborhoods’ (p. 58)” (p.138).

**ii. Entertaining Alternate Ways of Being.**

This quality of a critical stance is described as “creating and trying on new discourses” (Lewison et al., 2008, p. 16). Entertaining alternate ways of being calls on educators to modify their teaching when they recognize what they believe about teaching, learning, and curriculum may not be working. This quality of critical stance calls for “tension” to be used as a resource, which supports alternate ways of being. Kosnik et al. (2015) provide an example of what this quality would look like in a teacher education context: “analyzing the discrepancies in topics covered in teacher education courses vs. practice teaching placements” (p.140).

**iii. Taking Responsibility to Inquire.**

The third quality of developing a critical stance involves the educators’ responsibility to inquire. Inquiry, interrogation, and investigation need to be placed at the forefront when adopting this quality of a critical stance. Lewison et al. (2008) further elaborate on what it means for educators to take responsibility to inquire: “we push our beliefs out of their resting positions and engage in a cycle where new knowledge provokes new questions and where new questions generate new knowledge” (p.17). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) coined the phrase “inquiry as stance.” They describe the process of an inquiry stance as: “working from and with an inquiry stance involves a continual process of making current arrangements problematic … [and] … questioning the ways knowledge and practice are constructed,"
evaluated, and used” (p. 121).

iv. Being Reflexive.

The fourth quality educators must adopt and develop for a critical stance is being reflexive. This means, “being aware of our own complicity in maintaining the status quo or systems of injustice” (Lewison et al., 2008, p.18). Kamler (1999) further elaborates on this quality of a critical stance as: “catching ourselves in incongruent and contradictory behavior is hopeful. It is a sign that we are engaged in the struggle of trying on new identities and discourses” (p.18). Sleeter (2013) suggests teacher educators should have their student teachers write an autobiography to increase awareness of their involvement in existing systems of injustice (p. 154). In turn, student teachers are able to “outgrow” (Lewison et al., 2008) themselves by questioning “who was present and absent in communities where they grew up, core values they learned in their families, beliefs they hold about people who differ from themselves, and their conceptions of what “good teaching” looks like” (p. 154).

Roots of Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is grounded in principles of equity and justice and calls for: questioning and analysis of texts, and resistance and action against social injustices (Edelsky, 1999). Critical literacy has its roots in adult and community education of which Paulo Freire is a key figure. Freire conducted his research in working class communities throughout Brazil. One particular adult community he worked with was a fishing community in Monte Mario, Brazil, a community deemed illiterate. He asked members of communities to name the people, places, and events that comprised their day-to-day lives. Community members learned to symbolically represent the stories, traditions and rituals that were already a part of their cultural community. This process enabled community members to actively understand their
place in the present, and from such situated awareness, empower themselves to shape their evolving history (Freire & Macedo, 1987). From these conversations, literate communities were born. (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Thus, Freire contended that individuals first read their world, and then read the word (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Freire wrote extensively about the existence of oppression in societies through the roles of the oppressor and the oppressed. In order to disrupt the cycle between the oppressor and oppressed, Freire (1994) spoke about praxis, “the reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1994, p. 33). To this end, Freire advocated for problem-posing education. By asking “why,” learners began to see alternative perceptions of reality and shift from consumers of knowledge to producers of knowledge (Freire, 1994). It was through questioning our texts and asking “why?” that my classroom in the Bronx felt alive. When we used problem-posing language to question textbooks and subway searches my students and I began our transformation to being socially aware and active members of our community.

During his research with working class communities in Brazil, Freire coined the term “banking education.” In “banking education,” knowledge is determined by a dominant group and is “a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (Freire, 1970, p.72). “Banking education” can be characterized by certain student-teacher dynamics (Freire, 1970, p. 73), including:

- The teacher teaches and the students are taught
- The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing
- The teacher chooses program content, and the students adapt to it
- The teacher talks and the students listen meekly
Freire (1970) argued that this model of knowledge transmission ensured that the dynamic between oppressor and oppressed remained uninterrupted.

**Banking Education in Teacher Education**

While the banking model in teacher education is slowly being disrupted, there are, for a variety of reasons, teacher education sites where the “banking education” (Freire, 1970) model is still enacted. One reason is what Loughran (2006) identifies as an adage of teacher education: “Good teachers have been trained to master proper techniques” (p. 20). This adage implies the assumption that teacher educators are “expert” educators and that their responsibility is to prepare student teachers with the most up-to-date teaching procedures (p. 20). This assumption reinforces the student-teacher dynamic of “the teacher teaches and the students are taught” (Freire, 1970, p.73).

Secondly, an increasing amount of scholarly work is documenting disconnects between critical literacy theory and critical literacy practice in teacher education. Vasquez, Tate, and Harste (2013) argue that in teacher education courses “reading, reflecting, and discussing what is critical literacy is not enough” (p. xviii), while Cahnmann-Taylor and Souto-Manning (2010) point out that as a teaching profession we [teacher educators] need to avoid simply “talking the talk” (p.7). The tendency in teacher education to not “practice what they preach in terms of teaching” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996, p. 3) supports the notion that a “banking education” approach persists in teacher education.

I believe that like the teacher-student dynamic, the teacher educator- student teacher dynamic in teacher education must move away from “banking education” by adopting critical literacy pedagogy. Engaging student teachers in critical literacy practices will encourage them
to avoid being complicit in ongoing acts of oppressions or social injustices in their future classrooms.

**Current Context of Critical Literacy**

Contemporary critical literacy theorists and practitioners have built on and expanded the concept of critical literacy. Freire used critical literacy to work with adult literacy learners; however, since then scholarly work has widened to include many areas and levels of education. Rogers and Mosley-Wetzel (2014) documented the growing research in the field of critical literacy (p.5):

- critical literacy in early childhood and elementary contexts (Aukerman, 2012; Bourke, 2008; Flint & Laman, 2012; Labadie, Mosley, & Rogers, 2012; Vasquez & Branigan-Felderman, 2012);
- critical literacy in adult and community education (Johnston & Rosario-Ramos, 2012; Pahl & Rowsell, 2011);
- critical literacy and social media (Burnett & Merchant, 2011; Reid, 2011); and
- critical literacy in teacher education (Johnston, 2012; Mosley, 2010; Rogers, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2010; Tate, 2011; Vasquez, Harste, & Tate, 2013)

Although scholarship in critical literacy has grown at all educational levels, it has only very recently entered teacher education contexts (Rogers & Mosley-Wetzel, 2014). Rogers and Mosley-Wetzel (2014) conclude this is because “many researchers of critical literacy practices were first studying other teachers’ practices before their own” (p. 4). Though some critical literacy scholarship about teacher education includes vignettes about teacher educators’ backgrounds and experiences (Vasquez, 2013; Kosnik et al., 2014; Dozier et al., 2006), there is a lack of in-depth study on LTEs and enactments of critical literacy;
specifically understanding their backgrounds, experiences, and pedagogies. This study aims to fill that gap in the literature.

**Teacher Education**

A growing body of research demonstrates a strong relationship between the traits of student teachers and traits of their teacher education programs (Beck and Kosnik, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2006). In other words, successful teacher education programs play a considerable role in developing effective classroom teachers. Research has shown that “fully prepared and certified teachers are generally better rated and more successful with students than teachers without preparation” (Darling-Hammond, 2000, p. 167). However, given the rapid shifts in external factors of schooling, such as technologies and societies, we must ask: What must teacher education programs prepare student teachers to learn and to know (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005) to become effective teachers in contemporary classrooms? On preparing student teacher for diverse classrooms, Darling-Hammond (2006) asserts the following about teacher preparation programs:

> schools of education must design programs that help prospective teachers to understand deeply a wide array of things about learning, social and cultural contexts, and teaching and be able to enact these understandings in complex classrooms … if prospective teachers are to succeed at this task, schools of education must design programs that transform the kinds of settings in which novices learn to teach and later become teachers (p. 302).

However, Darling-Hammond (2006) identifies challenges teacher education programs face when preparing student teachers for today’s classrooms. In a study surveying over nine hundred new teachers about their teacher preparation programs, Darling-Hammond notes the following challenges: differentiating teaching qualities from those observed during their own experiences of being a student; and dealing with the complex and rapidly changing nature of
teaching. In the following sections I discuss the challenges and their relation to other seminal works conducted in the field of teacher education.

**Differentiating Qualities of Being a Teacher and a Student**

Teacher education programs face a unique challenge because students in the program often enter with preset ideas of what it means to be a teacher. These understandings are a result of being students for several years and gaining first-hand experiences in classroom settings.

Lortie (1975) considers these years serve as an “apprenticeship of observation” into the occupation of teaching. In other words, a student teacher’s years of experience being a student serves as a form of an apprenticeship to teaching. As a consequence, many student teachers come into their teacher education program with narrow views of teaching and learning because they did not have visibility into the pedagogical processes enacted in the classroom (e.g., classroom organization, designing assignments and instructional series, varying instructional approaches). Loughran (2011) notes many student teachers simplify the practice of teaching and listening to: “teaching as telling” and “learning as listening” (p. 279). Student teachers may enter their teacher education programs with their own philosophy of education fully formed because they have, by virtue of being a student, beliefs about what a teacher is and should do. However, they have yet to assess the soundness of these beliefs about teaching through practices of reflection, goal setting, decision-making, and analysis (Lortie, 1975).

Darling-Hammond (2006) encourages teacher education programs to support student teachers in understanding teaching “in ways quite different from their own experience as students” (p. 305). Loughran (2006) shares this concern for student teachers and urges teacher education programs to allow for genuine opportunities to “see into teaching” (Loughran, 2006, p. 7). He
further argues that it is teacher educators who have the ability to grant student teachers access to the thoughts and actions that shape good teaching practice.

Regarding literacy teacher education, Smith and Rhodes (2006) assert teacher education programs should prepare student teachers to “enter their profession ready to teach literacy, and...to change many of their preconceived perceptions of literacy education” (p. 32). Teacher education programs must promote student teachers in developing an independent vision of what literacy is, while inviting student teachers to commit to work towards improving their own literacy skills, and promoting literacy in diverse settings (Smith & Rhodes, 2006, p. 32). To accomplish this, “teacher education programs need to reflect the complexity of influencing teachers’ beliefs and understandings that underlie their practices and of developing teachers’ reflecting dispositions and capabilities” (Zeichner, 2005, p.119).

Beyond the “apprenticeship of observation” in which student teachers draw upon their experiences with schooling to inform their practice as educators, research has revealed that novice teachers face challenges on how to “act as a teacher” (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Mary Kennedy (1999) calls this the “problem of enactment.” She asserts: “Novice teachers often approach the formal study of teaching with a frame of reference they developed during their childhood, while their university faculty are likely to approach the formal study of teaching from the perspective of reformers” (p.71). It is for these reasons novice teachers require continued in-service teacher education opportunities.
i. Reflective practice.

In helping student teachers gain insights into the differentiating qualities between being a teacher and being a student, scholars have advocated for teacher education to include reflective practices as an integral part of teacher education programs (Dinkleman, 2000; Korthagen & Wubbels, 1995; Risko, Roskos, & Vukelich, 2002). Reflective practice can be defined as a cyclical and recursive process that includes problem-solving, awareness raising, and construction of professional knowledge (Marcos et al., 2011, p. 21). Research has demonstrated that helping student teachers develop new reference points for assumptions about schooling is a lengthy process (Risko, Roskos, & Vukelich, 2002; Risko, Vukelich, & Roskos, 2009). So, teacher preparation programs must commit to an overriding philosophy, which gives student teachers several opportunities to separate their future role of teaching from their own experiences as students, in order to develop theoretically sound approaches in the classroom. Reflective practice affords student teachers opportunities to generate connections between theory and practice, and develop deeper understandings of beliefs and previous experiences while adopting new perspectives to teaching and learning (Risko et al., 2002, p. 135).

In their 2002 study, Risko, Roskos, and Vukelich studied student teacher’s reflections to gain an understanding of how it informed their practices and pedagogies as reading teachers. Risko et al. (2002) examined 30 student teachers’ reflective practices across three university teacher education programs. All 30 student teachers were enrolled in a literacy methods course at their respective universities. Using double-entry journals, student teachers reflected on their leanings each week in regards to content, as well as personal reactions to material discussed. The researchers acknowledged several implications of their work on
reflective practice. First, they noted learning to reflect is a developmental process, and so student teachers required several opportunities throughout their program to hone this skill and create change in their perceptions and understandings. Second, the researchers noted teacher education programs should give voice to multiple forms of reflection. In other words, reflective practice needed to be enacted beyond the practice of journaling; rather, reflective practices should aim to create “dialogic relations that can develop shared reflections between peers and through class discussion” (p. 140). Third, Risko et al. (2002) argued for more deliberate use of reflection for helping student teachers in making connections. Finally, the researchers noted that teacher educators often provide little guidance for teaching students how to reflect (p. 134). So, they called for further guided instruction when asking student teachers to engage in reflective practices. Understanding that student teachers’ personal experiences and preconceived notions about teaching and learning are powerful, teacher education programs must make meaningful reflective practice a priority.

**Dealing with the Complexities and Changing Nature of Teaching**

Darling-Hammond (2006) identifies one of the major challenges of teacher education as preparing student teachers for the complex and continuously changing nature of teaching. Ensuring that student teachers can successfully teach the increasingly diverse student body is a primary concern.

There is a comprehensive body of research on preparing classroom teachers for diverse classrooms (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Godley et al., 2006; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Leland & Harste, 2004; Lenski, Grisham, & Wold, 2006; Milner & Laughter, 2015). Although extensive research has emerged from this work, there has been little practical application in the construction of teacher education programs (Hollins & Guzman, 2005).
Furthermore, the existing research shows that “many of the fundamental assumptions about the purposes of schooling and the meritocratic nature of American society that have long been implicit in teacher education remain unchallenged and undermined by the weight of other aspects of preparation” (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004, p. 964).

Consequently, many researchers advocate for teacher education programs to prepare student teachers to be “culturally responsive,” and comfortable enacting “multicultural teaching” (Banks, 2003; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive teaching as: “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 106). Gay (2002) articulates the knowledge and skills student teachers need, to work effectively with students of ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity. This set of knowledge and skills include five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching: 1) developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity; 2) including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum; 3) demonstrating caring and building learning communities; 4) communicating with ethnically diverse students; and 5) responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction (p. 106). The knowledge and skills of being a culturally responsive teacher cannot be learned until student teachers and teacher educators alike have had the opportunity to interrogate their assumptions about culture and learning (Dozier et al., 2006, p. 9).

Accordingly, critical literacy has been used and documented in teacher education to show ways in which student teachers disrupt traditional assumptions about student culture, learning and literacy. (Banks, 2003; Comber, 2001; Dozier et al., 2006; Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002; Mosley, 2010; Rogers, 2013; Souto-Manning, 2010; Vasquez, 2013). For instance, Rogers’ work with in-service literacy teachers showed them that after engaging in
critical literacy practices first-hand during their teacher education program, they were able to do the same with their students by: learning more about their students’ community; expanding the teachers notion of what counts as literacy in the curriculum, and inviting students’ interests more readily into the classroom (Rogers, 2014, p. 254). Fennimore (2000) urges for such programs claiming, “successful teacher preparation programs need to be constructed upon commitment to activism as well as to excellence in pedagogical practice” (p. 105).

As the nation’s classrooms are growing more diverse, the teaching population remains fairly homogenous. Researchers have found that the majority of teachers in the U.S. are middle-class, white, women, and monolingual; although, approximately 40 percent of public school children are visible minorities (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Rogers, 2013). These demographic shifts have significant implications for classrooms and learning as research has shown that race and class are complexly linked with classroom dynamics and student achievement (Gay, 2000). For example, when students from diverse cultures, ethnicities and races are not able to “grapple with learning challenges from the point of strength and relevance found in their own cultural frames of reference,” (Gay, 2002, p. 114) they are faced with a “double jeopardy” (p. 114): 1) they must master academic skills, 2) while functioning under cultural conditions unfamiliar to them (p. 114). However, teachers cannot be held accountable for enacting critical literacy pedagogy if they have not been prepared effectively in their teacher education courses.

Research studies document student teachers failing to authentically engage in critical readings and discourse related to multiculturalism, diversity, and anti-oppressive education (Lewison et al., 2002; Marx, 2004). Dozier et al. (2006) assert that in order to teach critically, “our teachers must become critically literate themselves, value social justice, and have a sense
of the cultural contexts in which they work” (p. 16). It has been found that student teachers are often uncomfortable and shy away from the political responsibility associated with teaching (p. 169). Student teachers often take the position of being colorblind when up against issues of equity and diversity in the classroom (Milner, 2010; Milner & Laughter, 2015, Sleeter, 2001). Milner and Laughter (2015) identify colorblindness as an obstacle in enacting practices, which centre issues of equity, in particular, race and poverty. They identified common conceptions student teachers hold about race and teaching:

- **Mindset 1**: If I acknowledge the racial background of my students or myself, then I may be considered a racist.
- **Mindset 2**: I treat all my students the same regardless of their racial or ethnic backgrounds.
- **Mindset 3**: I focus on teaching children and ignore the race of my students because race is irrelevant.
- **Mindset 4**: Race does not matter in my teaching because racism has ended.
- **Mindset 5**: We live in a post-racial society and my classroom practices are, will be, and should be post-racial (p.343-344)

These mindsets are inadequate because they mask the social inequities, which result from an intersection of issues including race and poverty, while reinforcing dominant euro-centric discourses in the classroom (Sleeter, 2001). Consequently, when student teacher assume a colorblind position, it can “make it difficult to recognize institutional, systemic, and classroom practices and realities like disproportionate office referral rates and patterns among students of color to the office for misbehavior…” (p. 344).

Dozier et al. (2006) identified three sources of tension which further explain why student teachers hesitate to address critical literacy issues during their practice teaching placements: have difficulty finding a balance between developing a critical stance and developing reading and writing skills; experience critical literacy as a negative stance; and struggle with sociopolitical and multimodal dimensions of literacy can lead to a diversion
from struggles with the immediate textual dimensions of print literacy (p.169). Although rife with tensions, engaging in critical literacy practices in teacher education is essential. It allows student teachers to understand how “ideological posture informs their perceptions and actions when working with linguistic-minority and other politically, socially, and economically subordinated students” (Lewison et al., 2008, p.97).

Bearing in mind the necessity of critical literacy pedagogy in teacher education, these tensions are worrying. However, these tensions highlight the work that must be done to work through the resistance and help student teachers develop as critically literate educators. Teacher education courses play a major role in this because they can invite student teachers to consider multiple perspectives, interrogate assumptions, focus on socio-political issues, and take social action (Lewison et al., 2008). Ladson-Billings (2000) points a finger at teacher preparation, calling the programs “culpable in the failure of teachers” (p. 208) to teach diverse students. Studies of multicultural teacher education reveal that most teacher preparation programs rely on individual courses and diverse field experiences to prepare student teachers to teach diverse populations, and this approach is inadequate (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Zeichner, 1992). Ladson-Billings (2000) suggests a more “systemic” and “comprehensive” approach is required (p.208). She argues for the place of four practices in all teacher preparation programs:

1) **Autobiography**: When student teachers write their own biography, they have the chance to critically examine their own experiences. Also, student teachers’ voices are invited into the teacher education classroom because they are “representing themselves and their stories from their own perspectives” (Jackson, 1992) (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2000, p.209).
2) **Restructured field experience:** For practice teaching placements, student teachers are often placed in middle-class, suburban schools with a limited placements in “diverse” schools which can reinforce stereotypes and racist attitudes towards ethnically diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 209). However, community-based placements (as opposed to school-based placements) allow student teachers to better understand diverse students’ contexts and community strengths (e.g., neighbourhood associations, church communities, etc.).

3) **Situated pedagogies:** When educators draw on the cultural and linguistic practices of the students’ local communities, they are working to make “school and home experiences of diverse learners more congruent” (p.201). This approach ensures educators avoid enacting generic pedagogic, which privilege only certain learners. Thus, teacher educators must think about how their courses will best prepare student teachers to serve in the communities they will most likely teach in.

4) **Returning to the classroom of experts:** Ladson-Billings’ seminal work which studied successful teachers in diverse classrooms revealed three aspects to their pedagogy which formed, what she termed, a culturally relevant pedagogy. These aspects include academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical critique. First, they encourage academic achievement; educators set a tone for rigour and challenge in their course. Students were expected to work hard (p. 209). Second, cultural competence was actualized when educators valued and included student’s home languages and cultures in the classroom. Finally, the educators used their classrooms as a site of sociopolitical critique. Educators designed opportunities
for their students to develop insights into how larger social structures positioned them and often worked to perpetuate inequities.

**Literacy Teacher Educators**

The place of work for teacher educators, schools of education and teacher education programs, have increasingly been scrutinized by policy-makers, legislators (Anders et al., 2000; Cochran-Smith and Zeichner, 2005; Zeichner, 2006), and increasingly, by the public. Grisham (2006) argues the history of teacher education is one of “public ownership and oversight” (p. vii). The scrutiny for teacher education programs has included aspects such as program quality, diversity, accountability, and teacher characteristics (Grisham, 2006). Interestingly, amidst ongoing debates on the quality of teacher education “policy makers do not give much attention to teacher educators as a distinct professional group” (Swennen and van der Klink, 2009, p.1).

In 2000, Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy argued that more research was needed on literacy teacher education because they were “frustrated by the lack of empirical evidence to guide decisions about programs, curriculum, and instruction” (p. 719). Almost a decade later, these arguments were mirrored by Martinez (2008):

> Little systematic research has been undertaken to inform us about fundamental characteristics of the professional lives of this occupational group…their qualifications, their recruitment, their career pathways into and through academy, their teaching and research practices, the problems they encounter, or their professional needs and practices (p.36).

In order to adequately respond to these challenges, teacher educators are in need of more empirical knowledge, or as Anders and her colleagues (2000) conclude:

> “committing our energies to studying our programs, our courses, our teaching, and our
expectations and requirements. In short, it means consenting to be the subject of study ourselves” (p. 734). By studying literacy teacher educators with a critical stance, this study aims to contribute knowledge on this under researched group and deepen our understanding on their complex work.

Although LTEs remain an under-researched group, there has been a growing body of research on teacher educators as a professional group. Scholars highlighted the need to examine teacher educators’ knowledge and preparation (Berry, 2007; Loughran, 2006). The research on teacher educators is slowly growing and beginning to fill the identified gap in literature. Research areas on teacher educators have included: their transition from the classroom context to the university context (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Loughran, 2006; Murray & Male, 2005, Zeichner, 2005) their knowledge, practices and pedagogies (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Goodwin, 2010; Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Langerwarf, and Wubbels, 2001; Loughran, 2006; Loughran, 2011) and their role in enacting critical literacy practices (Mosley, 2010; Skerrett, 2009; Rogers, 2013; Vasquez, 2013; Vasquez, Tate, & Harste, 2013).

Research on LTEs as a distinct group of teacher educators is an emerging area of study in which there exists a very limited body of literature. However, this research has given great insight into teacher educators as an occupational group. Although not completely literacy specific, the research on teacher educators as an occupational group is highly relevant to this study.

*Transition From the Classroom Context to the University Context*

The path to becoming a teacher educator has traditionally started with teaching in the K-12 classroom first and then moving to higher education (Loughran, 2006). However,
Goodwin and Kosnik (2013) argue the transition from teacher to teacher educator is “not a simple two-step process” (p.334). In addition to their teaching responsibilities, teacher educators must assume a host of new responsibilities: securing grants, conducting research, disseminating knowledge through publications and conferences, and performing service at their institution. Further, teacher educators must learn to “teach about teaching” (Loughran, 2006) and so need to “develop further pedagogical knowledge and understanding, appropriate for second-order setting” (Murray and Male, 2005, p. 137). Loughran (2011) relates these new responsibilities of a teacher educator as essential to their professional development:

> In the world of teacher education, ideas, theories, research and practices are fundamental to the development of teacher educators’ professional knowledge, not least because how teacher educators view their role influenced not only what they do, but also how they do it (p.280).

These expectations, however, are not always made clear to novice teacher educators. Goodwin and Kosnik (2013) have argued for the formal preparation and induction of novice teacher educators (p.343). Similarly, Zeichner (2005) suggests teacher educator preparation begin in graduate school. He, along with his colleagues, designed graduate-level courses, which focus on the study of teacher education. These courses include: supervision and mentoring teachers; teacher education policy issues; and teacher professional development (p.119). Beyond immersion into teacher education through teaching or practicum supervision, Zeichner (2005) suggests two essential components to these courses: 1) conducting a self-study; and 2) gaining a familiarity with teacher education literature (p.122). He explains,

> I believe that everyone who works with prospective teachers need to take at least a basic course that deals with conceptual issues and policy debates in teacher education and recent literature on learning to teach, the nature and efficacy of different program characteristics and instructional strategies, and
the mentoring and assessment of teachers if an individual is working as a supervisor (p.122).

The recommendation that novice teacher educators need preparation and formal induction suggests that teacher education requires a specific pedagogy. Loughran (2011) reminds us that the work of teacher educators “must be informed by knowledge or practice that goes beyond recounting of one’s own school teaching experiences or being limited to the passing on of tips and tricks about teaching” (p. 284).

**Knowledge, Practices, and Pedagogies**

Loughran (2006) and Korthagen et al. (2001) coined the term “pedagogy of teacher education” to describe the knowledge and practices of teacher educators as unique from that of classroom teachers. A pedagogy of teacher education aims to articulate how the knowledge and practices of teacher educators are developed and refined (Loughran, 2011, p. 280). Further, a pedagogy of teacher education offers insight the process of teaching teachers. Goodwin and Kosnik (2013) explain,

Teacher educators need to transcend the practicalities (and limitations) of discrete teaching skills and tools gained from previous teaching experience; and develop ways of thinking about and approaching teaching and learning that promote the application of a professional repertoire to a vast array of dilemmas, most of which cannot possibly be anticipated beforehand. Yet, standards for teacher educators are needed, but simply creating new or more numerous standards may not be enough to address the vacancy so apparent in teacher education preparation (p. 337-338).

Pertaining to the knowledge of teacher educators, Goodwin (2010) identifies five domains of teaching. Each of Goodwin’s (2010) domains of teaching will be explained followed by the ways in which each domain of knowledge informs the work of teacher educators.

1) personal knowledge/ autobiography and philosophy of teaching;
2) contextual knowledge/ understanding learners, schools, and society;
3) pedagogical knowledge/content, theories, teaching methods, and curriculum dvpt.;
4) sociological knowledge/ diversity, cultural relevance, and social justice; and
5) social knowledge/ cooperative, democratic group process, and conflict resolution.

i. Personal knowledge. Through years of being a student in K-12 classrooms and in post-secondary contexts, student teachers, through years of ‘apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), inevitably have impressions of who teachers are and what they do. It is for this reason beginning teachers often teach the way they were taught, regardless of topics addressed in their teacher preparation program. Understanding the importance of integration of student teachers’ personal experiences and formal teacher training, Goodwin (2010) asserts: “Each student teacher needs to draw on personal knowledge, prior experience, the teacher preparation curriculum, and practice teaching, and reconstruct these in such a way as to derive personal meaning” (p.23).

Teacher educators also enter the academy with preconceived notions of who a teacher educator is and what they do. Receiving little to no induction or formal preparation, novice teacher educators often replicate what they believe should be good teaching in teacher education, based on years as apprenticeship observers. Goodwin and Kosnik (2013) argue that “Through self-study, self-reflection, novice teacher educators can critically unearth the beliefs, (mis)conceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and biases embedded in their personal histories” (p.339).

ii. Contextual knowledge. This domain includes knowledge of the immediate environments in which students are located: the classroom and the community. However,
contextual knowledge goes beyond the immediate to include an understanding of the political, historical, social, and cultural contexts in which students live in (Goodwin, 2010, p. 24). It would be unrealistic, however, to expect student teachers to gain knowledge for every situation that may arise in a student’s context. However, teacher education programs, and thus teacher educators, can work to “teach student [teachers] ways of thinking about studying teaching and children, placing problem-solving, problem-posing, and data-gathering skills at the centre of teacher preparation” (Richardson, 1996 as cited in Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013, p. 339).

**iii. Pedagogical knowledge.** Although student teachers often request practical knowledge like ‘tricks of the trade,’ teacher preparation programs should be creating opportunities for student teachers to gain deeper pedagogical knowledge. Beyond gaining a knowledge of content and theories and developing a repertoire of teaching strategies, student teachers should gain an understanding of how to “study a situation, notice what students need, and invent appropriate practices” (Schoonmaker, 2002 as cited in Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013, p.340). One way to hone this ability is invite student teachers to be curriculum makers rather than curriculum implementers (Goodwin, 2010, p. 25). This shift allows for more meaningful connections to be made in the class because “the teacher and his or her students have agency and are actors in the process; they are not simply acted upon” (p.25).

Teacher educators’ pedagogical knowledge of course includes knowledge about teaching (e.g., instructional methods, pedagogical content knowledge, and curriculum design), but they must also develop a pedagogy of teacher education (Loughran, 2006). This domain asks teacher educators to transcend the “doing of teaching to achieve the understanding of
teaching about teaching with the requisite skills and dispositions” (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013, p. 341).

iv. Sociological knowledge. This domain of knowledge acknowledges that while diversity has always existed, globalization has highlighted the nuances of diversity and made it a topic which we must address. This means we cannot “ignore any longer the too many children who do not receive what they deserve, including a quality and caring education to help them develop into informed, thinking, moral, and empowered citizens” (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013, p. 341). Goodwin (2010) recognizes this domain as the most challenging because issues related to equity (race, class, gender) are connected to each of our core beliefs and values (p.26).

Teacher educators must have a firm grasp on the sociological issues, which affect teaching and learning because they must help student teachers recognize, understand, and respond to a diverse student body. Further, Goodwin and Kosnik (2013) assert that teacher preparation programs should create space for interrupting commonplace think, and so teacher preparation “must become uncomfortable” (p. 342).

v. Social knowledge. This final domain of teaching considers the complexities of teaching and learning in the twenty-first century, and the ability to participate in democratic and cooperative groups in order to respond to dilemmas presented. A teacher who is skilled in fostering democratic and cooperative groups will create classrooms where fairness, equality, and fairness are valued (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013, p. 342).

In this domain, the teacher educators’ role transcends preparing student teachers for certification; rather, “they are preparing teachers to remake the profession, ensuring that new
teachers are ready to make a true and positive difference in the live of young people - young people who will in turn initiate positive change” (p. 342).

These domains reveal the vast amounts of knowledge teacher educators need to develop a pedagogy of teacher education. Further, the domains draw focus to the need for “good teaching as the consequence of numerous decisions and reflective practice” rather than a set of “discrete behaviors and competences” (p.22).

Building on the domains of knowledge for teacher educators (Goodwin, 2010), Kosnik et al. (2013) have identified “spheres of knowledge” specifically needed for LTEs: knowledge of research; knowledge of pedagogy in higher education; knowledge of literacy and literacy teaching; and knowledge of current school and government initiatives. These expansive and overlapping spheres reveal the complex work of LTEs because they “span two disciplines, literacy and teacher education” (p.51).

i. Knowledge of research. The first sphere of knowledge for LTEs recognizes the increasing need for teacher educators to be able to conduct quality research and use research appropriately in their work. Novice teacher educators are expected to “expand and/or refine their knowledge of research practices, learn new methodologies, and acquire identities as full-fledged researchers” (p. 57), while mid-and later-career teacher educators need to continue refining their research skills and secure large-scale research grants, which may be a source of pressure for them (p. 57).

ii. Knowledge of pedagogy in higher education. Although most teacher educators enter higher education via the K-12 classroom, research has shown that there is no direct transfer of the skills used for teaching children to those needed when teaching adults (Loughran, 2008).
Thus, a pedagogy of higher education is required. Novice teacher educators need to “develop further pedagogical knowledge and understanding, appropriate for the second-order setting” (Murray and Male, 2005, p. 137). Mid-and later-career teacher educators must understand how to remain current with classroom literacy practices and negotiate a balance between their teaching responsibilities and administrative duties.

**iii. Knowledge of literacy and literacy teaching.** The third sphere of knowledge takes into consideration the rapidly changing landscape of literacy and literacy teaching. As our knowledge of literacy practices have continued to expand, to include both in and out of school literacy practices, LTEs must continue to expand their knowledge in theories in literacy as well as “know how to prepare student teachers how to be literacy/English teachers” (p. 58). This means LTEs must stay abreast “current school-based literacy pedagogy, including curriculum resources …teaching practices, climate in schools, public view of teachers… and professional resource materials” (p. 58).

**iv. Knowledge of current school and government initiatives.** The fourth sphere of knowledge required for LTEs emphasizes the importance of understanding the context in which they and their student teachers work. Today’s context of teacher education involves “a greater degree of political interference in curriculum goals and processes” (Bayer, 2009, p. 3). Kosnik et al. (2014) recognize the often “deleterious effects of micro-management” teacher educators face when preparing student teachers and teaching in-service courses. LTEs must also develop knowledge of school and government initiatives when becoming involved in schools through conducting research or teaching in-service courses.
In their paper *Improving Teacher Education Through Longitudinal Research*, Kosnik et al. (2009) uncovered six themes when looking at the pedagogical practices of LTEs. The paper reports looking at common goals and practices; emphases and gaps; and recognizing differences in practice of LTEs as the main findings. They also identify six major themes to describe literacy teacher education pedagogy, which extends far beyond the notions of “best practices” and good classroom practices. These themes include: range of areas of expertise; course organization; conceptual framework; balancing theory and practice; avoiding being prescriptive; and challenges in the literacy course (Kosnik et al., 2009).

When discussing their findings, Kosnik et al. (2009) note being “astounded” (p.173) by the differences among the instructors. In particular, the variance in conceptual frameworks had significant implications, which they argue would “result in students graduating from the program with markedly different knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 163). This variability in what teacher educators know and are able to do directly affects how prepared student teachers are to effectively teach in 21st century classrooms.

Smith and Rhodes (2006) argue that LTEs should aim to “inspire emerging teachers to become literacy leaders” (p.36) at the forefront. They offer a set of skills essential for literacy teacher educators: learning to be a model of and motivator for literacy; working with diverse levels of literacy and cultures; understanding and using several types of assessments; understanding and using recent literacy research; and becoming an innovator for literacy improvement (p. 36). Given the influence of teacher educators’ beliefs and understanding of knowledge, practice, and learning, it is imperative that more attention is given to the work of LTEs.
Role in Enacting Critical Literacy Practices

There is an emerging body of research documenting how LTEs are re-framing their courses and integrating resources from critical literacy pedagogy (Kosnik et al., 2013; Mosley, 2010; Skerrett, 2009; Rogers, 2013; Vasquez, 2013). Rogers (2014) expands on the potential of critical literacy practices in teacher education courses:

The intellectual work of designing critical literacy practices provides multiple learning opportunities for teachers to rethink traditional assumptions about literacy, learning, and the role of literacy education in the lives of the children and families with whom they work. This is particularly important because part of teacher learning includes disrupting old patterns of thought and integrating new (p. 257).

Vasquez, Tate, and Harste (2013), in their book *Negotiating Critical Literacies with Teachers: Theoretical Foundations and Pedagogical Resources for Pre-Service and In-Service Contexts*, identify the gap in knowledge about “the alignment between our [LTE] expectations for our own literate lives and our expectations for our students [teachers] as literacy learners” (p.3). Further, Vasquez et al. (2013) note that universities do not often practice what they preach in terms of critical literacy teaching, and so LTEs need to “avoid talking the talk” (p.3). Vasquez (2004) notes that critical literacy is not an approach that can be taught traditionally; rather, it should be “lived” through the socio-political issues that emerge in the communities in which we live. She further asserts that educators “need to incorporate a critical perspective into our everyday lives in order to find ways to help children understand the social and political issues around them” (Vasquez, 2004, p. 1).

To interrupt oppressive schooling practices, Goodwin (2010) calls for teacher educators to develop and draw upon their sociological knowledge (one of the five domains of knowledge aforementioned). She further explains,
Teacher preparation will need to become uncomfortable, a space for interrupting low expectations, deficit thinking, racism, classism, xenophobia, and all other kids of isms, if our intention is to develop teachers who can uphold the rights of children and are equipped to interrupt schooling practices that are discriminatory and harmful (p.26).

Goodwin (2010) acknowledges the challenging nature of creating such spaces for teacher educators because “issues like race, class, and inequity are sensitive and loaded with emotion, and connect to our core beliefs (p.26). Moreover, although there has been a push towards addressing critical issues of diversity and multiculturalism in teacher education courses, many scholars have documented this effort to be artificially implemented (Dixson & Dingus, 2007; Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005). Researchers have identified several reasons for this: teacher educators who don’t identify with this work are being forced to teach it (Ladson-Billings, 2005a; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005); teacher educators are using an “add-on” approach to teaching because they are simply appeasing a call to action (Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005); and/or student teachers are resistant to engaging with this work (Dixson & Dingus, 2007, p.645). The influence LTEs have on the future work of student teachers calls for research focused on teacher educators’ beliefs about teaching and learning in relation to their own critical literacy pedagogical practices. However, at this point researchers know very little about LTEs and the ways in which they enact critical literacy practices (Rogers, 2014).

**Chapter Summary**

Critical literacy pedagogy challenges the status quo and strives to disrupt inequitable schooling practices with the aim of a more just society. While critical literacy has its roots in the area of adult literacy (Freire, 1970), contemporary critical literacy scholars have encouraged the use of critical literacy practices in teacher education. LTEs play an essential
role in realizing the goals of critical literacy. Rogers (2014) reminds us that LTEs have the opportunity to engage student teachers in transformational work by “designing learning experiences that support their development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to work confidently with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds” (p. 7).

Researchers have found that teacher educators require a vast amount of knowledge (e.g., personal knowledge, sociological knowledge), which goes beyond pedagogical content knowledge (Goodwin, 2010). Although a subset of teacher educators, LTEs require a unique “spheres of knowledge” (e.g., knowledge of higher education; knowledge of government based initiatives) (Kosnik et al., 2013). However, teacher educators, for the most part, do not receive any formal preparation or induction into teaching in teacher education. Further, teacher educators enacting critical literacy practices are often met with resistance, from the public, colleagues or student teachers, when taking up critical issues like race, privilege, and power. This study aims at gaining insight into the complex roles of LTEs who enact critical literacy pedagogies in their teacher education courses. Using the four dimensions of critical literacy framework (Lewison et al., 2008) helps to fill a gap in the literature on the experiences, visions, and practices of this unique professional group.
Chapter 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Systematically capturing the work of dedicated LTEs can be challenging. LTEs have a multifaceted role as they maintain active research agendas, teach undergraduate and graduate courses, and participate in service work at their institution (e.g., doctoral student supervisor, member of faculty committees). In order to study and understand them individually and collectively, a qualitative research methodology was appropriate. It allowed me to pursue specific lines of inquiry and provided detailed information on views, experiences, practices, and pedagogies of the LTEs with a critical stance. The qualitative methods I used to conduct my study resulted in a depth of knowledge about a niche group of six LTEs with a critical stance in the U.S. context.

While there is an emerging body of research on teacher educators, especially on the transition from teacher to teacher educator (Murray & Male, 2005), more studies are needed which consider the knowledge, background, and experiences of LTEs (Kosnik et al., 2013; Kosnik et al., 2014). While studies on LTEs professional induction into the academy from classroom teaching (Boyd and Harris, 2012; McKeon and Harrison, 2012; Murray and Male, 2005) provide a glimpse into the shifting identities of teacher educators, an incomplete picture remains. How do they acquire the knowledge necessary to be LTEs? What experiences do they bring to their roles? In what ways have educational reforms influenced their practice? Questions like these can begin to be answered through an in-depth study of LTEs.
My study recognizes that teacher educators are not a homogenous group; their backgrounds, career trajectories, and visions of teacher education are varied. There has been little focus on sub-groups of teacher educators (e.g., LTEs vs. physical education teacher educators; primary-focused teacher educators vs. secondary-focused teacher educators). Furthermore, LTEs have seldom been considered as a distinct group of teacher educators, with the same being true for those with a critical stance. Kosnik et al. (2015) state, “Teacher educators are considered as a homogenous group without attention to the specifics of the discipline they teach. If there are differences in the demands placed on them because of the content they teach these have not yet been identified” (p. 53).

This study explores the niche group of LTEs by examining their needs, challenges, successes, and goals. Understanding the sensitive and complex work of LTEs with a critical stance requires a methodology that captures the nuances of their work and their identity. This study investigates the work of LTEs beyond their pedagogies and practices, and studies LTEs individually and as a group. A qualitative methodology approach allowed for in-depth exploration of the backgrounds, visions, and practices, which suited the purposes of this research. My research aimed to delve beyond the superficial and gain insight into the nuanced work of LTEs with a critical stance.

This chapter is organized into seven sections. The first section describes the current U.S. context in which the LTEs work. In the second section, I describe the qualitative research methodology and research design used in this study. This section includes a description of a grounded theory approach; an overviews of the primary research questions; and an explanation of the participant selection process. The third section discusses the data collection methods used in the study. Section four is devoted to describing the data analysis process,
including the use of NVivo9 qualitative software. The final three sections describe limitations of the study, ethical considerations, and a summary.

**Context of Teacher Education in the U.S.**

Something dramatic has happened to teacher education policy in the last 30 years. Up until the 1980s, in virtually every country around the world, teacher education was a relative backwater in terms of educational policy. In a world of intense competition among nations, education increasingly plays a key role. National prosperity, social justice, and social cohesion are all seen to rest on the shoulders of education (Lauder, Brown, Dillabough, & Halsey, 2007) (Furlong, 2013, p. 29).

Over the past few decades teacher education in the U.S. has undergone significant transformations (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Kosnik, Beck, & Goodwin, 2016; Zeichner, 2006), leading to a great deal of “variability” in educational policies and practices (Darling-Hammond, 2012, p.130). The priorities, policies, and reform agendas have sent conflicting messages regarding the knowledge student teachers need to acquire and the skills they should learn. The balance between content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge continues to be debated. In fact, Darling-Hammond (2012) notes in some states “[teacher] candidates can gain licensure without any pedagogical preparation if they pass a content test” (p.132).

As noted earlier, teacher education has been a “backwater” of educational policy, but over the past 30 years it has been placed on the “hot seat.” Given the dramatically changing landscape of teacher education, it is the ideal time to study teacher educators, a professional group at the forefront of teacher education. Teacher educators are living through an era of reform never witnessed before. An in-depth look into the work of LTEs is necessary to understand how and why their work aligns with or challenges the educational reforms. Thus, a
small sample of LTEs, as opposed to a large-scale sample, allows for an in-depth examination into their views and practices during the current era of reform.

**U.S. Educational Reforms and Teacher Education**

Some educational reforms have made strides towards the professionalization of teaching. For example, the 1980s saw professional organizations like the Holmes Group, The Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) advocate for the “centrality of expertise to effective practice and the need to build a more knowledgeable and skillful professional teaching force” (Darling-Hammond, 2012, p. 130). As a result, policy initiatives were developed to: design professional standards, strengthen teacher education and certification, and increase investments in induction mentoring and professional development. In recent years, nation-wide standards (i.e. Common Core Standards) and Teacher Performance Assessments (i.e. EdTPA2) have been developed to further professionalize teaching; however, there lies a great deal of variability in the implementation of these initiatives. EdTPA, for example, has not been adopted in all 50 states in the U.S., and so while some teacher education programs place great emphasis on teacher performance assessment preparation, others do not include it at all. This variability in government initiatives influences the everyday practices of LTEs.

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2 “EdTPA is a student-centered multiple measure assessment of teaching. It is designed to be educative and predicting of effective teaching and student learning. Stanford University faculty and staff at Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) developed edTPA” (www.nystce.nesinc.com/NY_annTPA.asp)
Simultaneously, the past three decades have seen “reforms”, which have been aimed at replacing the traditional elements of teacher professionalization: formal preparation, licensure, certification, and accreditation of teacher and teacher education programs. (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Goodwin, 2015). As a result, there has been a de-professionalization of teaching by creating easier access into the profession while promoting the elimination of tenure (Darling-Hammond, 2012, p. 130). By replacing traditional teacher education programs, supporters of this perspective believe that teaching does not require highly specialized skills and knowledge; rather, all learning can be done while on the job, in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2012, p.130). Brewer and Code (2014) argue, “Proponents of [these] reforms seek to subvert teacher professionalism, commoditize teaching and learning for profit, and de-skill teaching in order to replace traditional colleges of education” (p. 77). It is from this position that alternative pathways to teaching have been developed. Alternative certification programs are currently operating in 47 of the 50 U.S. states, and as a result have created alternative pathways to certification and licensure (i.e. Transitional B certification) (Kosnik, Beck, & Goodwin, 2015, p.) Kosnik et al. (2015) comment on this trend in the last few decades, “This period saw university-based teacher preparation revising their programs and coursework specifications, adding credits to meet additional content requirements, changing student teaching, supplementing staffing in order to maintain state approval for their programs” (n.a). It is ironic that university-based programs have had more requirements to meet while shorter alternative certification programs proliferate.

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3 Alternative Certification Programs give prospective teachers a few weeks of training in the summer and then become teachers of record in the fall while they complete additional coursework, either through a university or through a district training program (Darling Hammond, 2012, p. 136)
Teacher licensure, certification requirements, and formal preparation vary from state to state. For instance, the 50 states require some or all of the following components in order for teachers to gain licensure: performance assessment, pedagogical skills exam, content subject assessment, and basic skills exam. As a result, teacher education programs and what teacher educators need to know vary a great deal across states and universities. Darling-Hammond and Ball (1997) comment:

Unlike other professions where the professional curriculum is reasonably common across institutions, the enacted curriculum of teacher education in the United States is often more idiosyncratic to programs and their professions. Students’ learning experiences can be distributed widely across university departments and school sites often with little coordination between them (as cited in Darling-Hammond, 2012, p.133).

Educational reforms in the U.S. have focused largely on outcomes, measures, and mandating the particulars of teacher education courses; however, little attention has been paid to teacher educators. Kosnik et al. (2013) note, “The intense focus on teacher education programs…overlooks the teacher educators who deliver these programs” (p. 525). If teacher educators are truly “linchpins” (Cochran-Smith, 2003) of education, we must ask: What issues do the LTEs face amidst all these educational reforms? How do the reforms impact their visions and practices of literacy education? We know that teaching is both a relational and political act (Kosnik et al., 2013). When teacher educators work in highly politicized contexts, how does this affect their identity and relationships with their student teachers? Teacher educators’ conceptualizations and enactments of pedagogy are influenced by the context in which they teach, specifically the barriers they face and supports they receive in their specific institutions. An in-depth qualitative study allowed me to document and analyze their conceptualizations of critical literacy and teacher education in this current era of reform.
Qualitative Research Methodology and Design

A qualitative research methodology was chosen because I was primarily interested in a rich and comprehensive understanding of the six LTEs with a critical stance. While qualitative research tends to be “time-consuming, intimate, and intense” (Patton, 2002, p. 35), Strauss and Corbin (1990) note it places “social interaction and social processes at the center” (p.6) of inquiry. It emphasizes the necessity for clearly understanding participants’ viewpoints for understanding interaction, process, and social change (p.6). And so, data is collected and studied in an effort to describe the experiences, viewpoints, and meaning in the lives of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). Similarly, Merriam (2009) identifies three areas of interest for qualitative researchers which reiterate understanding participants’ viewpoints as a fundamental goal in qualitative research: “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 23). There have been limited opportunities for LTEs to share stories and views about their professional lives (Kosnik et al., 2012; Kosnik et al., 2013; Kosnik et al., 2014) Through three in-depth interviews I was able to collect extensive data on the participants, allowing for me to best understand their views, feelings, intentions, and actions, as well as the context and structures of their lives (Charmaz, 2006, p.14). In trying to document and analyze the nuanced work of LTEs, qualitative research was the best “fit” for my research goals.

Qualitative research is a systematic and empirical strategy through which researchers can make meaning from participants’ lived experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Although the practices of qualitative researchers are varied, there are key features present in the practices of qualitative researchers. Merriam (2009) identifies four features to describe qualitative
research. I will describe each feature in general followed by details on how it relates to my study.

First, qualitative research recognizes the individual participants’ experiences and their meaning. In other words, the researcher considers “[h]ow do people make sense of their experience?” (p.5). For my study, I was interested in exploring how LTEs with a critical stance were influenced and informed by their personal and professional experiences, including early life experiences. I wanted to understand how their experiences influenced their visions, practices, and pedagogies as LTEs.

The second feature of qualitative research is that the primary instrument used to collect and analyze data is the researcher herself. The intent of qualitative research is used to study individuals’ understanding of their experiences. Naturally, as the primary data collection instrument, the researcher may have biases, which could affect the study. Charmaz (2006) notes: “Qualitative research of all sorts relies on those who conduct it,” and as researchers, “[w]e are not passive receptacles into which data are poured” (p. 15). Rather than attempting to remove such biases, qualitative research operates on the belief that biases presented by the researcher must be considered, accounted for and monitored to determine their influence on data collection and analysis. I recognized that my previous experiences unavoidably influenced the data I collected, how I collected it, how I analyzed it, and ultimately the ways in which I reported my participants’ experiences. As a former classroom teacher, I began my research with assumptions about the pedagogies of teaching and learning based on my personal experiences. During the research process, I was acutely aware of my responsibility to recognize my assumptions and biases and monitor them to minimize their influences on the data collection and analysis process.
The third feature of qualitative research is that it is seen as an inductive process, rather than a deductive one. Researchers gather evidence in order to establish theories rather than verify theories. In this study, there was limited literature to draw upon for studying LTEs with a critical stance, and so I used a modified grounded theory approach for my data collection and analysis. And so, as data was being collected, the analysis process began. This allowed for the analysis to inform future data collection while themes started to emerge.

The final feature associated with qualitative research considers the products gathered from the research. Qualitative research is “richly descriptive” (Charmaz, 2006, p.5) and its data is most often in the form of words and pictures rather than numerical data produced by other types of research. My study describes each participant in detail, as well as his/her professional context. By drawing upon their actual words, quotes from the interviews were integral components of the findings section, contributing to the “descriptive nature of qualitative research” (p.5).

**Research Questions**

Qualitative research studies involve asking the kinds of questions that focus on the why and how of human interactions (Agee, 2009, p. 432). Thus, qualitative research questions need to reflect the particularities of a study by articulating “what a researcher wants to know about the intentions and perspectives of those involved in social interactions” (p. 432). My research questions reflect my intention to study the backgrounds, visions, and practices of LTEs with a critical stance, and further, to begin to describe the pedagogies enacted by this group. To explore these issues, my qualitative study was framed by the following research questions:

1. What are the LTEs’ conceptualizations of critical literacy in teacher education?
2. In what way do LTEs’ backgrounds and experiences influence their practices and pedagogies?

3. What are the goals and practices/pedagogies of LTEs with a critical stance?

4. What challenges do they face and what supports do they receive when enacting critical literacy practices in their teacher education courses?

Three interviews were conducted, each approximately 60-90 minutes in length. Each interview had a specific focus including early childhood experiences, turning points, identity, goals for their courses, examples of assignments, use of digital technology, and views of their teacher education programs. More detail on the three interviews is included later in this chapter.

**Participant Selection**

The six participants in this study were chosen from the group of 28 LTEs who were already participants in a large-scale Social Sciences and Humanities Council (SSHRC) study entitled, *LTEs: Their Backgrounds, Visions, and Practices*. The principal investigator of this study was Dr. Clare Kosnik from OISE, University of Toronto.

*i. Participant selection for larger study.*

After receiving ethical review approval for the study from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Toronto, Dr. Kosnik issued 15 invitations to LTEs who were a good fit for the study (i.e. teaching literacy courses). This led to “snowball” sampling as the invited LTEs suggested colleagues who might be interested in the study. Merriam (2009) describes “snowball” sampling as a process when researchers select participants for the study; the participants then suggest other suitable participants from their network to be part of the study. In total 34 invitations were sent via e-mail, and in the end 28 accepted. To our knowledge,
none declined because of lack of interest; rather, those who declined gave reasons such as they were assuming an administrative position and would not be teaching literacy methods courses.

The 28 LTEs were faculty at research-focused or teaching-focused universities in four countries: Australia, Canada, U.K, and, U.S.A. For purposes of consistency, all participants had a Ph.D. and were teaching literacy courses in a teacher education program. Their status at the university varied: tenure-stream, tenured, contract lecturer. The 28 participants had a range of experience both as classroom teachers and LTEs. The gender representation of participants (M=9; F=21) mirrored that of the profession as a whole (Ducharme, 1996). Below is an overview of the 28 participants from the larger study.
Table 1: *Overview of 28 Participants (as of January, 2015).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience as classroom teacher</th>
<th>0 years</th>
<th>1-5 years</th>
<th>6-10 years</th>
<th>12-20 years</th>
<th>21+ years</th>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<th>Experience as a teacher educator</th>
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<th>6-10 years</th>
<th>11-15 years</th>
<th>16-20 years</th>
<th>21+ years</th>
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<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>U.S.A.</th>
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<th>Australia</th>
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<th>Gender</th>
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<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>
ii. Participant selection for my study.

The six participants in my study, LTEs with a critical stance, were chosen from the larger group using purposive sampling. Berg (2004) notes that researchers develop purposive samples when they hold “special knowledge or expertise about [a] group to select [participants] who represent this population” (p. 36). It is for this reason, purposive sampling is considered to be a form of “theoretical sampling,” a tenet of grounded theory research (Denscombe, 2003). When applying theoretical sampling practices, the researcher generally has “some idea of the phenomena he or she wants to study then, based on his knowledge, selects groups of individuals, an organization, or community most representative of that phenomenon” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 420).

Drawing on my existing knowledge about the field of critical literacy and teacher education, I identified three qualifiers, which would determine a purposive sample. I was mindful of these qualifiers as we collected data in the first two interviews. First, the participants’ pedagogical practices illustrated a critical literacy approach as defined by Lewison et al.’s (2008) Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy framework (i.e. disrupting the commonplace; viewing multiple perspectives; focusing on socio-political issues; and taking action and social justice). Questions posed in the first two interviews helped determine if participants’ pedagogical practices were aligned with the critical literacy framework. Questions in the first two interviews, which were particularly helpful in identifying possible participants, were: What are the particular goals for this course? Tell me about your teaching style. Second, the participants’ publications and research considered critical issues such as social justice, relationships between language and power, and culturally relevant pedagogy. This information was gleaned by questions posed in the first interview (e.g., Tell me about
your experiences with research?), as well as from listings of participants’ publications on their respective university faculty websites. Third, the theorists who resonated with them came from a critical perspective (e.g. Allan Luke, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Paulo Freire, Celia Genishi). This was determined by interview questions in the second interview (e.g. Which literacy theorists resonate with you?) and by scanning the references section of their publications.

Based on the three sources of information for participant selection, nine LTEs fit the selection criteria. Using a purposive sampling practice, six from the nine participants were selected for this study. Being a qualitative research study, my goal was to conduct an in-depth study of LTEs with a critical stance, and so the number of participants had to be manageable and realistic within the scope of a doctoral dissertation. Further, six of the nine participants who met the selection criteria were from the U.S., while two were from the U.K. and one was from Canada. Through my teaching and schooling experiences, the U.S. was a context I was familiar with and also interested in exploring further. Also, concentrating on one country would allow for a more consistent sample while attempting to understand the complex work of LTEs in a particular setting. The background information for the six participants in this study is outlined below.
Table 2: *Overview of Six Participants (as of January, 2015)*.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience as classroom teacher</td>
<td>1-5 years= 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years= 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience as a teacher educator</td>
<td>1-5 years= 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years= 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 years= 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>U.S.A.- 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female= 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male= 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection Sources**

For this study, data collection consisted of interviews with LTEs and a review of their course syllabi (provided by each participant). The six LTEs were interviewed three times each from 2012-2015, for approximately 60-90 minutes. The interviews were used to investigate the research questions outlined earlier in the chapter. Following is a description of data collection and each data source.

*Intensive Interviews*
Intensive interviews are a valuable means of collecting qualitative data when conducting in-depth research on particular topics and experiences (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). Focusing on the participants’ voices, interviews allow for the researcher to gain insight into their experiences, feelings, and views, many of which we cannot observe such as influence of childhood experiences (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 1998). In this study, interviews were used as a data collection tool because the goal of my research was to understand the participants’ backgrounds, visions, and practices as related to their work as LTEs with a critical stance. Wanting to learn first-hand about their experiences and feelings, which I could not observe, I decided interviews would be a valuable tool for data collection.

Interviews can range from structured to informal, with semi-structured interviews falling in along the middle of the continuum (Merriam, 1998). In this study, the interviews were semi-structured in format. Using this format, each interview began with pre-determined questions for all participants in order to gain insights into the similarities and differences of participant experiences. However, when “something” unexpected and of relevance came to light, probe or follow-up questions were asked which were unique to each participant.

Much like critical literacy, intensive interviewing is a contextual and negotiated practice (Charmaz, 2006, p. 27). The interviewing process serves to co-create findings because “whether participants recount their concerns without interruption or researchers request specific information, the result is a construction- or reconstruction- of a reality” (p. 27). For this study, questions were “open-ended but directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet flexible” (p. 28) in order to allow for new ideas to emerge and be pursued (Merriam, 1998).

i. Interviews in the larger study.
The six LTEs in this study were also part of a large-scale study, entitled *LTEs: Their Backgrounds, Visions, and Practices*. The larger study consisted of 28 LTEs. Each participant was interviewed three times from 2012-2015, with each semi-structured interview approximately 60-90 minutes in length. The data collected through interviews in the larger study and this study were similar. Generally, the participants in my study were asked the same questions as in the larger study for all three interviews; however, probe questions were asked when participants made reference to critical literacy practices. Additionally, the six participants in this study were asked a set of questions relating specifically to their critical literacy practices in the third interview.

The interviews were conducted via video conferencing tools (i.e. Skype, FaceTime) or face-to-face whenever possible. All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. Following each interview, data was recorded in an Excel spreadsheet to capture quantifiable data (e.g., Years as a classroom teacher) and qualitative data (e.g., Ph.D. research topics).

*ii. Focus of first interview.*

The first interview included six sections of questions: participants’ backgrounds, influences on practice, academic community, qualities of effective LTEs, identities, and research activities. The first two sections focused on their background as well as influences on practice, including their LTEs experience, their classroom teaching experience, and their educational background. Questions included: “Tell me about your work experience at the university.” “What jobs/positions did you have prior to joining the university?” “Thinking about your previous educational experiences and work experiences which do you see as being most useful in your current work as a LTEs?” and “To what extent do you draw on your experiences as a classroom teacher in your current work as a teacher educator? How do you draw on them?”
The next three sections of the interview looked at participants’ perceptions of qualities in effective LTEs, their academic community, and their identity as LTEs. Sample questions from these three sections included: “What background/work experiences do you think are important for a teacher educator?” “What conferences do you go to?” “When you are asked by someone outside of the university what you do, how do you describe your job/profession?” and “How comfortable are you being labeled a teacher educator?”

These sections were followed by the final set of questions on the participants’ experiences with research. They were asked about the emphasis of their Ph.D. as well as their current research activities. Questions from this section: “Had you always planned to get a Ph.D.? If no, when did you decide to pursue a Ph.D.?” “How well is your Ph.D. research connected to your current work as a teacher educator?” and “Do you think it is important for teacher educators to be doing research? If yes, why? If no, does this present any problems?”

iii. Focus of second interview.

The second set of interviews took place approximately 10 months to one year after the first interviews. While the first interview primarily focused on participants’ backgrounds and identities, the second interview focused on their pedagogies and practices. The interview questions were divided into four sections: framework and goals for their literacy courses; pedagogies used and examples of enactment; assignments and readings; and shifting views and practices of literacy. Participants were asked to select one literacy course they were currently teaching or had recently taught. They would keep the selected course in mind when answering the remainder of the questions focusing on course particularities (e.g., assignments, course structure). In this section, questions regarding course structure were also asked: “How many hours is this course?” “Generally, how many students are in this course?” and “Do you
have a Teaching Assistant” These questions concerning course logistics provided a clearer picture of their immediate teaching context. Next, participants were asked about goals for their course. Questions from this section included: “Is this a survey course or do you go in depth with topics?” “What do you think student teachers need to know?” and “To what extent are you able to connect your course with fieldwork/practice teaching?”

The following three sections of the interview looked at participants’ pedagogies, practices, assignments, course readings, and changes in practice. Although the course syllabi provided an outline of assignments and readings, the interview made space for participants to describe them in detail while offering their reasons for incorporating them into their courses. Sample questions from these two sections included “Is there something you hold dearly to your heart that you want to be part of your teaching?” “To what extent do you use children’s literature/young adolescent literature in your teaching? How do you use it?” and “Looking back on the years, how has your practice as a LTEs changed? Why has it changed?”

The second interview initially included a section of questions concerning digital technology practices; however, after careful consideration these questions were not asked for several reasons. First, the participants had much to say about their practices and pedagogies, so asking questions about digital technology would have risked cutting off participant responses or caused participant fatigue from an exceedingly long interview. Second, throughout the second interview many participants mentioned aspects of their digital technology practice. There were significant similarities and differences in their uses and views on digital technology, and so the initial interview questions had to be re-examined to ensure they were meaningful to the participants and the study. Once reworked, this set of questions was asked in the third set of interviews.
iv. Focus of third interview.

In the final interview all participants from the larger study were asked three sets of interview questions, while participants in my study were asked an additional set of questions specifically focusing on their critical literacy practices. These included questions regarding professional labels: “Would you be comfortable being called a critical literacy teacher educator or is there another term you prefer?” This question was followed by questions about their pedagogies. Sample questions asked included: “To what extent do you address issues of equity, including power, race, and privilege in your courses?” and “What are some difficulties/challenges you experience when addressing these topics?” The following section looked at participants’ views of their current teacher education program. Questions from this section included: “What would you consider to be poor practices in teacher education?” and “What would you like to see in your teacher education program that is currently not part of it?”

The third section of the interview focused on the participants’ views and uses of digital technology. A subset of questions in this section asked participants to rank their views on different aspects of digital technology using a Likert scale. Using a scale from one to five with one being the lowest and five being the highest, questions of this nature included: “How comfortable are you using digital technology in your teaching?” and “How important is it for LTEs to be using digital technology in their teaching?” Other questions from this section (non-ranking ones) asked for participants to consider the advantages and challenges of digital technology, as well as effective uses of digital technology they have witnessed. This section was followed by a final set of questions about participants’ future professional plans.

Data Analysis
**Grounded Theory**

A grounded theory approach is a form of qualitative inquiry in which “data collection and analysis reciprocally inform and shape each other through an emergent iterative process” (Charmaz, 2011, p. 360). In other words, the primary purpose of a grounded theory approach is to generate theory from data rather than verify theory from data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Punch, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 2000). This approach is often used when theory of a topic is limited or simply does not exist.

As noted earlier, there is a limited body of research that has explored the backgrounds, visions, and practices of LTEs. There is an even smaller selection of research on LTEs with a critical stance. Although the research in the area of critical literacy studies is robust, the theoretical foundation on which to base this particular research was lacking. For these reasons, a modified grounded theory approach was appropriate for the study, as an existing framework of critical literacy practices was used to analyze data collected on LTEs.

Although Glaser and Strauss (1965) founded the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) in their foundational text *Awareness of Dying*, several contemporary theorists have contributed to the approach by uncovering complexities in the evolving qualitative design methodology. Charmaz (2006), for instance, has championed what she has coined a “constructivist” approach to grounded theory. She departs from traditional grounded theory works. When grounded theory pioneers Glaser and Strauss (1967) wrote about discovering theory, they described it as a process emerging from data. Charmaz takes a constructivist stance, and asserts theories are not *discovered*; rather, they are *constructed* “through our past and present involvement and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (Charmaz, 2006, p.10). Further contributing to the understanding of a modified grounded theory,
Denscombe (2003) asserts grounded theory must allow researchers to incorporate existing theories into their analysis by adding or expanding on them. He explains, “researchers cannot be entirely free from the influence of social conditioning and previous theorizing when it comes to analysis of their data” (p. 124). These flexible and non-prescriptive understandings of grounded theory reflect my epistemological beliefs about research.

There are a few distinctive terms commonly used in reference to grounded theory research. First, theoretical sampling describes the ongoing process of accumulating information for creating hypothesis whereby the investigator gathers, codes and examines the information and identifies gaps that require elaboration and then determines additional sources and type of data to collect (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.45). Second, a constant comparative method refers to a type of data analysis in which researchers compare parts of data with other parts to determine existing differences and/or similarities in order to analyze patterns by which categories are then developed. Punch (2009) claims the constant comparative method is “at the heart of grounded theory analysis” (p. 182). Although many other types of qualitative research also utilize the constant comparative method for data analysis, such studies differ from grounded theory research because no theory results from data analysis. Finally, core category is another term commonly used in grounded theory research. It refers to a main category developed from data analysis that is as connected as possible to the other categories (Punch, 2009, p. 188). The core category is important to grounded research as it is used to develop theory. The core category is “grounded” in the data collected. Unlike other types of research, hypotheses developed through grounded research are not identified at the beginning of study but instead are identified at the conclusion of the study once they have been derived from data collected.
Grounded Theory Approach in My Study

A modified grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006; Punch, 2009) was used to inform the data analysis processes in this study. During the three-year period of data collection from April 2012 to February 2015, the transcripts and course syllabi were read several times. After a few interviews from the first round of interviews had been transcribed, the analysis process began. At this point the cycle of alternation between data collection and data analysis was initiated (Punch, 2009). I followed a systematic approach to data analysis, employing practices of continuous coding.

The first level of analysis, “open coding,” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.61) was used to examine properties of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000) by identifying salient words and phrases, relating to the research questions and any other category or theme, which were emerging. The interview transcripts were read several times line-by-line and important words and phrases were coded. To initially generate open codes, the clearest transcripts were analyzed; they were “richly descriptive” (Merriam, 1998, p.7) and had few disruptions (e.g. phrases transcribed as “XXX” because transcriber could not hear what was being said). During the open coding process, transcripts were first coded by hand. Then, all transcribed interviews were imported into NVivo9 software for analysis “to allow rigorous interrogation of the data” (Crowley, Harre, & Tagg, 2002).

The initial coding of the transcripts was broad. The salient words and phrases from the transcripts were organized into categories (e.g., background, education, qualities). These categories, in addition to some significant interview questions, were used to create core categories or nodes (as referred to in NVivo9). For example, the nodes of early childhood experiences, educational background, and qualities of teacher educator were developed.
Several of these nodes had sub-nodes. For instance, the node of qualities of teacher educator had four sub-nodes: relational qualities; qualities- knowledge; qualities- dispositions; and qualities-own strengths and talents. The node identity had four sub-nodes: academic community; conference and journals; label; validation.

With each round of analysis (Interview 1, 2, and 3) new nodes were developed. In total 110 nodes were developed after merging and collapsing nodes and sub-nodes. In Interview 1 approximately 43 nodes/sub-nodes were developed; in Interview 2 approximately 40 nodes/sub-nodes were developed; and in Interview 3 approximately 27 nodes/sub-nodes were developed. While analyzing interviews two and three, nodes developed for previous interviews would also be used for coding. For example, the node bridging theory and practice was developed in the first interview and was used as a code for the second and third interview. Influence of context and politics were other nodes developed in the first two interviews that were used to analyze data from the second and third interview transcripts. In addition, NVivo9 allowed for double-and triple coding of content. This allowed for more nuanced coding because the same data often related to more than one node.

As the study continued, I engaged in “axial coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.96). In this stage of analysis, using the analytic principle of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), connections between the core categories were determined. As the transcripts, annotations, and memos (which were made directly in NVivo9 software) were analyzed, connections were determined between the core categories. With the use of NVivo9, queries were conducted to see relationships between biographical data and other data. For example, matrix queries were run to explore the connection between years at university and goals for the course.
In the final level of analysis, “selective coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116), I made efforts to systematically relate core categories to other categories, “validating those relationships by searching for confirming and disconfirming examples, and filling in categories that needed further refinement and development” (Strauss & Corbin, 2000, p. 111). An example of a selective code I used: LTEs’ with a critical stance view their experiences of marginalization as turning points in their professional lives. In addition to confirming initial core categories, other research was used to support emerging theories and its broader significance.

Once all coding was done, I extracted all nodes for my six participants from NVivo9. At this point, I applied the critical literacy framework (Lewison et al., 2008) to the data for broad patterns which led to themes. The existing framework was used as a tool to help “rethink practices, events, or engagements by weighing data against categories or model criteria as a means to arrive at new insights” (Van Sluys, Lewison, Flint, 2006, p.214). Data collected from the three interviews and course syllabi were coded according to LTEs’ perceptions and enactments of critical literacy as outlined in the framework (i.e. disrupting the commonplace; considering multiple viewpoints; focusing on socio-political issues; and taking action). For example, the node changing definition of literacy was analyzed using the framework as a way the participants enacted critical literacy practices by Disrupting the Commonplace.

Throughout the data analysis process, I recognized that as a researcher I was part of the phenomenon being studied. What I heard, read, coded, and ultimately categorized during this process was inevitably influenced by my past experiences, biases, and relationship to teaching
and learning. Charmaz (2000) asserts that researchers conducting a constructivist grounded theory study “share in constructing what we define as data” (p.509).

**Learning Qualitative Software NVivo 9**

The members of the large-scale SSHRC grant attended three Nvivo9 workshops tailored to meet the needs of our research. Additionally, we engaged in a number of tutorials, which focused on advanced features of Nvivo9, such as running matrix queries and linking external documents (i.e. Excel spreadsheets) to participants. This sophisticated software had several advantages. It allowed me to: manage all documents in one place; import and analyze collected data, such as transcripts and spreadsheets; code sources to organize raw data into themes; use text analysis tools to examine unstructured data like words with similar meanings; and run queries to reveal multiple complex relationships across themes.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. One of the limitations of this research is the relatively small sample size of participants used. Considering there are only six participants in this study, it is not possible to generalize findings to the wider professional group of LTEs with a critical stance. Additionally, there are several commonalities among participants, which further reduce the generalizability of the findings. All participants are early career or mid-career faculty (1-10 years experience); none were later-career faculty (11+ years experience). In addition, all have completed their Ph.D. and are active researchers (not a requirement to be a literacy teacher educator). Although the participants vary in terms of classroom teaching experience and years at their university, they do share many characteristics.
Another limitation of this research study is the absence of observations of the practices of LTEs in their teacher education courses. Observations of critical literacy enactments in their courses would have contributed to the data collection; however, this was not feasible due to distance and cost. As a researcher, I would have had a more complete view of their practices and pedagogies, thus deepening my understanding of their work.

The third limitation is related to direct, face-to-face access to the participants. I completed my thesis work in Toronto while all of the participants were based out of the U.S. Attempts were made to interview participants in person as much as possible (e.g. visits to Toronto, AERA conferences), but interviews were primarily conducted via video conferencing tools due to logistical reasons. Technological difficulties (e.g., audio malfunctions, pixelated images) often compromised the flow and pace, thus quality, of the interviews.

A fourth limitation of this study is related to my biases that result from my own experiences with teaching and learning. As a former K-12 classroom teacher and current instructor at a community college, I began my research with assumptions about effective pedagogies of literacy education based on my personal experiences. Being part of a larger research team I was able to monitor my assumptions and biases to minimize their influence on the research process. The initial coding of the data was often done as a team. We would individually code the transcripts and then meet as a team share our initial codes and thought processes around our coding practice. Participating in open dialogue with members from my research team allowed for me to consider, account for, and monitor the biases I held. Further, the use of an established theoretical framework to inform my analysis (Lewison et al., 2008) minimized the influences of bias during data analysis. The theoretical framework is based on several years of research in critical literacy practices. Although I put checks and balances in
place to present a fair representation of my data, I understand my own experiences in the classroom inevitably influenced my data collection and analysis.

**Ethical Considerations**

This research study was situated within a large-scale SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) study, *LTEs: Their Backgrounds, Visions, and Practices*. The principal investigator of this study is Dr. Clare Kosnik at OISE, University of Toronto. This larger study was granted approval by University of Toronto Research Ethics Board. As a graduate student I was a member of the research team with approved access to the data.

All prospective participants received a letter of invitation to the study informing them of the purpose of the study and their role in it. The letter outlined the research objectives of the study and data collection processes, including notifying participants all interviews would be recorded and transcribed. The right to refuse participation at any time was clearly stated in the letter. Those who agreed to take part in the study signed a consent form acknowledging that they had read the letter of invitation and consent form and agreed to participate in the study. Once interviews began, they were transcribed and sent to the participants. Further, any publications (e.g., book chapter, peer-reviewed journal articles) derived from the study were sent to the participants once published.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the research methodology used to guide my research on the backgrounds, visions, and practices of LTEs with a critical stance. This chapter outlines the
qualitative research methodology used, specifically a grounded theory approach, and provides a rationale for its use in this study. The research questions are outlined, along with the participant selection process. Data collection and data analysis processes and methods are explained and justified. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations and ethics related to the research study. In the next chapter, research findings are presented through individual participant profiles of the six literacy teacher educators.
Chapter 4
PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Introduction

This chapter presents Participant Profiles of the six LTEs in the study. As a researcher interviewing literacy teacher educators with a critical stance I chose to highlight their personal and professional backgrounds to provide insight into how their practices and pedagogies were informed by existing and shifting beliefs as well as early life experiences. The participants shared many commonalities such as academic degrees, geographical context (U.S.), classroom teaching experience, and research and teaching interests, but their early life experiences and prior work history offered contrasting experiences for them to reflect on and use to shape a critical approach literacy education in the teacher education context. The following participant profiles highlight those similarities and differences.

All earned their Ph.D. degrees in Education (e.g., Reading, Writing, and Literacy; Language Education; Language, Literacy, and Culture) and had classroom teaching experience in K-12 settings. In addition to their teaching responsibilities, all participants were involved in funded research of some kind. At the time the interviews were conducted, all participants were tenured or tenure-streamed faculty in an education department at a university in the U.S. When the study began, one of the six LTEs was an associate professor, while five were assistant professors. Since then, several gained tenure status at their institutions. Currently, four participants are associate professors, and two are assistant professors. Finally, five have remained as faculty at their university, while one has moved to an administrative role in a teacher education program.
The profiles describe the participants’ background and experiences, as well as the influence their prior experiences have on their current views and pedagogies in literacy teacher education. The six profiles include the LTEs’ personal and educational background; early childhood and schooling experiences; literacy teaching experiences; research activities; and the influence of life experiences to their work. Table 1 summarizes the participants’ background including their racial background, experiences as classroom teachers, their Ph.D. program emphasis, and their current status as LTEs.
Table 3: Background of Participants (as of January, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Racial Background</th>
<th>Years Teaching in the Classroom (K-12)</th>
<th>Grade Level (Primary: 1-5; Intermediate: 6-8; Senior: 9-12)</th>
<th>Years in Teacher Education (Tenure-track Faculty)</th>
<th>Faculty Position</th>
<th>Ph.D. Research Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>ECE, Primary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Ethnographic study on first-grade writing practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>ECE, Primary</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Breaking cycles of poverty among women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misa</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Ethnographic study of Black and Latina student teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giovanni</td>
<td>Bi-racial (White and South-East Asian)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Primary, Senior</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Immigrant narratives from fifth-grade students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominique</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Student teachers use of critical pedagogies in practice teaching placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pietro</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Intermediate, Senior</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Literature discussions in High School English courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participant Profile One: Maya**

Maya is a hard-working and thoughtful teacher educator and researcher who is driven by her commitment to all children. For instance, not only does she aim to help all student teachers
shed deficit views of children, but she also reflects on her own practice to ensure she does not view student teachers in the same deficit light. Maya’s scholarly interests include: critical literacies, multilingualism and immigrant identity, and young children’s writing. Maya’s early schooling experiences in the U.S. revealed to her the political nature of schooling, as well as the power structures in place (e.g., whose knowledge counts in schools?). Her work as a classroom teacher and professional development facilitator have helped to develop her vision for literacy and influenced her approach to teaching about teaching literacy. Maya’s life experiences have significantly informed her work as a LTE.

**Personal and Educational Background**

Maya was born in a large city in Argentina and attended school there until immigrating to the U.S. with her family while in elementary school. Both of Maya’s parents have high levels of education; both have earned doctorates degrees. As a young child, Maya moved between the United States and Argentina, but finally settled in New York City before entering the sixth grade. Her English was limited and as a result she was placed in a “very low tracked sixth grade classroom.”

Maya completed her undergraduate degree in Latin Studies followed by a Masters of Arts in Early Childhood Education with a focus on bilingual education. Maya spent two years teaching pre-school in a private school setting. She then spent the following two years teaching in a dual-language (Spanish and English) early childhood classroom in the public school system. Maya returned to university to complete her doctoral studies in the area of reading, writing, and literacy. She conducted an ethnographic study of writing practices in a first-grade classroom. During her doctoral journey, she was involved in professional
development work with teachers in the areas of language learners and literacy across a variety of contexts (e.g., rural high-school, inner-city elementary school).

Maya is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching at a large research-focused university in New York City. Before securing a tenure-track position at her present institution, Maya was an adjunct professor at a university in the Mid-West for one year. At her current institution, she teaches courses in the teacher education program including: *Teaching Literacy in the Early Years*; and *Literacy, Culture, and the Teaching of Reading*. Maya has been a tenure-stream faculty member at her current institution for four years.

**Early Childhood Experiences**

Maya described her schooling experiences in the U.S., as a new immigrant, to have greatly influenced her understanding of schooling practices. As a non-native speaker of English, Maya was placed in a very low-tracked classroom.⁴ She recognized the implications of being placed in a low-tracked class: “I knew what kind of curriculum I was getting.” She remembers the curriculum making assumptions about her intelligence (or lack thereof) and thus, lacking in rigour. She says, “It was very worksheet driven, it was very remedial.” Even though she was only in the sixth grade, she understood the deficit views the teachers had of her because of her English Language Learner (ELL) status: “I really remember being very aware of how I was being positioned by the school.”

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⁴ Tracking, a process still in place in the U.S., refers to separating students based on academic ability into groups (high, medium, or low) for all or a few subjects.
Interestingly, Maya had a very different schooling experience on Saturdays when she attended cultural classes taught in Spanish. On Saturdays she was a top student who experienced a great deal of success. She knew she was the same student who received conflicting messages about her abilities as a learner. On Saturdays she was successful in her cultural classes; however, from Monday to Friday in public school she felt her intelligence “just was not recognized.” These contradictory experiences revealed to Maya the “stratification” students experience in schools. Commenting on her own experiences, she notes, “My lack of English was really matched with a lack of intelligence, [and] I just got a sense of how school structures perceive and label students and give very unequal types of educational opportunities.”

In the seventh grade Maya was moved up to a higher-tracked class. She recognized that the school’s perception of her had changed: “My intelligence quote-unquote was discovered.” When applying for high school, Maya recognized the stratification in schools. For example, Maya began to understand how the “power of networks,” a form of social capital, could determine schooling opportunities (or lack thereof). She remembers,

A friend of mine in middle school really helped me. I didn’t know that you have to apply to high schools and we didn’t have the money for any of these things…she helped me with the forms and she told me which tests to take. And I got in. And it was a very rigorous school. So it showed the power of networks…I think it shows you the power of just how schools stratify students, not just the structures for getting in and blocking access, but once you get in, everything you hear… ‘You’re the best of the best. You’re here because you’re the top’ from day one.

**Literacy Teaching Experiences in Schools**

Maya gained knowledge about literacy teaching and learning in schools though a variety of experiences in bi-lingual and ELL contexts. She worked in classrooms with young learners in
early childhood classrooms. She taught in New York City in a private school for two years followed by two years in the public school system. Reflecting back on her journey, Maya recalls that she was exposed to “more critical ideas” later in her career, when she was pursuing her doctoral work. After completing her doctoral studies she did not work as a classroom teacher. Maya comments, “I just never had the chance to live as a teacher, as a critical literacy teacher.” She realizes she would have deepened her insights if she had spent more time as a classroom teacher. Although her time as a classroom teacher was limited, Maya strongly believes LTEs should have classroom teaching experience. In the case of Maya, being a classroom teacher allowed her opportunities to develop an authentic pedagogy. She draws on these opportunities to inform her current practice as a LTE. For instance, Maya often shares “artifacts” from her time as a classroom teacher with her student teachers.

Maya feels “fortunate” to have been a Professional Development Facilitator because she gained a different perspective of literacy teaching. For five years, while pursuing her Ph.D., Maya worked in a variety of settings delivering professional development workshops to literacy teachers. From these experiences Maya gained a deep respect for “the complexity of teaching and literacy teaching.” She was exposed to the socio-political nature of schools and classrooms, as well as the influences social politics have on schools, classrooms, and teachers. For example, when delivering a professional development workshop in a small coal-mining town in the U.S., Maya witnessed the ways in which anti-immigration legislation influenced discourse in local schools about non-native students. Maya describes her experience:

There was a lot of anti-immigrant sentiment there…But the immigration population had revived the town but they were experiencing a lot of discrimination. At my first professional development session there, I [asked] the questions…‘What kinds of questions do you want to know about our language learners and how we can support them?’ And the first question
somebody raised their hand and said… ‘How can I get them to stop speaking Spanish in the lunch room?’

Although Maya was initially shocked by the “racist and negative comments,” she saw this as a situation in which teachers needed support because she recognized that teaching is “not easy work.” To help literacy teachers recognize, understand, and respond to issues faced by English Language Learners, Maya used an inquiry-based approach with the literacy teachers. She used the professional development sessions as a platform to help teachers in “thinking about their work and supporting one another.” By creating teacher inquiry communities, Maya believed that teachers would gain the support they needed and learn from and with one another.

**Experience with Research**

After spending a few years as classroom teacher, Maya joined a doctoral program in a department of Reading, Writing, and Literacy at a research-intensive university. She did an ethnographic study of the writing practices in a first-grade classroom. Maya’s topic of study aligned with her teaching and professional development experiences, which took place in primary education contexts. Maya’s current recent research is an extension of her doctoral research. She has broadened the scope of her research to include bilingual students in culturally and linguistically diverse settings; however, she still focuses on the writing practices of early childhood and primary students.

When asked if she has planned on pursuing her Ph.D., Maya said “No.” Both of her parents held doctorates, so it is not surprising that they encouraged her to pursue hers, but they were not the source of motivation. It was the opportunity to be part of a school-based inquiry community that led Maya to seriously considering a doctorate. While a classroom teacher in
New York City Maya joined a “thriving teacher inquiry community.” She joined two teacher inquiry groups; both were “self-sustaining” and “did real work in the school.” One was a dual-language inquiry group and the other was a literacy-focused inquiry group. Through the experience of being part of these inquiry communities, Maya realized that research “didn’t have to be disconnected from schools and communities and families.” In fact, she learned that “it could be deeply immersed in them.” Maya further experienced the “interconnection” between schooling and research during teacher inquiry conferences where she had the opportunity to present, as well as learn about other teachers’ research in schools and communities. Maya’s involvement in inquiry groups led her to seeing herself as a researcher, and deciding to pursue her Ph.D.

Influence of Life Experiences

Maya identified various life experiences, which she considers to be turning points in both her personal and professional life. These experiences shaped the way she envisions and approaches literacy as a teacher educator. Maya’s move to the U.S. was a turning point because she experienced first-hand what it felt like to be left out of the dominant discourse and the implications her status as an ELL had on her personally and academically. Maya draws upon these personal schooling experiences to help student teachers unpack the deeply rooted assumptions they may hold about non-native speakers of English. For example, she pushes her student teachers to think about their assumptions by posing questions that disrupt commonplace thinking: “How is it that a student’s performance may really just be a result of our own assumptions?” and “How is it that a student’s performance may really just be a result
of the pedagogical activities that we create that kind of position some as knowing or not knowing?"

As a LTE, Maya shares her personal experiences with the stratification of schools. Receiving conflicting messages about her intelligence from public school (where she was placed in a low-tracked class) and Saturday school (where she was viewed as “successful”) demonstrated to her the unequal learning opportunities and messages students receive based on a school’s perception and labeling of them. In her current role, Maya aims to have her students teachers “understand that literacy isn’t neutral….And for them to disrupt some hierarchies.”

The time Maya spent in the Mid-West as an adjunct professor was another turning point, and has influenced her practice as a LTE. She described the initial move from a very diverse city to one that was very homogenous as “traumatic in some ways” because the population of her student teachers was overwhelmingly White. Maya found herself having to challenge her own assumptions about the students, and their experiences and ideologies. She says, “I sort of assumed…they wouldn’t be open to a diversity stance.” It was here, at the university in the Mid-West, Maya honed her skills as a reflective teacher educator. She explains, “I had to challenge some of my own deficit thinking about the student [teachers] I was working with…And I had to look for other ways.” Through reflection and action, Maya found alternative ways to bring diversity to her teacher educator courses. For instance, she taught one lesson entirely in Spanish in order to give student teachers another perspective on language and power in schools. This is a lesson that has become part of her repertoire and she uses it in her current practice. Reflective practice is at the core of Maya’s pedagogy as a LTE.
She often reflects on her own practice by considering if the pedagogical activities may be making assumptions about her current students teachers’ experiences and ideologies.

**Participant Profile Two: Melissa**

It is clear from the three interviews conducted with Melissa that she is a hard-working and dedicated teacher educator. Issues related to equity (e.g., race, class, privilege, language) are at the centre of her teaching and research. She provides opportunities for her student teachers to disrupt their notions of “what counts as literacy”, as well as interrogate assumptions they may have about students’ knowledge. Melissa has a keen interest in the areas of multicultural learning and culturally relevant pedagogy. During her upbringing in Brazil, Melissa was engaged in critical literacy practices at the ‘Freirean’ school she attended. Her educational and personal life experiences have been formative in shaping her beliefs of literacy teaching and learning. She draws on her life experiences to inform her current teaching practices in higher education.

**Personal and Educational Background**

Melissa was born and raised in Brazil. She attended elementary school and high school in the state in which Paulo Freire (foundational scholar in critical pedagogy) was born and conducted his research. Melissa completed her undergraduate degree in Brazil in which she majored in law. While gaining her degree, Melissa taught pre-school children. As a young adult, Melissa immigrated to the U.S. and changed the focus of her career to education. Once in the U.S. she pursued an undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Special Education, followed by a Masters’ in Early Childhood Education. She then taught as a classroom teacher in the primary
grades, including kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. Following her work as a classroom teacher, Melissa pursued her doctorate in Language Education.

Melissa is currently an associate professor at a large research-focused university in New York City. Prior to securing her current faculty position, she worked as a tenure-stream faculty member in two different higher education institutions in the U.S. Both institutions are located in the South Eastern region of the U.S. She worked at her first university for one year then moved to her second faculty position for two years. At her current institution, Melissa teaches in the Early Childhood Education Program. Courses she teaches include: *Language and Literacy in the Early Childhood Years and Reading*; and *Writing in the Primary Grades*. She has been a tenure-stream faculty at her current institution for five years. Melissa is very content at her institution: “I love it here…It’s a great fit” she says.

**Early Childhood Experiences**

Melissa attended primary school, secondary school, and university in Brazil. Her parents worked full-time, so she was enrolled in school from the age of eighteen months. She recalls knowing the alphabet, as well as reading and writing at a basic level before entering first grade. As she continued in school, Melissa remembers enjoying reading and writing, and being successful at it.

Melissa attended a “Freirean school” (a school founded by Paulo Freire) from the first grade up until the eighth grade. The years she spent at this school had a significant influence on her. She describes the school as “theory-heavy” and recalls attending workshops with Freire himself. At a young age, Melissa remembers understanding the influence critical pedagogy had on her as a student. She became acutely aware of its influence when she entered
“normal” (public) high schools, which were not steeped in a critical pedagogy approach. She attended three different high schools over three years, attempting to find a place with an approach she wanted and which she was comfortable. She says, “I was so unhappy with the pedagogy at the [high] schools.”

**Literacy Teaching Experiences in Schools**

Melissa strongly believes that classroom-teaching experience is necessary to be an effective LTE. Melissa has classroom teaching experience in a variety of contexts and grade levels. She began her teaching career in Brazil by teaching pre-school, which she loved (more than the practice of law for which she trained). After moving to the U.S. she taught Kindergarten, grade one, and grade two for a total of six years. While teaching the second grade, Melissa assumed leadership responsibilities related to curriculum development. As the second-grade team leader, Melissa led literacy teachers in conversations about making curriculum relevant for students by “discussing the content in a pedagogically-aligned way.” For instance, her grade-team group would discuss how to address the state standards while being responsive to the students’ needs, in addition to honouring the knowledge they brought to the classroom. Melissa’s experience as a team leader was significant because it helped her develop a more nuanced understanding of teaching literacy. She recalls “extending, applying, and re-imagining the classroom” along with her fellow teachers. As a LTE, Melissa engages her student teachers in similar conversations about curriculum and state standards. Placing equity at the centre of her teaching, she leads discussions on how to negotiate “wiggle room” in the curriculum, so all students’ needs are met, and their lived experiences are valued.

As a classroom teacher, reflection was a common and intentional part of Melissa’s practice. She assumed an “inquiry stance” which meant systematically questioning her
practices on literacy teaching, followed by taking action: “As I posed questions, I tried to
change my own pedagogy.” For example, when considering an issue of student learning,
Melissa first asked herself: “What am I doing…how are the ways in which my talk is creating
these [issues] in the classroom, instead of saying, ‘Oh, xxx’s not paying attention.’” Through
systematic inquiry into her practice, Melissa began to view herself as a teacher researcher.

**Experience with Research**

Melissa completed her Ph.D. in Language Education at a university in the Southeast of the
U.S. She studied the ways in which cycles of poverty among women could be broken in
Brazil. Using “culture circles” to collect data, Melissa interviewed women in Brazil who
“broke the cycle.” Her study was informed by her time spent in the classroom where she
witnessed young girls dropping out of school to take on domestic responsibilities. Her
research aimed to better understand “[t]he phenomenon in which women, especially in rural
areas, were pushed out of school to take on roles in the home.”

Some of Melissa’s more current research is somewhat related to her doctoral
studies, but her research now includes children, pre-service, and in-service teachers. She has
extended her work with culture circles and studies the practices of student teachers and in-
service teachers in classrooms. However, Melissa’s most recent research has taken a departure
from her doctoral studies. She is researching an after-school program she helped to develop
for “at-risk” first and second grade students whose background is Latino or Afro-Latino. As a
researcher, Melissa has grown past her doctoral research to consider a variety of contexts (e.g.,
schools, after-school programs), participants (e.g., “at-risk” youth, in-service teachers, pre-
service teachers), and topics (e.g., multicultural teaching, culture circles, early literacy
education). Much of Melissa’s research aligns with her classroom teaching experience in
primary classrooms. Her passion for research has led her back to where she began her career in education.

It was while teaching the second grade Melissa realized she wanted to pursue her doctoral studies. Her young female students were dropping out of school at an alarming rate, and the school district told her they were returning to Mexico, where they were born. However, living in the community in which she taught, she soon began to see this was not the case. She recalls, “I would see them in parts of the city. And they would tell me that they were taking care of babies and younger siblings at ages seven and eight…they were the main person responsible for the baby.” Not wanting to simply “denounce the families,” Melissa wanted to “do something” about an issue, which was a common practice in many parts of the world, including her birth country, Brazil. This experience prompted her to pursue her doctorate, as well as the topic she researched.

In addition to her observations of young girls dropping out of school, Melissa attributes her decision to pursue a Ph.D. to the close ties she maintained with higher education faculty while teaching. She took several in-service courses to remain current with literacy theory. She called this practice of being an active learner her “modus operandi” and it is one of the reasons she believes she eventually pursued her doctorate.

**Influence of Life Experiences**

When asked to do a timeline of turning points (personal or professional) Melissa identified a host of experiences from her life, ranging from childhood to more recent experiences. She identified her experience at the Freirean school as a significant turning point in her life which impacts her views and her work to this day. As a student at the Freirean School Melissa
remembers being happy, successful, and engaged. It is when she left the school to attend high school she realized the influence that critical pedagogy had on her learning. Melissa was surprised that the high schools she attended had not adopted the Freirean pedagogy; she had realized that “life wasn’t like that” outside of the Freirean School. From this difficult period in her life she realized the influence pedagogy could have on a child’s success in school.

As a classroom teacher, Melissa enacted the pedagogy she experienced as a child. In regards to curriculum, she started with her student’s strengths and interests, as well as “respecting them as human beings.” She approached her work with her student teachers in a similar way; understanding their experiences, and learning their interests. She also emphasized to her student teachers the lessons she learned from her own early schooling experiences in Brazil. She reminds students, “You’re not teaching literacy, you’re teaching the student…The student should be in the middle…because you can stretch [the curriculum] to fit around.”

Melissa identified her move to the U.S. as a major turning point in her life because she was “starting all over again.” Since her degree from Brazil for not transferrable to the U.S., she had to begin with taking a course titled English 101 at a community college. Wanting stability and a financially lucrative career, Melissa put her studies in education on hold and enrolled in a business program. However, she remembers the feeling of “being miserable in the class.” She took one elective course in education and remembers loving it. That course in education was a turning point for Melissa and a launching pad for her career in education. While enrolled in the education course, she recalls the moment she made an important life decision: “I loved this one education class. And I said, ‘You know what? That’s what I’m doing. I don’t care how much I make. This is what I’m doing.’” Making the difficult decision to follow her passion has affected the way in which Melissa views her work. As a LTE she
approaches her teaching and research with a sense of urgency and joy. She says, “I feel privileged to be paid to do what I want to do and I believe in.”

Finally, Melissa identified life experiences in her adulthood that affected her work as a teacher educator:

I think being a mother influences me, but also being a woman, a woman of color, being a speaker of English as another language, being someone who has been barred from entering my place of work because of the way I look… So those are experiences that I bring to my classroom.

Accordingly, in her work as a teacher educator, Melissa attempts to make systemic barriers transparent so her student teachers can recognize and understand what marginalized members of society face. In the in-service capacity, Melissa works with practicing teachers on topics including bilingual and multilingual learners in the regular classroom. She aims to help teachers recognize and understand the complex relationship between language, class, race, and power.

**Participant Profile Three: Misa**

Misa is a passionate and dedicated teacher educator who works tirelessly to include under-represented voices in her teaching and research. Particularly, Misa’s work focuses on students and teachers of colour. She values community literacy practices. She is continuously “engaged with parents” and the community and delivers her teacher education courses in local schools. Her scholarly interests focus on the experiences of students of colour in literacy teaching and teacher education. Misa’s family history, early childhood experiences in schools, and various teaching experiences have informed her pedagogy and research as a LTE.

**Personal and Educational Background**
Misa is a Black teacher educator who comes from a “family of educators.” Her grandmother, mother, and several cousins are teachers. Misa was born and raised in a working-class household in the inner city of a town in the Mid-West. She completed her undergraduate degree in English and teacher education. After graduating, Misa was an English Language Arts teacher for the eighth and ninth grade for two years. She then pursued her Masters’ degree in Education. Upon completion, Misa joined a community college as an instructor of composition for five years. In her time at the college, Misa also assumed an administrative role as a student advisor. She returned to school to pursue her doctoral degree in the area of Curriculum Instruction and Teaching where she conducted an ethnographic study of the language and literacy practices of Black and Latina student teachers. While completing her Ph.D., she continued to teach composition courses at the community college, and worked as a curriculum development consultant for a non-profit educational organization.

Misa is presently an associate professor in the department of Reading and Language Arts in the School of Education at a university in the North-East region of the U.S.. Additionally, she holds a leadership position at her institution as the Director of English Education Programs. Misa has been a faculty member at her institution for six years. She currently teaches a graduate course entitled *The Composing Process*. Misa also directs a writing-focused program, which supports the writing practices of urban youth within and beyond schools.

*Early Childhood Experiences*

Misa’s early childhood experiences of growing up in the inner-city influenced her understandings of literacy, as well as her views on teacher education. As a young girl, Misa
was a very shy child with a passion for reading. She learned how to read while in the first grade, and once she started, “there was no turning back.” Growing up in a working-class family with very young parents, Misa spent her summer holidays enrolled in reading programs at the local library. She recalls, “I spent the days in the stacks at the library.” For Misa, the library was a place of refuge: “Having a library and access to books really saved my life.” She recognized that the library “provided an outlet and a space to move beyond the present and escape into all kinds of places.” Misa’s experiences at the library shaped her understanding of literacy as “being more than just reading a book.” She explains, “[i]t was more about reading the world and defining it.”

Misa, along with most students from the inner city, attended high-school in the suburbs. She recalled, “We were bussed to a suburban school for high-school where we were tracked.” Misa was placed in a high-track and had an overall “good experience” with her own education. However, her friends and cousins did not share the same positive experiences; many of them were placed in low-tracked schools. She comments, “Depending on where you were placed, you received a certain type of education.” Misa began to understand how practices like tracking could lead to inequitable schooling experiences. Further, her first- and second-hand experiences in high school revealed the influence teachers have on a student’s relationship with schooling. While Misa fondly recalls teachers of hers who made a difference, she explains that her cousin did not have similar experiences with teachers: “One cousin can remember all his teachers and how some of them were so terrible in terms of shaping his self-esteem and his identity.” Misa draws on her experiences to inform her practice as a LTE. For instance, through discussion and sharing personal stories, she reminds her student teachers of
their responsibility: “Do not underestimate the potential of what we [teachers] do to really define someone’s existence... What you do is serious.”

**Literacy Teaching Experiences in Schools**

Misa gained an expertise in teaching literacy through various experiences: as a classroom teacher, a college instructor, and a community-based researcher. As a classroom teacher, Misa taught English Language Arts to the eighth and ninth grade for two years. Although her time in the K-12 classroom was brief, Misa believes the experiences guided her current work as a LTE. On course evaluations at her current institution, student teachers often describe Misa as “passionate.” She believes her passion was awakened during her time in the classroom, and this trait gives her more credibility with her student teachers. She says,

They see the passion coming from the fact that I have real lived experience. I’m not just talking about it because I’ve read about it or that it’s just theory. I always try to make it real and that has to start with myself.

Misa strongly believes LTEs need some experience in the classroom to be “more credible” with student teachers. She also believes that LTEs must remain current with classroom practices. Misa is able to do this by conducting her research in schools and by teaching in the K-12 context during summers. She explains her approach to staying relevant while involving her student teachers in her practice:

I have to demonstrate 1) that I’ve done [teaching], but 2) that I’m still doing it. For example…I have this project where I’m always working with young people. And so I try to connect my student [teachers] to work in the capacity as tutors or right alongside me, working with young people in the community. So it always comes together.

Misa continued to deepen her knowledge about literacy teaching and learning while she was a community college instructor and a curriculum developer. She taught courses in
writing composition for five years while also maintaining a role as a student advisor. In her advising role, Misa observed students of colour struggling with issues of self-esteem and identity. This experience was a turning point for Misa, which informed her research interests she would later pursue in her doctorate.

Experience with Research

After working in a community college as an instructor and administrator for five years, Misa joined a Ph.D. program in Curriculum and Instruction and Teaching at a research-intensive university. She conducted an ethnographic and sociolinguistic study of the literacy practices of Black and Latina student teachers. She describes her study as: “I worked with pre-service teachers, documenting their discourse practices in multiple contexts to look at the hybrid spaces that they created between teacher education and other contexts, as they were becoming teachers.” Misa’s current research is broader in scope than her doctoral work. While her research continues to consider the identities of student teachers and teachers, Misa’s research now aims at better understanding how to “cultivate racial and linguistic diversity within English and Literacy teacher education.”

When asking Misa if she had planned on entering a Ph.D. program, she responded “No.” She is the first person in her family to have earned a doctoral degree. She says, “I didn’t even know what a Ph.D. was when I was growing up.” Misa’s role as student advisor at a community college ultimately informed her decision to pursue her doctorate. When she saw many students of colour struggling to finish a four-year program at her college, she was reminded of the inequitable schooling opportunities her friends and cousins had experienced growing up, who were placed in lower-tracked schools, She came to the conclusion that the students’ struggle was in some way connected to their K-12 schooling experiences. She
comments: “I had to go back to my roots in K-12 and figure out what’s going on…why are [students of colour] still having these kind of issues?” Misa decided to leave the comfort of the community college to pursue her passion. She says, “So with a one-year-old, I started studying for the GREs and applying.” Reflecting back on her doctoral journey, Misa considers it to be a time of growth and making connections between her experiences. She says, “It was an opportunity for me to pause and really critically reflect about the connection between practice, research, and theory.”

**Influence of Life Experiences**

Misa recognizes several personal and professional life experiences as turning points in her career. These experiences have informed her decisions, as well as guided the ways in which she views literacy teacher education today. Misa believes her community-based approach and focus on students and teachers of colour comes from understanding her family history. In the 1960s her grandmother lived through the “war on poverty;” a time when children of colour in the U.S. were not receiving quality classroom instruction. She says, “She saw her own children-she had nine- weren’t offered quality education.” Motivated by her grandmothers’ experiences with the schooling system, Misa views her role as a privilege with a great deal of responsibility:

I don’t just see my job as working with [student teachers], I see it as working with the hundreds of students that they will one day educate. And so, I take this very seriously. It’s a part of my history.

Misa identifies her early childhood literacy practices as a turning point because she experienced literacy as a social practice, a way of “reading the world,” rather than a set of autonomous skills such as simply reading a book. Growing up in a working class family in the inner city, Misa recognized that her community’s literacy practices were not valued in schools.
Her friends and cousins, who were placed in low-tracked schools, felt the negative implications of that practice. As a LTE, she strives to remain engaged in the community so she can stay current with community literacy practices, as well as model a pedagogy that she values for her student teachers. Regarding community engagement, Misa aims to have her student teachers think deeply about teaching and learning beyond what happens in classrooms. She encourages them to be engaged with parents, as well as with the community at large. She explains, “I think too often teachers think it’s just about them and the students. They don’t think about how it is part of a larger community, a larger context.” Misa invites her student teachers to take part in the community by serving as mentors in the writing program she directs, which aims at celebrating and developing the writing practices among urban youth in the community.

Participant Profile Four: Giovanni

Through interviews with Giovanni over three years, it was clear that he viewed himself as an activist in his role as a LTE. Giovanni places social justice at the core of his teaching and research. He strives for his student teachers to view “teaching as an intellectual enterprise,” and to see “students as intellectuals.” Giovanni conducts community-based action research in the areas of immigrant identities and education, critical literacies, practitioner research, and urban education. He has also published extensively in these areas. Giovanni’s diverse experiences as a student and as a classroom teacher have informed his vision of literacy teaching and learning, as well as shaped his current pedagogy as a LTE.

Personal and Educational Background
Giovanni is a second-generation born American from a mixed-race family. His mother and father’s family immigrated from Europe and South East Asia, respectively. Giovanni’s family history shaped his research topics, as well as his views on literacy teaching and learning. He completed his undergraduate degree in English from an Ivy-League university in the North East of the U.S. After graduating, Giovanni applied for the alternative certification-teaching program, Teach for America (TFA). He spent the following ten years teaching various grade levels (primary, intermediate, and senior) in a variety of contexts, in- and outside of the U.S. While teaching the fifth grade, Giovanni returned to school to begin his doctorate work in the area of Reading, Writing, and Literacy. He studied his own fifth grade classroom focusing on the narratives of immigrant students.

Giovanni is currently an associate professor in the Department of Reading, Writing, and Literacy at a large research-intensive university in the North-East region of the U.S. He also holds a leadership position as the Chair of the department. Before moving to his current institution, Giovanni was a tenured faculty member at a research-intensive university in the Mid-West for seven years. At his current institution, Giovanni teaches several courses in the graduate Reading Specialist Program, including: *Forming and Reforming the Elementary Curriculum; Literacy and Assessment;* and *Practitioner Research.* Giovanni has been a tenured faculty member at his current institution for four years.
Early Childhood Experiences

As a child, Giovanni experienced success in school. He explains, “Math came easy to me, but I loved literature and I loved reading.” Giovanni remembers having to work harder at reading and writing than at mathematics. He describes his relationship with literacy as “complicated” because he was “attracted to and also pained by” the subject.

While in elementary school, Giovanni joined an after-school reading program in which he vividly remembers reading the novel *A Wrinkle in Time* (L’Engle, 1962). The program’s discussion-based approach reinforced Giovanni’s love of the written word. For the first time, he experienced reading and reading comprehension without links to assessment; the program was an “evaluation-free zone,” where Giovanni has fond memories of having “grand conversations” about literary texts for the first time.

Growing up in an immigrant household, Giovanni recalls his parents placing emphasis on education. Attaining high levels of education was valued, and thus highly encouraged. Giovanni attributes these values to his father’s immigrant experiences. Giovanni’s father, a first-generation immigrant from South East Asia, grew up in a “tough, working-class, [and] poor neighbourhood” in the U.S. As a young adult, Giovanni’s father, a South-East Asian man, experienced segregation; he was subject to the Jim Crow laws[^5] in the South. These experiences of marginalization influenced Giovanni’s father a great deal, and in turn Giovanni’s upbringing. His father viewed higher education as a “vehicle for social mobility.” Giovanni explains, “I was raised [being told] education is something no one can take away

[^5]: Racial segregation laws enacted by Southern U.S. states between 1890-1965
from you…someone can persecute you based on all sorts of arbitrary characteristics, but they can never take [education] away.”

**Literacy Teaching Experiences in Schools**

Giovanni considers a “desire to see teaching as an intellectual enterprise and to view students as intellectuals” as essential dispositions for LTEs. As such, he does not believe teacher educators must have experience as classroom teachers. He recognizes a variety of experiences that could be useful for teacher educators (e.g., school-based research, community-based activism, professional development facilitation). Giovanni’s stance on teaching, learning and teacher education is informed by his diverse teaching experiences in various contexts and levels. As a member of TFA, Giovanni taught in under-resourced areas where he was endlessly “confronting issues of inequality and social injustices.” He spent the first three years of his teaching career in the South of the U.S., followed by one year of teaching in Puerto Rico. Returning to the U.S., Giovanni moved to the West Coast and taught for six years. Throughout his ten-year teaching career, he taught several grade levels, ranging from the first grade to the twelfth grade.

As a novice classroom teacher, Giovanni taught the first grade where he had to administer standardized tests for the first time. He had many language learners and immigrant students in his first grade classroom. Although kindergarten was not mandatory in the state in which he taught, all students in the first grade were expected to participate in annual standardized testing. Giovanni witnessed the inequities his students faced as non-native English speakers. He recalls, “I had children who had never been to school before who were forced to fill out bubble exams and in a language that wasn’t their native language.” Although Giovanni created a “loving and supportive environment,” it was not enough to make his
students feel safe. He remembers students “crying,” and “throwing up” because of the tremendous pressure they were under from the standardized test. Reflecting back on his students’ experience, he now views what they endured as a form of “symbolic violence.” As a LTE, Giovanni draws upon the experiences of his immigrant students to discuss issues of language and power with his student teachers.

Several years later, Giovanni found himself on the West Coast teaching the fifth grade. He recalls the diversity his classroom: “The children in my classroom spoke fourteen to twenty different home languages.” As a more experienced teacher, Giovanni had learned how to “navigate across cultural and social boundaries” and how to create classrooms which celebrated diversity and valued students’ prior experiences. Giovanni invited his students to document their lived experiences through story telling and narrative writing. Through student narratives, Giovanni was able to value students’ knowledge and integrate it into the curriculum in meaningful ways. It is in his fifth grade classroom where Giovanni ultimately conducted his doctoral research. These classroom experiences have informed Giovanni’s current practice as a LTE. For instance, in his current practice, he brokers difficult conversations with student teachers that aim for developing an “awareness about the ways in which the system [can be] inequitable in many ways.” In turn, he wants student teachers see their role as advocates for their students.

**Experience with Research**

After several years in the classroom, Giovanni joined a doctoral program in the department of Reading, Writing and Literacy at university in the U.S. He studied his own fifth grade classroom and focused on the narratives of immigrant and migrant students, as well as
studying his own practice as a teacher. He says, “I was theorizing my own classroom practice.” Giovanni’s research topic and context were personal to him because they were closely linked to his own familial heritage. He explains, “It was a back to roots things. California was where my grandfather had been a migrant labourer. So I went there to explore the history.” In many ways, Giovanni’s current research is a continuation of his doctoral work. He continues his research with students and community members who face social injustices and inequities.

As a student in undergraduate school, Giovanni had planned on pursuing his Ph.D. He attributes his goal of pursuing his doctorate to the value placed on education during his upbringing. Interestingly, Giovanni had plans to pursue a doctorate in literature or literacy theory as an extension of his undergraduate studies. However, Giovanni’s acceptance into the TFA program changed the trajectory of his career, as he was given the “opportunity to teach.” After spending years as a classroom teacher, Giovanni pursued his doctorate in Education in the Department of Reading, Writing, and Literacy. Giovanni’s experiences with research have led to view it as an extension of teaching. He comments, “I don’t see the distinction [between teaching and research]. To me, they’re absolutely entwined; my scholarship, my teaching, and my research.”

Influence of Life Experiences

Giovanni acknowledges both the impacts of personal and professional experiences, which he considers to be turning points in his life. These experiences have influenced his current views and practices as a LTE. Giovanni’s first year in the classroom as a teacher was a turning point because he witnessed the trauma his immigrant and migrant students experienced when they were required to take standardized tests. He viewed the system to be inequitable in many
ways, as the knowledge of his students was not valued in the curriculum or on high-stake tests. Giovanni used this experience to inform his doctoral research by studying the narratives of immigrant and migrant students from his fifth grade classroom. Further, he draws on his time in the classroom to inform the goals for his teacher education courses. Giovanni aims for the democratization of knowledge in his teacher education courses, and so he invites multiple perspectives into his courses by drawing on multicultural texts and resources. Further, Giovanni includes student voices in his courses by drawing on his research. He explains, “My own narratives and memories as a teacher are very much a resource of my teaching and pedagogy.” Giovanni strives for his student teachers to “see themselves as advocates,” as well as assume an “activist stance in their work.” To achieve this, Giovanni has his student teachers engage in readings and assignments which uncover “the power of the children’s own literacy practices, their narratives, their own testimonials.”

Giovanni identified an assignment from graduate school, which influenced him a great deal. The assignment required him to interview someone from a different background, and so he interviewed his grandfather who was a migrant worker in the 1920’s. Giovanni recalls this assignment to be a “powerful experience” because it revealed to him his own “family literacies.” The assignment was the first time he was invited and encouraged to explore his history. He comments, “There was a buried history...that I’d never had the opportunity to inquire and to explore through my formal education.” Giovanni truly values family and community literacy practices; his research examines the out-of–school literacy practices through “community-based action research.” Further, Giovanni makes every attempt to live in the community in which he teaches and conducts his research so he can “get to know the families” and build “good relationships with parents.” During a research project, Giovanni
recalls building relationships to better understand students’ family literacy practices: “I would go to daily mass in the church by the school I taught [at]…and every morning get to know the grandparents.”

Participant Profile Five: Dominique

Dominique is a dedicated teacher educator who pushes herself to grow in her practice by continuously considering the ways in which children engage in literacy practices. For example, she has made great efforts to remain current with digital technology practices (e.g., using a variety of technology tools (iPads, video recorders) and applications (flipboard, pal tunes) to better serve student teachers and in turn, pupils in the 21st century. Dominique is deeply interested in the areas of social justice, equitable learning environments, digital technology, and learning and engagement among elementary and middle school students. Her personal and professional experiences of being a classroom teacher, a mom, and a graduate student have shaped her current practices and views as a LTE.

Personal and Educational Background

Dominique is a Black teacher educator who was born and raised in the U.S. During her undergraduate and graduate degree, she studied in a concurrent Elementary Education program, which involved a four-year program followed by one year of graduate school to receive her teaching credentials. Dominique’s Masters’ degree was also in elementary education with a focus on literacy. After graduating, she taught in primary classrooms, from grades two through five, for a total of eight years. Following her work as a classroom teacher, Dominique pursued her doctorate in Language, Literacy, and Culture.
Dominique is currently an assistant professor at a large research-focused university in New York City. Before moving to New York City, she was a tenure-stream faculty member at a research-focused university in the Southwest. Dominique was at her first institution for three years in the department of Language and Literacy Studies. There she taught courses, both undergraduate and graduate, including: Language Arts Methods; Reading Methods; and Sociocultural Influences on Learning. At her current institution, Dominique works in the Elementary Education Department, and she teaches Curriculum and Instruction in Elementary Inclusive Education. She has been at her current institution for two years.

**Early Childhood Experiences**

Dominique developed a love for reading from an early age. Her active participation in the church community stimulated her reading development, as well as her love for the written word. She recalls her mother encouraging her to read before she had even developed the skills to decode. She says, “She had me reading — and I wasn’t reading because I couldn’t read, but memorizing all these long passages from the bible and putting me in front of the congregation.” Performing in front of the congregation at church was a turning point in Dominique’s life. She understood her mom’s support and encouragement to suggest, “You have to do something important with your life…you need to shine.” As a young girl, Dominique carried that message with her, for she was a determined and ambitious student.

Dominique recalls successfully mastering traditional literacy practices (reading and writing) from an early age. In fact, she enjoyed reading by herself more than playing with her friends. She remembers going to friends’ homes, but choosing to read rather than play: “I would bring my Childcraft encyclopedia and sit on the porch and read instead of [playing with the kids]…given the choice, I’d rather read.” Dominique was aware that her interests as a
young girl were different than those of her peers. She often felt like she didn’t fit in among others her age. She says, “I felt very awkward as a kid growing up because I didn’t always choose to go do what everyone else did.” Dominique considers a few teachers from her childhood to be very influential because they recognized her potential and fostered her love for reading. She recalls a few “teachers recognized ‘Okay, maybe there’s something about you and we can invest more time in.’”

**Literacy Teaching Experiences in Schools**

Dominique believes that LTEs should have experience as classroom teachers to truly develop a “love for teaching.” She believes classroom-teaching experiences earn LTEs credibility with their student teachers. She says, “I think it’s important for them to see that we lived the philosophy that we’re trying to tell them to take up. That they see us walking the walk.”

Dominique has classroom teaching experience in various contexts and levels in the U.S. She first taught in a classroom as a student teacher, while earning her undergraduate degree in elementary education. Her practice teaching placements were at a lab school, which had a direct partnership with the teacher education program she was enrolled in. Many professors from the university sent their children to that school. During her practice teaching placements, Dominique was exposed to pedagogy that valued community literacy practices, as well as the knowledge and experiences of community members. This community-based pedagogy influenced Dominique’s practice as a classroom teacher and her current practice as a LTE. She recalls:

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6 An elementary or secondary school created in association with a university or teacher education institution which is used for student teacher training and education-based research.
That [experience] has informed just about everything that I know about what it means to be a member of a larger learning community. And I really do see that…When I say larger learning community, I see that school taught me to look at schools in general as learning communities. And so that philosophy has really shaped just about everything that I’ve done.

After graduating from her undergraduate program, Dominique taught in an urban school for six years, followed by two years in a suburban school. She taught in primary classrooms, including grades two through five. Dominique describes her approach to teaching in the classroom as “holistic,” in which she considered the whole student (e.g., their community, families, and lived experiences) in her teaching. Her approach in the classroom reflected the pedagogy she saw modeled during her time as a student teacher. She describes her approach to teaching in the primary classroom: “Instead of just separating the child from their community and their family, always talking about how [teaching and learning] moves beyond just the classroom… and understanding how it could be taken up in the child’s home.”

As a first-year teacher, Dominique enacted pedagogy that valued community- and home-literacy practices. She had an “open door policy” in her classroom, which meant that students’ siblings, parents, grandparents, and caregivers were always welcomed to sit-in, observe, and participate in classroom activities. She recalls, “Every single day, there were parents or grandparents in my class.” The knowledge and experiences family members brought with them were valued in Dominique’s classroom. In addition to observing their children in class, they were also invited to participate in discussions and work with students. Dominique recalls parents and grandparents actively participating in the classroom: “They might sit beside their child for read-aloud and listen to the story and participate in that…or
they may come in during writing workshop and maybe work with some kids in small
groups.”

**Experience with Research**

Dominique earned her Ph.D. in Language, Literacy, and Culture from a university in the Mid-West. She studied student teachers’ enactments of critical pedagogy in their practice teaching placements in primary classrooms. Dominique’s context of study was aligned with her focus on elementary education, and the pedagogy she studied was supported her vision of literacy teaching and learning. Dominique’s current research is in some ways consistent with her doctoral work; however, in other ways, she has entered new areas of research. She continues to study student teachers and critical aspects of their work; however, she has shifted her focus to include the student teachers’ use of mobile technology in their practice teaching placements. Dominique further explains the evolution of her research:

One big question is: what tools are these pre-service teachers drawing on to implement pedagogy in the classroom? And so the tools at that time that they were using might have been Drama and children’s literature. While the tools now that students can use are a little bit different. So maybe it is mobile technology…like iPads…and so I see the question expanding to include more tools but I think it’s still similar questions.

While Dominique’s research still focuses on the experiences of student teachers, she now considers “21st century literacy learners,” and aims to better understand “what tools are we drawing on to engage them in curriculum.” Understanding student teachers’ enactments of critical pedagogy remains essential to Dominique’s research. By including mobile technology in her research, Dominique strives to understand “How these tools [mobile technologies] disrupt inequitable practices that we see happening in society…and what are we doing with these tools to address any inequities.”
Dominique did not plan on pursuing her Ph.D. In fact, she says she “fell into it.” Dominique planned on attending Law school after teaching in the classroom for a few years; however, her husband encouraged her to pursue her doctorate since she had spent so much time studying literacy and teaching in the classroom. She joined a doctoral a program, but was still hesitant that it would be the right “fit” for her. However, once she enrolled, she was convinced of what her husband had felt all along. She says, “I enrolled in the program and fell in love…it made me stay.” Once in the program, she knew she had made the right decision.

**Influence of Life Experiences**

Dominique identified diverse life experiences that influenced her practice as a literacy teacher educator. Dominique’s practice teaching placements as a student teacher were turning points because she witnessed a pedagogy that valued community literacy practices. This pedagogy influenced her approach as a classroom teacher; for example, students’ family members were valued and they were encouraged to observe and participate in the day-to-day classroom activities of their children. As a literacy teacher educator, Dominique draws upon her experiences as student teacher and a classroom teacher to help students view students more holistically. She models a holistic approach to teaching and encourages student teachers to consider ways in which they will “talk with their students and their families.” Additionally, she encourages student teachers to value students’ families by maintaining open communication and avoid “putting up walls.” She also creates opportunities for student teachers to develop expansive definitions of literacy by considering how literacy practices “circulate in lots of ways in kids’ lives.”

Most recently, Dominique recognized her enrolment in an out-of-school activity, Tae-Kwando, as a turning point in her life. She used this personal life experience to inform her
professional practice as a literacy teacher educator. Entering Tae-Kwando as a novice, Dominique was reminded of the challenges students and student teachers face when faced with new materials or concepts. She realized that to help someone learn something new, we must do so by “building on their strengths.” The approach to teaching Dominique experienced in Tae-Kwando encouraged her to reflect on her own practice in teacher education. She recognizes the similarities in her Tae-Kwando class and her own pedagogy as a teacher educator: “They broke us up into small groups, they put us in whole group, they worked with us individually. All the scaffolding that we talk to our teachers about, I experienced as an adult.” This personal life experience “cemented” the pedagogy she advocates for and models in her teacher education courses.

**Participant Profile Six: Pietro**

It is clear from the three interviews conducted with Pietro that he thinks deeply and deliberately about his pedagogy of literacy teacher education. He explains, “I’m simultaneously constantly trying to figure out how to prepare teachers for the schools that we have, while simultaneously preparing them for the schools we want.” Pietro has deep interests in the areas of urban education; language acquisition; teacher preparation, support, and retention; and school development and leadership. His personal experiences as a student with learning disabilities and as a classroom teacher with “at-risk” youth have shaped his current practices and pedagogy as a literacy teacher educator.

**Personal and Educational Background**

Pietro is a White male who openly identifies as gay. He was born and raised in the U.S. As a young boy, he was labeled with several learning disabilities, including dyslexia. As a result, he
experienced many obstacles in school until a teacher uncovered his potential. Pietro completed his undergraduate degree in English Literature with a minor in Outdoor Education. He was a classroom teacher for five years with “at-risk” students who had been historically underserved. Pietro taught a variety of courses and grade levels. He then enrolled at a research-focused university to earn his teacher credentials. Pietro returned to the classroom with his teaching credential and taught English Language Arts in urban intermediate and secondary settings. Five years later, Pietro returned to school to earn a Ph.D. He examined the ways in which literacy teachers led classroom discussions. During his doctoral work, Pietro was also the induction coordinator for his university’s residency teacher education program. Once graduating with his Ph.D., he remained at his institution in an administrative role as the Director of the residency teacher education program. Soon after, he secured a tenure-stream faculty position at a teaching-focused university in Southern California. While the three interviews were being conducted, Pietro was a faculty member. However, since then, he has accepted an administrative position at a prestigious research-focused university as the faculty director of the teacher education program.

When the interviews took place, Pietro was an assistant professor in the Department of Teacher Education at a teaching focused-university in California. He taught courses including: *Curriculum Development and Design; Learning and Teaching;* and *Curriculum and Instruction Methods.* Pietro was a faculty member at his university for six years.

**Early Childhood Experiences**

Pietro describes his early schooling experiences as “life-shaping,” as they informed his understanding of schooling practices and the long-lasting influence of teachers. Pietro struggled during the early years of his schooling. He remembers being branded as “someone
who would never read and write.” Pietro was diagnosed with several learning disabilities, including dyslexia. In the second grade, he was held back, and as a result, Pietro viewed himself as a “rotten student.” Through his own drive and love of reading and writing, Pietro was able to change the trajectory of his schooling experience. Although Pietro had “well-intentioned teachers,” he recalls developing his love of reading and writing outside of the classroom. He explains, “I had to do that on my own. That was not a school activity, that was an underground literacy.” In school, he was still positioned as a “struggling” student and so, was often “pulled out of class” for remedial instruction.

It was not until high school that Pietro’s intelligence was realized. He fondly remembers the high-school teacher who invested time with him. She engaged Pietro in literacy practices which built on his strengths. He explained:

She saw that I was not the student I had cast to be, and she and I started a literary magazine. She enrolled me in XXX University when I was in the eleventh grade. And I became what she called a “scholar”…It took her making me one, because I wasn’t able to do that on my own.

Pietro’s influential high-school teacher viewed him as a writer and made him believe in himself. He recognized that she did not view him in a deficit light; rather, she built on his knowledge and strengths. As a literacy teacher educator, Pietro modeled the same disposition for his student teachers he hopes they will embody with their pupils. He explained his approach to helping student teacher work with very complex literacy practices of pupils:

When student [teachers] are presented with underdeveloped or unschooled Literacy practices, I feel like I’m able to help my teachers focus in on what are the particular things that a teacher can do in that setting to draw upon what they’re bringing to class, and help them develop it further.
Literacy Classroom Teaching Experience

Pietro’s powerful teaching experiences have led him to believing that LTEs need prior experience as classroom teachers. By drawing upon his own classroom experience, Pietro believes it earns him “street cred.” He explained, “I do firmly believe that it’s difficult to claim that you know what to do in a classroom if you haven’t actually been in one. I think [student] teachers know that right away.” Classroom teaching experience also allows his students to “envision the possible.” Pietro, for example, uses authentic problems of practice from his own experience to think through solutions with his student teachers.

Pietro’s classroom teaching experiences were diverse and unique. He primarily worked with students who were deemed “at-risk.” During his first experience in the classroom, Pietro was not yet credentialed as a teacher, and so was hired as a mentor. He says, “I entered teaching through the back door.” He worked with young kids, ages three to eleven, who had been removed from their homes due to abuse or trauma. Soon after, Pietro was promoted to a school leadership position in which he was responsible for the professional development of teachers and student behavior plans. Serving in a school leadership capacity without teaching credentials, Pietro recognized the problematic nature of his role in the school: “I became aware that I was part of the problem, not part of the solution…. as an uncredentialed, untrained teacher, I was enabling the system that was happening, not fixing it.” Pietro decided to return to school to earn his teaching credentials along with his Masters’ in Education.

Once credentialed, Pietro returned to the classroom as an intermediate and secondary teacher in historically under-served schools for students who had been expelled from the public school system. He spent five years teaching in various subjects and grade levels. Although Pietro was credentialed to teach literacy, he taught a wide range of subjects,
including English, Biology, Geology, Physical Education, and Cooking. Working closely with marginalized youth shaped Pietro’s views on schooling and social justice. He witnessed, first-hand, the impact students’ socio-economic status played in their schooling opportunities: “Where my students came from and what that meant [determined] what kinds of resources were available to them.”

**Experience with Research**

Pietro earned his doctorate degree in Curriculum and Teacher Education from a prestigious university in Southern California. He studied the ways in which high-school English teachers learned to lead literature-based discussions in their classrooms. His classroom teaching experiences with at-risk students from the inner-city informed his study because it pushed him to “think deeply about Literacy as a construct” and the role “African-American English” plays in literacy learning in schools.

Pietro’s current research is not related to his doctoral work; however, his current research agenda keeps him closely connected to schools. Pietro hopes to one day return to his doctoral research in some form to build on it. One of his ongoing research projects is a component of a larger teacher residency-training program that he leads. The research component of the program explores teacher advocacy, program coherence, program retention, and the implementation of performance assessments. Pietro is also working on another research project, which is a longitudinal study that examines the state of high school scholastic journalism. This study is aligned with Pietro’s own schooling experiences as an active member of his high-school newspaper. Pietro explains the issues his study is exploring: “What does it mean for a school to lose something like the opportunity for students to participate in the most authentic task a school does, which is find information and report on it?”
Pietro did not plan on pursuing his Ph.D.; however, his experience as a classroom teacher, as well as administrative roles in teacher education programs paved the way for him to complete his doctorate. As an administrator he worked closely with teachers, and so becoming a teacher educator seemed like a natural career step. When asked if teacher educators should be doing research Pietro responded, “Yes.” He explained, “I think it’s necessary because it’s a voice in the field that is under-valued and under-represented.” However, Pietro acknowledged that the structures to support research are “less available” for teacher educators than those scholars form other disciplines.

**Influences of Life Experiences**

Pietro recognized several personal and professional turning points in his life, which influenced his current practice as a literacy teacher educator. He identified being labeled with learning disabilities as a young student to be a major influence on his current views of schooling and literacy. He draws from this “life-shaping” experience to demonstrate to his student teachers the importance of understanding their own literacy autobiographies in their teaching lives. Pietro re-enacts a day from his fifth grade classroom to introduce the significance of one’s own literacy experiences. He explains:

> The first day of my Methods class, I re-enact an episode from fifth grade that had to do with a spelling lesson. And I actually dramatize it and act it out for them, to get them ready to write an autobiographical incident of their own. I bring [my own experiences] in.

By drawing on his personal experiences, Pietro models to student teachers the significance of reflective practice. He aims for student teachers to be able to understand their own literacy journey and how it can influence their understanding of literacy teaching and learning.
Pietro identifies his classroom teaching experiences as a turning point for many reasons. He developed an initial understanding of the expansive notion of literacy, beyond simply reading and writing. From working closely with “at-risk” youth he began to see “different forms of literacies,” and began to understand “the notion of literacy being a cultural practice as well as a cognitive practice.” Further, as a classroom teacher, Pietro experienced viewing classroom literacies in an “affective way”, which focused on creating relationships with students that are “valuing the literacies they bring into the classroom.” As a literacy teacher educator, he draws on this knowledge in his teacher education courses. For example, Pietro assigns his student teachers the task of interviewing pupils in the classroom to understand the literacy practices they bring to the classroom. His own experiences as a struggling student and classroom teacher influenced Pietro to avoid assuming a disposition of “correction” of “saving the student.” Rather, Pietro aims to have student teachers develop dispositions, which value students existing literacy practices, while “trying to come to a strategy for helping the student develop a fuller range of literacy skills.”

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, individual case studies for each of the six LTEs were presented. Their educational backgrounds, early schooling experiences, classroom experiences teaching literacy, and experiences with research were discussed. The LTEs early life and early schooling experiences significantly affected their current views and practices as teacher educators with a critical stance. There was a direct connection between the literacy teacher educator’s early life experiences and their current practice. The profound affect their early life experiences had on them translated into their practice and determined the focus on what they would teach.
All named early schooling experiences as a turning point in their life because they understood the inherent relationship between schooling and power. Further, their doctoral research and current research agendas were often informed by their early life experiences as well as their time as literacy classroom teachers. In the next chapter, I begin a cross-case analysis of the LTEs.
Chapter 5
CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

As illustrated in Chapter 4, the LTEs’ early life experiences greatly influenced their views and practices; all identified formative experiences that informed their pedagogies as both teachers and teacher educators. This connection between early life experiences and current practices demonstrated their approach to teaching was not driven by theoretical notions; rather, personal experiences motivated their critical stance. This chapter will delve further into the work of the LTEs by investigating their current practices and pedagogies as LTEs. Across the participants, there were a number of commonalities regarding their pedagogies and practices, including expansive views of literacy, helping student teachers unlearn, using digital technologies to enact critical literacy practices, seeking out texts from multiple perspectives, and making difference visible in their courses. However, the ways in which they enacted these pedagogies were varied and nuanced as they were deeply informed by their early life experiences. In my findings chapters I chose to focus on common themes that emerged among them. It should be noted that I am not proposing that the six teacher educators in this study have the same visions, practices, and pedagogies. By examining them as a group, however, I am able to provide a comprehensive discussion of their work. Thus, findings will be presented in cross-case analysis format.

In this chapter and the next, I describe in detail how the six participants actualized the four dimensions of critical literacy. Using a modified grounded theory approach, the critical literacy dimensions framework (Lewison et al., 2008) was used to analyze the participants’
pedagogies and practices. The themes revealed in each dimension were highly interrelated. There were several practices, examples of pedagogy, and assignments, which could be categorized in more than one dimension. This overlap is accurately representative of the critical literacy framework as conceptualized by Lewison et al. (2008) noting the four dimensions are interrelated and cannot stand alone. Although many actualizations of critical literacy could be categorized in more than one dimension, for the purposes of reporting the findings they have been written under the dimension they most strongly represent.

Additionally, strong themes emerged which were linked to the LTEs enactments of critical literacy but did not necessarily fit into the four dimensions framework, so they will be discussed in stand-alone sections. Among these themes are the organic approach the LTEs adopted, challenges faced in their role, relational approach to their teaching, and overall student teacher response to their courses.

In this chapter, I discuss the organic approach to teaching adopted by the LTEs. Next, I discuss the first two dimensions of the critical literacy dimensions framework: Disrupting the Commonplace and Interrogating Multiple Perspectives. Themes within each of these dimensions are discussed and supported with participant quotes from interviews as well as excerpts from course syllabi.

**Adopting an Organic Approach to Teaching**

Each of the six LTEs adopted a unique approach to their teaching. While some focused more on experiential learning, others worked tirelessly to make their courses interactive or connect with student teachers’ practice teaching placements; however, central to each of their teaching styles was the organic approach they adopted. An organic teaching style allowed the LTEs to
include a critical stance into their teacher education courses. When asked if their courses were organic, preset, or both (organic and preset), five of the LTEs said both, while one said organic. The courses were able to evolve to address their individual contexts, as well as student teachers’ experiences and needs. For example, Giovanni demonstrated his flexibility when he used examples of student writing as a platform to generate discussion about issues such as poverty and mental health. He was responsive to the range of issues they raised in class:

[they] related to everything from issues of power or racism or class….to the kind of erosion of the public education system or the large discourse about teachers, disrespecting teachers. It could be about mental health issues, test anxiety in classrooms, and sometimes these issues are pretty heavy.

Like the other LTEs, Giovanni felt he needed to make space in his course for the group to discuss issues student teachers were facing. Likewise, Misa described her flexible approach: “I'm not someone that goes there with a prepared lecture but I love to engage in conversational dialogue … sometimes those digressions are where some of the most powerful learning happens.”

Further, all six LTEs made time in their courses to discuss student teachers’ concerns after their practice teaching placements (e.g., discrepancies between theory introduced in courses versus practice witnessed in classrooms; pressure of state administered testing). The LTEs felt bridging the theory introduced in their courses with the experiences of their teaching placements was important for student teachers to reconcile any tensions, as well as share their classroom experiences with their peers. Maya noted her student teachers “bring in things from the field, and based on what they give us or what kinds of questions they have, we move things around or I plan the activities based off that for the course.” Her organic approach
granted student teachers time to reflect on their practice teaching placements. This enabled her
student teachers to compare their experiences with the critical perspectives she modeled in her
literacy course.

By using an organic pedagogy, the LTEs prompted student teachers to “outgrow”
themselves (Lewison et al., 2008, p. 19); they were able to assume new ways of viewing
themselves as educators as well as their future pupils. For this reason, most LTEs did not
adhere to a rigid syllabus. Melissa described her syllabus as a “daily forecast.” She said, like
the weather, her course plan didn’t always work out, “Sometimes it’s sixty percent chance of
rain.” She further explained: “My goal is not to get through that plan, my goal is to get to the
aims of it. But I also want to make visible to them my planning and my pedagogy.”

A few LTEs acknowledged that an organic style could be challenging for their student
teachers to adapt to or undertake in their own classrooms. Misa shared the pressure she felt her
student teachers were under: “On one level we are thrown standards and at the same time I’m
saying to them be present, be in the moment, and I think that for student [teachers] this is a
very difficult contradiction to work through.” With the pressure to adhere to the Common
Core Standards, student teachers often felt assuming an organic approach would not be
realistic because there would be too much material to cover. An organic teaching style was
also becoming challenging for the LTEs because they felt an increasing pressure to address the
formal curriculum, as well as teacher performance assessment requirements (i.e. edTPA).

In response, the LTEs made a significant effort to create spaces for critical
conversations in all parts of their course as questions arose naturally. All participants spoke of
brokering conversations about issues like race, class, privilege, and power with student
teachers. When the opportunities presented themselves for teaching and learning about pedagogical approaches, Pietro presented questions to student teachers such as: “How do we position ourselves in the classroom?”; and “How do our own identities inform our teaching practices?” Most, like Misa, identified that developing a critical stance was a process and “there is a lot of observing and listening, adjusting, and reacting that you cannot plan and anticipate.”

The findings discussed above demonstrate that the LTEs created courses that met the needs of their student teachers. Being flexible and organic in their approach to teacher education was central to their pedagogy as critical LTEs. This flexible and organic approach allowed the space for the six LTEs to enact critical literacy practices in their courses. They understood teaching and learning to be a social practice which is culturally located (Fairclough, 2003), so they were able to adjust and change their curriculum based on the needs of their student teachers’, educational and political context, and community needs. The following sections discuss the LTEs critical literacy enactments as conceptualized in the four dimensions framework (Lewison et al., 2008).

**Dimension #1: Disrupting the Commonplace**

This dimension of critical literacy practices focuses on seeing the everyday through a new lens, including our routines, habits, beliefs, and theories (Lewison et al., 2008). In particular, it requires “a step outside of one’s usual modes of perception and comprehension using new frames to understand experience” (p. 8). Disrupting the commonplace is the first dimension of the framework and lays the groundwork for the subsequent three dimensions of critical literacy practices. However, it must be noted that disrupting the commonplace is a recurring
process which can take place at any point during the critical literacy framework. The LTEs disrupted commonplace thinking about literacy teaching and learning in their courses by having a broad definition of what counted as literacy followed by enacting expansive understandings of literacy in their courses; helping student teachers unlearn; and engaging with multimediated nature of literacy.

**Using an Expansive Definition of Literacy**

All six LTEs held broad views of literacy. The LTEs conceptualized literacy in three broad and significant ways: literacy beyond a set of autonomous skills, literacy as a way in which we make meaning in the world, and literacy as a multimodal practice. In turn, their courses aimed to have student teachers gain an expansive understanding of literacy, while giving student teachers opportunities to think critically about issues of equity including power, language, and privilege. The LTEs worked with student teachers to recognize that traditional views of literacy and traditional views of being literate privileged some pupils while marginalizing others.

   *i. Literacy beyond a set of autonomous skills.*

First, the LTEs held an expansive view of what counted as literacy, and so viewed literacy beyond a set of autonomous skills such as reading and writing. As such, the LTEs introduced a wide range of literacy practices into their courses, which often disrupted the student teachers notion of what counted as literacy. For example, several LTEs introduced out of school literacy practices such as community literacies and home literacies (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005), as well as multimodal and multimediated literacy practices. In their courses and their research, the LTEs challenged traditional notions of “texts” (i.e. print-based texts) by engaging with a variety of expansive texts, including: photographs, maps, videos, blogs, social media, theatre,
dance, spoken word, toys, comics, and graffiti. Maya, for example, had student teachers create quilt squares as a form of text during an ice-breaking activity. Creating quilt squares at the beginning of the course allowed the student teachers to introduce themselves in a creative way. Later in the course, student teachers created new quilt squares. The squares were used as a text to unpack issues related to equity. Maya prompted student teachers to analyze their own quilt squares: “What are other ways you are thinking about your identity now? What were issues of power and privilege that maybe you didn’t surface in the first one?” By having student teachers create quilt squares to discuss identity, Maya modeled the power of multimodal approaches in the classroom.

Further, the LTEs challenged assumptions about the “site” or “place” of where literacy practices occurred (traditionally taking place in schools). To broaden conceptions on sites of literacy Misa and Maya had student teachers take walks in the communities where they would be completing their practice teaching placements. Student teachers were asked to identify places and sites where literacy was taking place. Student teachers recognized literacy practices occurring in a variety of places outside of the school context: Laundromats, subway stations, churches, and community centres. Giovanni’s course, *Literacy and Assessment*, was largely based in a Catholic church that had a school attached to it. He had secured a grant, which encouraged community engagement through a focus on asset-based community development. By engaging with community members in a place where they were regarded as knowledgeable and successful, the student teachers in Giovanni’s class were able to experience first-hand expansive literacy practices taking place outside of traditional sites of literacy learning.

The LTEs developed thought-provoking assignments, which helped student teachers arrive at their own understandings of literacy beyond just autonomous skills. For example, in
Dominique’s course, *The Teaching of Literacy*, student teachers had to complete a Community Literacy Digital Project. This assignment encouraged student teachers to view literacy beyond traditional practices such as reading and writing by encouraging them to create digital texts.

On her course syllabus Dominique described the assignment as:

> The purpose of this project is to help understand how practices in various community spaces have the potential to inform and influence our conceptions of the term literacy. For this project you will attend a community literacy event, create a digital project that explores the questions listed below, write a 2-3 page reflection about how the event is shaping your understanding of literacy, and create a handout for the class that provides basic information about your event. Questions to consider as you choose and attend a community literacy event are:

  - How is literacy defined in this community space?
  - How does this definition connect to scholarship we have read in this course?
  - What questions about theory/practice/policy does this experience raise?
  - What lessons can teachers learn from viewing literacy through this lens?

By asking student teachers to attend community literacy events, Dominique makes community members’ knowledge count while having student teachers experience first-hand literacy events taking place outside of traditional sites of teaching and learning (i.e. schools). By asking: How is literacy defined in this community space? Dominique disrupted student teachers assumptions about how and where literacy practices take place, while encouraging them to acknowledge a variety of literacy practices taking places in communities.

**ii. Literacy as a way to make meaning in the world.**

The LTEs understood literacy as a way to make meaning in the world. In order to help student teachers view literacy as skills beyond reading and writing, they worked with student teachers to help them recognize literacy as a social construct. They helped their student teachers understand what counted as literacy and who counted as literate was often determined by
dominant discourses in society (Luke & Freebody, 1997). Maya worked with her student teachers to arrive at these understandings. She said,

I always want to support students and thinking about what are the lenses by which we view our students? How are we not just describing what we’re seeing but often evaluating it? And how is it that a student’s performance may really just be a result of our own assumptions or a result of the pedagogical activities that we create that kind of position some as knowing or not knowing?

The LTEs’ understanding of literacy as a practice that is not neutral was at the core of their pedagogy. Melissa poignantly described literacy as a practice in which we “make sense of and in the world.” And so, the LTEs created opportunities for their student teachers to arrive at their own understandings.

The LTEs used this expansive view of literacy to conceptualize their course goals and assignments. By setting expansive goals for their courses, the LTEs were able to provide student teachers with opportunities to engage with literacy practices, which transcended autonomous skills such as reading and writing. Pietro explained his overarching goals for his teacher education courses:

I’m trying to do a number of things that help [student teachers] broaden their view of what counts as Literacy, broaden their view of what counts as Literacy instruction, and enrich their view of what counts as the teacher’s role in the classroom in creating opportunities to have experiences that are meaningful Literacy experiences.

Pietro’s course goals were directly informed by his expansive definition of literacy: “the notion of Literacy as layers of discourses that we all learn and enact.” He wanted his “student teachers to problematize…to think about literacy as being broader than traditional views about reading, writing, and speaking.”
Maya described a central goal for her course as helping student teachers “disrupt the idea of literacy as autonomous and literacy as a school-based skill” and in turn, gradually, “to understand that literacy isn’t neutral.” She elaborated: “The author has a political message whether we see it or not…and literacy is constructed, its not neutral…and for them to also disrupt some of the hierarchies that they may have come across, such as the distinction between illiterate and literacy peoples or groups.”

**iii. Literacy as multimodal.**

The LTEs engaged with multimodal practices to help student teacher gain an expansive view of literacy, and thus enacted disrupting the commonplace (Lewison et al., 2008). As discussed earlier, a common goal among the LTEs was having their student teachers gain expansive views of literacy, which extended beyond print-based text and often took place outside of traditional settings for literacy teaching and learning (i.e. classrooms). To model this expansive nature of literacy, the LTEs engaged with their student teachers using alternative texts and forms of expression (Lewison et al., 2008). These included podcasts, slam poetry, greeting cards, social media, quilt squares, Boalian theatre, and maps. Kosnik et al. (2015) identified this practice of using alternate texts and forms of expression as a way to “unsettle student teachers from the dominant discourses about literacy…and help student teachers unpack issues related to equity” (p. 145). To help student teachers disrupt the idea of literacy as autonomous and solely a school-based skill, the LTEs had student teacher engage in a variety of multimodal exercises and assignments. For example, in Misa’s course, *The Composing Process*, student teachers participated in spoken word poetry. She described spoken word as one of the “multiple ways of written and oral expression.” Although many student teachers were “nervous” and “scared” to try something new, the assignment
encouraged them to step outside of their comfort zone and practice literacy in a new way. Misa commented this assignment was often the highlight of the course for several student teachers: “This is an assignment they are all nervous about at the beginning because they have to perform this spoken word piece but everybody’s piece is always really powerful. The final projects are always awesome.”

Another example was in Maya’s course, *Literacy, Culture, and the Teaching of Reading*, where student teachers were asked to do a Literacy Analysis assignment where they mapped places they travelled in a week. On her course outline the assignment is described:

This assignment is designed to encourage metacognitive awareness of your everyday literacy events and practices. Choose two activities that you do as part of your ordinary life, document them (i.e., take notes immediately after the activity so you can remember it), and analyze them using a chart to be handed out in class. You will bring your analysis chart to class for peer discussion, and then prepare a 5 page paper in which you briefly describe the events and analyze them in relation to course concepts and readings about literacy, positioning, and power.

Upon completing their assignments, Maya prompted student teachers to think about their own literacy practices in those spaces as well as privileges they held by traveling those places. She asked them to consider: “Who are you? How are you read in that space?” Maya related this assignment to Paulo Freire’s (1970) notion of “reading the word and the world” because she challenged student teachers to “read” their daily actions and make meaning from them. In particular, this assignment helped student teachers identify their own daily literacy practices as well as various settings literacy can take place. Further, Maya used this exercise to facilitate conversations around privilege; student teachers gained awareness around their privilege by locating areas/stops they frequented on a map (e.g., visiting affluent neighborhoods, shopping in certain stores and grocery stores).
Throughout their courses the LTEs reported their student teachers’ views of literacy evolved. All of the LTEs had their student teachers reflect on their changing definitions of literacy in their courses. Some, like Maya and Giovanni, had student teachers hand in mini-reflections on their changing definitions of literacy throughout the course, while Misa, Melissa, and Pietro had informal group discussions with student teachers to examine their shifting conceptions of literacy. Interestingly, Dominique had an assignment built into her course, which explicitly addressed student teachers’ shifting notions of literacy. For their final assignment, student teachers’ were asked to write a paper, Definition of Literacy. The goals of the assignment were explained in her course outline:

- Crafting a practical definition of literacy is a difficult task to undertake. Literacy scholars, classroom teachers, and educational researchers continue to debate, revise, and (re)conceptualize definitions of literacy to reflect shifting social and political ideologies. This assignment is an opportunity for you to define literacy based on your evolving understanding of the term in theory and practice. Presenting your personal philosophy of literacy instruction. How do you define literacy? What do you see as the most productive approach to fostering literacy in school settings? What theoretical framework informs your perspective?

Dominique used this final assignment to have students formally express their evolving understandings of literacy. She was pleased how many student teachers were able to articulate their expansive philosophy of literacy through their deeper understanding for the “depth and breadth” of literacy teaching and learning, a central goal for her course.

All of the LTEs disrupted the commonplace by integrating expansive understandings of literacy into their courses. They conceptualized literacy in three significant ways: literacy as skills beyond reading and writing (e.g., community literacy practices); literacy as a way to read the word and the world (Freire, 1970); and literacy as multimodal.
**Helping Student Teachers Unlearn**

Although the six LTEs had an expansive definition of literacy beyond a set of autonomous skills, such was not always the case with their student teachers. The LTEs reported that student teachers often came into their courses with narrow views of literacy, which were often based upon their own schooling practices as students. In response to student teachers’ traditional views of literacy, the LTEs set broad and expansive goals in their courses, namely helping student teachers “unlearn.” These findings are not surprising when considering Lortie’s (1975) notion of the apprenticeship of observation. He argues, “There are ways in which being a student is like serving an apprenticeship in teaching; students have protracted face-to-face and consequential interactions with established teachers” (p. 61). Yet, as students they were not aware of their teachers’ pedagogical approaches, objectives, planning, student assessment, or analysis of their teaching. In addition, as students they did not “perceive the teacher as someone making choices among teaching strategies” (Lortie, 1975, p. 63). This often leaves student teachers with a one-dimensional view of teaching. Misa explained why having student teachers unlearn was an important part of her courses. She said:

> [Student teachers] have to unlearn what it means to be a school student, they’ve been in schools for how many years with a certain type of culture and norms that they know how to be, they know to do school, they know how to be good students. I don't care about that. Now you've got learn, you are a teacher, you are part of a learning community and I don't want you to then enact those same types of pedagogies that brought you to this space of just consuming what somebody wants.

Edelsky (1999) suggested that an initial step in taking up critical literacy practices in the classroom is realizing *first* we need to become aware of ourselves and develop an awareness of the larger social systems which are in place and then we can support pupils in doing the same. To have the student teachers better understand their own relationship to schooling, three of the six LTEs (Pietro, Maya, Melissa) had them create literacy autobiographies. In these
texts, student teachers were to recall and analyze pivotal moments in their literacy learning, as well as places where literacy took place in their lives. By having student teachers analyze their previous schooling experiences (literacy autobiographies, classroom discussions, reflective papers), this helped them identify their own filters.

In Pietro’s course, *Academic Literacy*, student teachers completed an assignment entitled Literacy History, which helped them to disrupt their assumptions about literacy teaching and learning. This assignment had student teachers locate their own literacy history and then make connections between the literacy history of a pupil in their classroom during their practice teaching placement. As stated on the course outline, the assignment asked student teachers to do the following:

*Drawing upon your observations of and interviews with a struggling reader or writer, you will weave together your autobiography with the student’s biography to consider similarities and differences in how you have each experienced literacy and schooling. While you can draw upon literacy events that occurred both in and out of the classroom, strive also to focus on literacy issues relating to your specific content area.*

By engaging in assignments which asked student teachers to identify their own relationship to literacy, they were then more ready to “step outside of themselves” to better understand diverse settings outside of their own cultural world. Melissa said this process of “helping student teachers understand privilege and whiteness” allowed for student teachers to truly begin to understand that “teaching is culturally located and literacy is not neutral.”

*i. Drawing on funds of knowledge.*

When considering students teachers’ often narrow views of literacy, all six LTEs recognized holding a deficit perspective of pupils, especially those from traditionally marginalized groups (i.e., pupils of colour, pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds) was an obstacle student teachers faced on a path towards a broader conception of literacy. To help student teachers
overcome deficit perspectives of pupils, the LTEs invited them to think about the relationships between traditional literacy practices, those who benefit from traditional practices and those marginalized from those practices, often leading to deficit perspectives. The LTEs aimed to have student teachers value what the pupils brought into the classroom and integrate it into the curriculum meaningful ways. Moll (1992) refers to this practice as drawing upon pupils “funds of knowledge” described as the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133).

Dominique referred to this approach as an “additive perspective” which positioned students as “experienced” and “knowledgeable.” Misa had student teachers challenge their assumptions about who is knowledgeable by helping student teachers see “young people as having capital and certain skills that they bring to their learning process, whether we use it in the classroom or not, but it legitimizes them up front and not seeing them from a deficit perspective.” Likewise, Giovanni wanted student teachers to question who counted as knowledgeable in order to “to view the [pupils] they are working with as intellectual resources and as people who come in with rich experiences.” Giovanni strongly believed “that [pupils] themselves can contribute to the curriculum in very powerful ways.” Melissa aimed to have student teachers challenge their assumptions about pupils, particularly those from racially and linguistically diverse backgrounds. She said,

My main goal is to get them to really appreciate young children. To realize that they are already literate regardless of whether they are doing it in traditional ways…children are brilliant and they’re capable, and a lot of times people will discount their brilliance because of the colour of their skin, because of their income or their family’s income. And I wanted them to recognize that just because the children’s literacy practices may not look like their literacy practices, that doesn’t mean that children can’t do [it].
By sharing a powerful classroom example with her student teachers, they were able to further understand pupils’ multiple literacies and their ability to “make sense of and in the world”:

There are four boys who never brought homework back the whole year. The teacher decided to engage them in a study of New York City, and asked the children to go to the subway station and get a free map at the tollbooth. And most of the kids who are very advanced, great readers, didn’t know what a tollbooth was and had great difficulty acquiring a map. So these four boys were the first ones to bring the map and were ones to school everyone on how to do it. But not only that, reading the map.

By sharing this example Melissa helped student teachers disrupt commonplace notions of what counted as literacy and what it meant to be literate. By drawing on the pupils “funds of knowledge” she positioned the four boys as highly literate because they were able to read a map for everyday purposes. Melissa, however, cautioned that this sort of critical work with student teachers could only be enacted if they first had opportunities to think about their own identity in relation to their literacy practices. This notion is further discussed later in the chapter.

Pietro shared a similar goal he had for his courses. He wanted his student teachers to create “asset maps” to uncover students’ funds of knowledge. Pietro encouraged student teachers to look for pupils’ out-of-school literacies:

Not just language, but what their musical abilities are and various ways that the child is literate in the world. All the basketball that they play and all the prayers that they’ve memorized and all the square-dancing they know how to do. So that the student teacher comes to understand the child as a capable person who probably needs to improve their reading and writing, who has to learn academic language.

Pietro encouraged student teachers to inquire into the ways in which pupils’ language is shaped by different kinds of literacies.
Maya’s ongoing research on first-graders influenced her perspectives on their out of school literacy practices which she incorporated into her courses. She invited her student teachers to view pupils as young as five and six as intellectuals with the ability to think critically and develop empathy. She commented: “children use literacy to negotiate cultural and relational bonds, they’re really attentive to inequality and alleviating others’ suffering.” By using content, which was familiar and relevant to the pupils, Maya modeled how teachers could build on pupils’ knowledge and experiences to develop critical literacy skills (Comber, 2001; Vasquez 2004). In her research study, Maya invited first grade students to take photos of their communities and use the photos to compose written reflections. The pupils focused on various spaces in their neighbourhood (e.g., the laundromat) and prompted to uncover the kinds of literacy practices occurring there. Through this ongoing research Maya truly views pupils of all ages as public intellectuals who bring to the classroom rich experiences and knowledge.

To help student teachers view all pupils as intellectuals, four of the six LTEs (Pietro, Melissa, Dominique, Maya) had an assignment in their courses which required student teachers to interview and study pupils in their practice teaching placement. Melissa, who taught a course Reading and Writing in the Primary Grades, titled this inquiry assignment Kid-Watching, a term which she defined as “getting to know each child in as many different contexts as possible-to know each child as a person unique in all the world.” On her course outline she explained why she had her student teachers “kid-watch”:

The best teachers I know are kid-watchers. They turn to children as curricular informants. They listen and observe their students, take field notes, anecdotal records, writing conference notes, and keep track of reading conferences in order to understand how children are making meaning. In short, they are researchers of children. They know that this documentation is the key to
developing literacy engagement that best meets the intersectional needs of their students.

In this assignment, Melissa encouraged student teachers to view pupils as “curricular informants” by viewing pupils as knowledgeable contributors in the classroom, and thus helping student teachers shed deficit perspectives. Melissa also involved her student teachers in school-based tutoring. Her goal was for student teachers to understand the lived experiences of the children: “student teachers must get to know a child.” The tutoring project required student teachers to “document the child’s interests” while practicing cultural responsiveness.

**Using Popular Culture and Media in Curriculum**

The LTEs used current events, popular culture, and media in their curriculum to familiarize themselves with student teachers’ interest in ways that contributed to their classroom instruction (Milner, 2010, p. 125). In particular, popular culture and media were used to help student teachers disrupt their beliefs, including how people are constructed by television and videos (Marsh, 2000; Vasquez, 2000). Dominique, for example, had her student teachers view and analyze videos for issues of “gender and equity, stereotypes, and intersections around race and gender.” Student teachers watched a video about a basketball star and unpack the race, gender, and class stereotypes being represented. To extend the activity beyond analysis, Dominique had her student teachers create a counter-narrative to the video, which disrupted commonly held stereotypes about basketball players.

The LTEs also used children’s toys and comics as points of entry into larger conversations about issues of power, specifically gender, race, and privilege. Dominique had her student teachers analyze the stereotypes presented in children’s toys, while Melissa, who was committed to a “critical take on digital media literacy,” had student teachers watch
cartoons and analyze how the characters and thus the people in society they were being constructed. She explained how she used popular children’s cartoons *Sid the Science Kid* and *Dora the Explorer* in her courses:

They watch and analyze Sid the Science Kid, and Sid is supposedly African-American and supposedly Jewish. But … he doesn’t speak African-American language…there are many things that are made visible and invisible. I [also] show them Dora and Diego in Spanish so that they realize how little Spanish actually Dora and Diego speak and [I show them] the English version, because they think it’s fully bilingual otherwise. And then really use that as an entry point to problematize issues of representation in terms of really these difficult issues, issues that a lot of times they tip-toe around. Issues of African-American language. Why is it that Sid the Science Kid is African-American? There is no mention of, I mean, all of their hairs are straight, all of their language is mainstream American English. And why is it that we’re surprised if kids are saying certain things when they do?

While several LTEs used TV, videos, and cartoons to disrupt the commonplace, Misa spoke emphatically about her course curriculum mirroring “very much what’s gong on in the world today.” She included the perspectives of not only research scholars, but also of community stakeholders whom were directly being affected by a particular issue. By doing this Misa modeled disrupting the commonplace because she problematized whose voices counted and were included in the telling of a community narrative. For instance, she included social media posts (e.g., Instagram, Twitter) and readings from local papers on the Black Lives Matter movement and the civil unrest related to the Mike Brown case. She invited her student teachers to question: “What are these local community folks saying and how is their knowledge legitimized within the work that we have to do?” By positioning the community members as knowledgeable and including voices from beyond traditional media outlets, Misa

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7 During the time of the second interview a top news story in the country was the fatal shooting of Mike Brown and the protests, which occurred after in Ferguson, Missouri.
enacted critical literacy practices in her courses. She encouraged student teachers to see the everyday through new lenses (Lewison et al., 2008).

**Enacting Critical Digital Literacy Practices**

Digital technology has rapidly changed the way we communicate, and thus changed our literacy practices. The LTEs had an expansive understanding of literacy, which included a wide range of digital literacy practices from showing videos in class to having student teachers create digital stories. Acknowledging the widespread uses of digital technologies both in and outside schools, the LTEs believed digital literacy practices could be a powerful way to disrupt the commonplace, and thus should be integrated into literacy teacher education courses.

When asked what place digital technology had in teacher education programs (low, medium, or high), all felt it had an important place in teacher education programs as shown in Table 4. They felt it should be “integrated throughout.” Interestingly, digital technology was not viewed as a “magic bullet” to teaching and learning; rather, it was viewed as a useful tool, “another way of representing, another way of consuming” (Melissa). The LTEs recognized the multimediated nature of literacy, and so enacted critical literacy practices with the aid of digital technology. Melissa shared an example: “I use cartoon [videos] to talk about issues of power and privilege in a very non-threatening way.”
Table 4: *Place of Digital Technology in Teacher Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Digital Technology in Teacher Education</th>
<th>Number who identified low/medium/high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All six LTEs recognized advantages of digital technology for a critical literacy approach in teacher education:

- **Misa** viewed digital technology as a tool to position those not in the dominant discourse as knowledgeable. She said digital technology allows us to “challenge assumptions that we have about who is knowledgeable and seeing young people as having capital and certain skills that they bring to the learning process.”

- **Maya** believed digital technology could provide “ways of extending learning and sharing among the group.” She also noted, when working with multilingual learners, digital technology provides “access to more materials and access to translations.”

- **Pietro** believed digital technology offers the “ability to share, manipulate, and collectively consider information that we wouldn’t have been able to consider that way.” He also thought it was a powerful tool to “draw student voice into different kinds of conversation than they might not have otherwise had the opportunity to do.”

- **Dominique** felt digital technology provided “options for demonstrating thinking and understanding of content.”
• **Giovanni** appreciated how digital technology could “create communities across distance” for both students and teachers. Related to his research with immigrant students, he noted “students are using technology to see themselves as part of larger diaspora communities,” and “teachers are able to participate in professional networks across communities.”

• **Melissa** said digital technology provides opportunities “to cross space and time for student teachers” while allowing them to “write for an authentic audience in which people are responding to their work.”

Understanding the range of advantages digital technology provided their student teachers, all LTEs infused digital technologies throughout their work, both in their teaching and research, although used to varying degrees. For instance, after showing a video about a mother and son’s experience as sweatshop workers, Giovanni and his student teachers identified and discussed the non-traditional literacy practices enacted by the mother and son in their challenging work environment. While Melissa shared her research of having second graders “break time and space” by using e-mail to write letters to fellow students in Tanzania; Dominique used an online application Voice Thread to make online courses interactive; Maya had her students create digital stories to explore issues related to identity; and Giovanni had participants in his research use hand-held cameras to videotape themselves in their community.

Although the participants demonstrated a certain level of skill with digital technologies, Pietro commented on not being completely comfortable with effectively integrating digital technology into their courses as shown in the Table 5 below. Most reported having medium to medium-high comfort levels using digital technology in their courses, while
one LTE felt he had a low level of comfort. The LTEs possible reasons for varying comfort levels were wide-ranging: levels of support from their institution, time spent learning new technologies; their children teaching them the skills, teaching assistants aiding in lesson planning. These reasons will be further discussed in the LTE Challenges section in Chapter 6.

Table 5: *Comfort Level vs. Actual Use of Digital Technology in Teacher Education Courses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale 1-5 (1 being the lowest; 5 being the highest)</th>
<th>Comfort Level Using Digital Technology in Courses</th>
<th>Actual Use of Digital Technology in Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Low)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Low-Medium)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (Medium)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (Medium-High)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (High)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the teacher educators commented on making great strides in incorporating multimedia into their work, as a way of disrupting the commonplace (Lewison et al., 2008), they understood it’s inherent relationship to power. The LTEs understood that digital technology could provide “more ways of extending learning and sharing among the group,” however, there were some challenges. For example, while Maya used plenty of digital technology in her courses she was aware this would not be the case for her student teachers. She stated, “In schools, technology is more policed,” and so many sites would have to be accessed at home, but pupils may not have that access. The challenges digital technology posed was a point of reflection the LTEs were constantly negotiating.
Dimension #2: Interrogating Multiple Perspectives

By consciously attempting to “stand in the shoes of others” we are encouraged to appreciate “multiple realities” (Lewison et al., 2008, p. 10). Like other dimensions of the critical literacy framework, this dimension views critical literacy as a social practice because of its reflective and reflexive nature. Shor (1999) reminds us, “Language use and education are social practices used to critically study all social practices… this literate practice seeks the larger cultural context of any specific situation” (n/p). The LTEs in this study consistently challenged themselves and their student teachers to consider multiple perspectives in an attempt to seek deeper and more complete understandings of issues at hand. Luke and Freebody (1997) assert that this particular practice of critical literacy often involves juxtaposing multiple and often contradictory textual accounts of an event. While Delgado and Stefanic (2001) argue considering multiple perspectives can “enable us to frame agendas and strategies that will do justice to a broader range of people and avoid oversimplifying human experience” (p. 55). In regards to “issues that are often invisible” (Dominique), the LTEs thoughtfully included multiple voices (e.g., scholars, community stakeholders) on a particular topic, so would be made visible and unpacked as a class.

Working under the assumption that literacy is not a neutral practice, the LTEs modeled how interrogating multiple perspectives led to a more equitable practice. This practice often unsettled student teachers because there was an absence of “the right answer” and counter-narratives presented to them often disrupted their assumptions. Lewison et al. (2002) noted this dimension of critical literacy is often an unconventional perspective for teachers to assume: “The ‘testing and right answer’ heritage of schooling stands in direct opposition to
examining conflicting perspectives - a process that usually does not produce neat and tidy conclusions. Open-ended inquiries can be extremely uncomfortable for some teachers” (p. 383). However, considering multiple perspectives ultimately helped student teachers grow as educators; they left understanding the importance of examining issues though lenses different from what they were used to. By carefully selecting course readings and texts, making difference visible, examining competing narratives, and writing counter-narratives, the LTEs were able to develop a curriculum, which enacted the second dimension of the critical literacy framework.

**Seeking Out Text From Multiple Perspectives**

The LTEs carefully selected course readings and texts to ensure multiple perspectives were included. By inviting student teachers to read critical theorists, the LTEs challenged them to question the status quo. They also made efforts to include silenced or marginalized voices.

The LTEs all reported carefully selecting texts for their courses, including theoretical texts, children’s literature, and young adolescent literature. They also used non-print based texts like social media to invite in voices from all around the world (not part of mainstream media).

1. **Textbooks/critical theorists.**

Three of the six LTEs used textbooks for their courses to introduce theoretical readings. Maya used a textbook titled, *Girls, Social Class, and Literacy: What Teachers Can Do to Make a Difference* (Jones, 2006), which focuses on the effects of socio-economic status on young girls in the classroom. The textbook uses principles of critical literacy to unpack issues of poverty, identity, and race. Dominique had three required texts in her course: 1) *Children, Language, and Literacy: Diverse Learners in Diverse Times* (Genishi & Dyson, 2009); 2) *Urban Literacies: Critical Perspectives on Language, Learning, and Community* (Kinloch, 2011);
and 3) *Freire, Teaching, and Learning: Culture Circles Across Contexts* (Souto-Manning, 2010). These textbooks focused, respectively, on multicultural education, out-of-school literacy practices, and critical pedagogy. Melissa also had four required texts: 1) *Kid-Watching: Documenting Children’s Literacy Development* (Owocki & Goodman, 2002); 2) *The Common Core Lesson Book, K-5* (Owocki, 2012); 3) *About the Authors: Writing Workshop With Our Youngest Writers* (Ray, 2004); and 4) *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well* (Routman, 2002). While Melissa’s required textbooks were not explicitly critical textbooks, like the other LTES, she supplemented the textbooks with critical course readings.

In addition to formal textbooks, all participants carefully selected a variety of readings, including journal articles, book chapters, and books. They were deliberate in the texts they chose to represent each topic. For example, when discussing the topic of advocacy and equity in her course, Melissa used the textbook *Reading Essentials: The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well* (Routman, 2002) as well as Lisa Delpit’s (2003) text *The Skin We Speak*, which critically examines the relationships between language and power in classrooms. The LTEs all included a number of readings from critical scholars such as Allan Luke, Celia Genishi, Arnetha Ball, Lisa Delpit, Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Paulo Freire, Elizabeth Moje, Luis Moll, Sonia Nieto, and Vivian Vasquez.

**ii. Children’s books and young adolescent literature.**

Maya, Melissa, and Misa used Young Adolescent Literature (YAL) and Children’s Literature to introduce multiple perspectives and provide examples of texts beyond the course textbook (if they used one at all). The LTEs used these texts to help student teachers explore issues related to equity, specifically race, class, and privilege. Maya included graphic novels to
“purposefully unsettle the reader.” She used *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006), which raised a lot of issues around identity and language, ethnicity…and also has some uncomfortable stereotypes.” By using alternative texts (non-traditional academic readings), Maya encouraged student teachers to question their own reading practices. This, in turn, raised their awareness of multiple literacy practices required by teachers and that should be available to students.

Some LTEs used children’s books to examine competing narratives in texts. Maya and Melissa had student teachers read multiple versions of the same book. After reading competing texts, they asked student teachers to reflect on the multiple perspectives they encountered by asking questions such as:

- Who’s included in these texts?
- Who’s excluded from these texts?
- What representations are inscribed here?
- What counter-narratives do we find?
- What things are normalized in this text?

By asking student teachers to consider the power structures in place in each of the texts they modeled how student teachers may be able to create space for critical inquiry using children’s texts. For example, in Maya’s course, *Literacy, Culture, and the Teaching of Reading*, student teachers had to complete an assignment titled The Critical Reading Paper. Student teachers had the option of choosing a children’s book as a “text” to critically read. The assignment on the course outline is described in the following way:

Each of you will select a “text” (broadly defined – for example, a television commercial, a print advertisement, an oral conversation, a children’s literature
text, etc.) and conduct a critical reading of this text in the form of a 5-7 page paper. Each critical reading will engage the three layers and tenets of critical literacy as described in Jones (2006). Below please find some specific questions to guide your thinking along these aspects of critical literacy.

Maya’s assignment asked student teachers to summarize and analyze the text. To prompt critical analysis, Maya asked them to consider the following when reading the “text”:

- Who is part of the target audience and why? How did you “read” this target audience?
- What perspectives are privileged in this text and what are the cues that this is so?
- Whose interests are being served through this text?
- How does your “reading” connect to Culture? Power? Literacy?
- From where did you read the text (Insider? Outsider? Cultural similarities? Differences?)

By using alternative texts (non-traditional academic readings), Maya encouraged student teachers to question their own reading practices and asked: “What position do you read from?”

This, in turn, raised their awareness of the multiplicity of literacy practices required by teachers and that should be available to students.

Young adolescent literature (YAL) was also used in the participant’s courses to help student teachers interrogate multiple perspectives. Misa used books like *Push* (Sapphire, 1996) and *Bronx Masquerade* (Grimes, 2002) to give student teachers a glimpse into the lives of adolescents, often in high needs areas. In *Bronx Masquerade*, “each chapter is a different student, so you kind of get into those adolescent’s lives and things that they’ve done.” Using a text like *Push*, Misa was able to demonstrate the power of a caring pedagogy, a stance for which she advocated:

I really don't feel you should be in a classroom if you are not about nurturing relationships with your students, with their families, with their communities. You know a student will not learn from you if they think you do not like them or that you are fearful of them or that you don't care about who they are.
Misa describes how young adolescent literature like *Push* influences student teachers to consider a pedagogy rooted in truly caring about pupils:

> In the book you see an evolution of her literacy. Ivy begins to develop and improve as she begins to have more positive interactions and experiences with teachers and adults in her life so from the beginning of the book, they are trying to show her literacy skills and by the end of the book, she is writing and they have the poetry at the end and all that. So I use that to kind of really get at a caring pedagogy and what happens… the role of teachers to help students be able to write about their lives and to be literate. For academic purposes but also its for personal.

By helping student teachers interrogate the multiple perspectives of literacy and schooling presented in YAL, Misa was able to help student teachers view diverse students in more complex ways (i.e. pupils’ lived experiences as valuable curricular resources). This, in turn, helped them develop a pedagogy rooted in caring.

Maya used the short story collection *Trash* by Dorothy Alison (1988) to help student teachers consider multiple viewpoints relating to social class and heteronormativity. Maya felt texts like these were a way to “unsettle” student teachers while encouraging them to reflect on their own assumptions. She prompted student teachers by asking ‘What were your assumptions coming into the text about norms that is causing this reaction?’ She asked them to consider the possibility of “you may be reading from a dominant position and therefore you have different expectations.” *Trash* was an opportunity for student teachers to entertain multiple perspectives. Maya explains how texts like *Trash* help to unsettle assumptions student teachers may have:

> the students [teachers] make certain assumptions like they assume that the author, the protagonists are African American or of colour because they are associating social class with a certain racial marker and … she’s white and she’s also a lesbian and so they feel uncomfortable about some of the things that are in the book.
To a great extent, Maya, Misa, and Melissa used a variety of children’s literature and Young Adolescent Literature (YAL) as a resource to include multiple and contradictory perspectives. In a non-threatening way, children’s literature and YAL opened up space for examination of issues related to gender, class, and race. Further, the LTEs prompted their student teachers to pay attention to and seek out silenced voices by having them complete rigorous assignments critically analyzing the texts.

**iii. Non-print based texts.**

Expansive non-print based texts were used by some LTEs’ to seek out otherwise silenced voices. One way this was achieved was the inclusion of multimodal texts (e.g., social media, spoken word poetry, videos). Earlier in the chapter the use of multi-modal texts was described as an enactment of disrupting the commonplace; however, the LTEs used multimodal texts in multi-layered ways, which also helped student teachers analyze multiple viewpoints. This point is especially significant when considering the diversity of today’s classrooms, and thus their increasingly multiliterate nature (New London Group, 1996). Engaging with multimodal texts provides opportunities to analyze multiple and potentially contradictory perspectives (Lewison et al., 2002; Nieto, 1999). Multimodal texts have the ability to broaden the perspectives with which students might interact; such texts model how different people might create counter-narratives to the various dominant discourse constructions of meaning.

Many described social media as a powerful tool connecting their student teachers to multiple perspectives locally and globally. Misa spoke emphatically about using the affordance of social media to include multiple perspectives in her teacher education courses. By asking student teachers to “identify three news stories that are happening right now and talk about how you would connect those for adolescent learners in your classroom,” Misa
required student teachers to pay attention and seek out the voices of those who had been silenced or marginalized (Harste et al., 2000). She noted that social media was an effective way of considering multiple perspectives on local, national, and international news stories. She elaborated:

I try to live by example and then also really include the students, bringing in a lot of [social] media and media that is produced by diverse communities [and] under-represented voices and things that they wouldn’t necessarily come into contact with.

Maya used student-created YouTube videos as texts in her course, which helped student teachers investigate multiple perspectives. She used published videos her course assistant had created in a project dealing with youth and digital storytelling. By selecting these videos as course texts, Maya modeled the use of non-print based texts while creating space for the various perspectives pupils had on a range of topics. Maya believed the student-created videos gave student teachers “another way to see students.” In particular, she thought the videos “helped humanize [pupils] who I think, otherwise, would be othered in different ways because of their experiences, because of their race or class and language.” Maya noted the pupils often were not “model students” in traditional school contexts, but the “visual, media-making piece” allowed for their voices to be heard and count as knowledgeable. Topics of the student created YouTube videos included immigration and identity, crossing the border into the U.S., dealing with loss, and teenage pregnancy. Similarly, Melissa used videos as texts; she included videos from a various countries and in multiple languages to help her student teachers understand multiple perspectives on a global level. She explains:

one of the things that I try to do is I try not only to bring vignettes from YouTube from the U.S., but I try to bring vignettes from areas of the world. So there’s this fantastic video about children being constructed as problems that’s from the Japan Teachers Association. And it is in Japanese but you can still understand.
By carefully selecting a range of texts both traditional (i.e. textbooks and course readings) and non-traditional texts (i.e., YAL, social media, YouTube), the LTEs introduced multiple voices into their courses on a range of topics. Student teachers were able to then, in Giovanni’s words, “cultivate their own critical perspectives,” a practice the LTEs wanted their student teachers to be able to model to their future pupils.

**Making Difference Visible**

Reflecting on multiple and contradictory perspectives is necessary for making difference visible (Harste et al., 2000). When considering only limited viewpoints of any text or issue, we run the risk of silencing marginalized voices and re-inscribing stereotypes. In the LTEs courses, student teachers became aware that different interpretations could be made on the same text and different voices must be respected. In Maya’s course, she wanted her student teachers to arrive at their own understandings. She said, “I see my role as facilitating conversations between the readings and then providing particular examples and scaffolds so … they can arrive at different understandings.” Student teachers also understood the importance of using multiple perspectives to interrogate texts by asking whose voices are heard and whose are missing (Luke & Freebody, 1997).

1. **Honouring and highlighting difference.**

The LTEs promoted student teachers’ interrogation of multiple perspectives by honouring and highlighting difference in their courses. Giovanni brought in multi-lingual and multi-cultural books as a way to honour and celebrate difference. He noted that introducing texts which are from multiple perspectives was key in the “democratization of knowledge,” a practice he considered a “core principle” of his pedagogy. Similarly, Maya used multicultural and multilingual texts in her course such as *Borderlands/la Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Anzaldúa,
This text aimed to highlight and honour difference by examining competing narratives, specifically the “invisible borders” that exist between Latinas/os and non-Latinas/os, men and women, heterosexuals and homosexuals, and numerous other opposing groups. Maya noted the text, which is “partly written in Spanish and not translated” was used to make difference visible by asking probing questions: “Are you the primary audience for this [text]?”; “What was the purpose of structuring the book in this particular way?”; and “Whose perspectives are included, excluded, whose privileged?” These texts garnered various responses from student teachers, some felt “uncomfortable” while others felt more strongly: “some people feel indignant that it’s not in English, so they turned on Google translate.”

To have student teachers formally document their multiple readings of texts, Maya created an assignment for her course titled The Reading Portfolio. In this summative assignment, student teachers were to analyze how texts (both traditional and expansive) helped them to read the world and the word while exploring the implications on their teaching (Freire, 1970). The assignment is described on the course syllabus:

The purpose of the reading portfolio is to develop and strengthen your abilities to critically analyze your thinking processes while engaged in reading print and non-print texts... Exploring multiple and critical perspectives of texts in schools is essential because it calls attention to the intersections of culture and power, and forces the practitioner to consider her or his students as situated readers... The three sections of this portfolio will be: Reading the world; reading the word; implications for teaching. Each section will incorporate themes from the readings, conversations, and assignments across the semester. You are encouraged to see this portfolio as an opportunity to immerse yourself in the close and critical study of reading.

This assignment was designed to enhance the metacognitive awareness of critical reading processes and promote conscious awareness of student teachers’ cultural locations. Student teachers were able to assess their own habits, processes, and eventually identify their growth as both readers and teachers of literacy.
Dominique highlighted difference by having student teachers engage in multiple readings of the same text. For each reading, student teachers were guided to view the text through a different lens. She explained:

So we try to take larger issues like schooling and disability or access to equitable curriculum, and we might look at it through race one week and then another week, or last week we looked at it through class. And then next week, we’ll probably [do] some more intersectional work where we start thinking about race and class and ability, linking all those things together.

By having student teachers view texts through various lenses, Dominique wanted student teachers to honour different perspectives while gaining deep understanding of the intersection of critical issues in relation to teaching and learning (e.g., the intersection of disabilities and language influencing class/community participation; the intersection of class and race influencing access to curriculum for kids and families).

**ii. Examining competing narratives.**

The LTEs often introduced student teachers to competing and counter narratives as a way of exposing them to “multiple realities” (Lewison, 2008, p.10). Melissa who used various versions of books like *Good Night Moon* and *Three Little Pigs* helped bridge theory and practice to “engage in a parallel process with the student teachers.” Melissa gave student teachers first-hand experiences with competing narratives. Once they experienced reading the competing texts, she gave student teachers opportunities to reflect and extrapolate on how they would help make pupils make these connections in the classroom. She further explains: “I want for them to have a theoretically informed practice, because many of them did not experience the practice that we are talking about, I think it is important...as opposed to just talking about it, it often starts with engagement.”
Misa engaged her student teachers in out of school literacy practices as a way of “examining conflicting perspectives.” She invited student teachers to a community writing project she led which invites middle school and high school students to “write their lives.” Misa notes the event was an opportunity for student teachers to examine competing narratives regarding students from urban communities. She comments on how they are able to view pupils and the climate for learning in a different and more positive light:

So [student teachers] see the possibility and the promise versus you know in their traditional setting a lot of it is they are seeing now in the context of New York State with the common core and the pacing guides that teachers have to follow. They have just seen so many limitations and so many failures right now that it’s good for them to see something positive.

She notes the student teacher learning, which took place as a result of observing pupils in out of school contexts:

its great when the students come and they get to be a part and they begin to make some connections between … or see the disconnections I guess I should say between what's happening in the kind of out of school spaces and youth initiated spaces with writing that aren’t being achieved with schools in the classroom.

**iii. Constructing counter-narratives.**

In addition to guiding their student teachers through the examination of multiple perspectives, a few of the LTEs had student teachers produce counter-narratives to dominant discourses often portrayed by society (e.g., urban students as lacking in literacy skills, English as the language of power, stereotypes about athletes and rappers). In her course, Misa “guided student [teachers] towards recognizing their ‘authentic voice’ and identity” (Hallman, 2009) by constructing counter-narratives about themselves. She invited student teachers to participate in a spoken word assignment, an assignment that asked student teachers to draw on their out-of-school literacies (Hallman, 2009; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005) to paint a more complete
picture of themselves, beyond viewing themselves as student teachers. Misa noted this assignment was a highlight in her course because the student teachers’ growth was tangible. Misa commented on becoming “teary eyed when your students grow like that,” she said, “everybody’s pieces are always really, really powerful.” The student teacher performances influenced their constructions of their own identities because they experienced their out-of-school literacies as valid a practice of literacy as traditional skills like reading and writing.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed findings that arose from a cross-case analysis of the data. First, the organic approach adopted by all of the participants is discussed. Second, themes were explored under the first dimension of the critical literacy framework, Disrupting the Commonplace: using an expansive definition of literacy; helping student teachers unlearn; and using popular culture and media in curriculum to analyze how people are constructed by TV, video, toys, comics. Third, themes were analyzed in the second dimension of the critical literacy framework, Interrogating Multiple Perspectives: seeking out texts that give a voice to the marginalized; making difference visible by honouring and highlighting multiple perspectives; and examining competing narratives.

In the next chapter, the LTEs practices and pedagogies are further explored using the final two dimensions of the critical literacy framework: Focusing on Socio-Political Issues and Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice. Additionally, stand-alone themes outside of the framework are discussed including student teacher responses and challenges the LTEs faced.
Chapter 6
CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the LTEs enacted a critical stance by disrupting commonplace notions of literacy and using multiple perspectives in their courses. By using an expansive definition of literacy, helping student teachers unlearn, and seeking out texts, which honoured and highlighted difference, the LTEs shared commonalities in their approach, pedagogies, and practices. In particular, they all had adopted an organic approach to teaching, which allowed their courses to evolve and address particular contexts, as well as student teachers’ experiences and needs. This chapter continues the cross-case analysis of themes from the previous chapter. In this chapter I describe in detail how the six participants actualized two dimensions of the critical literacy framework: Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues and Taking Action/Promoting Social Justice.

First, I discuss three themes within the dimension Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues. Themes under this dimension include: exploring the policies and politics in teacher education and challenging the inherent relationship between language and power. Second, I explore five themes and sub-themes in the fourth and final dimension of the critical literacy framework, Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice: adopting an inquiry stance; providing authentic learning experiences; building connections in the community; and supporting praxis using digital technologies. Third, I discuss a stand-alone theme, which explored the challenges the LTEs faced when negotiating a critical stance in their teacher education courses. Themes within each of these dimensions are discussed and supported with participant quotes from
interviews as well as excerpts from course syllabi. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

It is important to note, the themes in each dimension were highly interrelated, so several examples of pedagogy and assignments could be categorized in more than one dimension; however, for the purposes of effectively communicating the findings they have been written under the dimension they most strongly represent.

**Dimension #3: Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues**

This dimension of critical literacy considers the ways in which sociopolitical systems, language, and power relationships are “intertwined and inseparable from our teaching” (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383). Proponents of a critical literacy approach argue that when there is an absence of sociopolitical issues in the literacy classroom, literacy education could be misleading and artificial (Lee, 2012). Further, in Chapter 1 a distinction between critical thinking and critical literacy was made; the former was identified with higher order thinking skills, while the latter as the unpacking of unequal power relationships for the purposes of social change. Lewison et al. (2008) explain: “although critical thinking approaches have focused more on logic and comprehension, critical literacies have focused on identifying social practices that keep dominant ways of understanding the world and unequal power relationships in place” (p.3). This dimension of critical literacy, focusing on sociopolitical issues, is key to understanding the distinction between critical thinking and critical literacy, and in turn enacting critical literacy pedagogy.

All six LTEs in this study shared a common belief that literacy is not a neutral practice. For example, they believed certain texts privileged some learners while disadvantaging others.
So, the LTEs integrated sociopolitical issues into their courses so student teachers could “understand that literacy isn’t neutral…and for them to disrupt some of the hierarchies” (Maya). The LTEs focused on sociopolitical issues in a number of ways: exploring difficult topics through classroom discussion; engaging in the politics of everyday life through the use of literacy; and challenging the relationships between language and power.

**Using Classroom Discussion to Explore Difficult Topics**

Closely examining sociopolitical issues (e.g., race, class, culture, privilege, Language) in the teacher education classroom was not an easy task. Kosnik et al. (2015) noted LTEs explored difficult topics through classroom discussion in a deliberate manner to help student teachers appreciate the complexity of education. The LTEs used large group discussions to explore difficult topics; however, they noted the experiences to be “nerve-wracking” and “intense” for both themselves and student teachers. Giovanni commented: “Sometimes having a good discussion about these issues is the really thrilling part of it. But sometimes it’s also the hardest and not all these conversations always go well.”

The student teachers in the LTEs’ courses were demographically representative of the teaching profession as a whole in the U.S.; they came from predominantly middle class, White, women, and monolingual backgrounds (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Rogers, 2013). As a result, discussions about issues related to equity were often difficult because they challenged student teachers’ deep-rooted values and beliefs. For example, Pietro asked his student teachers to consider, “How do we position ourselves in the classroom?” “How do our own identities inform our teaching practices?” Giovanni recognized that when discussing sociopolitical issues “you are dealing with identity and deep stuff.” Maya acknowledged
student teachers were “stepping outside of [themselves], interrogating [their] privilege…imagining the world in a different way.”

The LTEs did not want to force their viewpoints on student teachers; rather, they wanted student teachers to arrive at their own understandings. Giovanni, for example, said, “Rather than just toss out a controversial issue or take a strong stance and provoke more conservative students to have an immediate reaction, I want them to cultivate their own critical experience.” He chose not to use class time to stand on a “soap box”; rather, he routinely engaged student teachers in discussions so they could form their own position on issues. Maya also believed discussion was a significant part of student teachers’ learning: “I like for student [teachers] to engage with [issues] themselves rather than me telling them the point already.” Similarly, Pietro noted he avoided a “sage on the stage” approach in his courses and focused on leading student teachers through discussions of difficult topics. Misa also used discussion in her class to help student teachers develop into “generative” and “creative thinkers.” Like the other LTEs, Misa aimed for student teachers to understand the relationship between literacy and power, while developing their own perspectives and understandings. She explained:

I want to engage the student [teachers] in inquiry…I want them to discover some things about how literacy works to position people or to exert power through their own inquiring into text. So I see my role as a facilitating conversations between the readings and then providing particular examples and scaffolds so that we can inquire together and they can arrive at different understandings.

Through years of experience, LTEs such as Pietro and Dominique recognized they could not assume student teachers would be ready for deep discussion around issues related to equity; rather, they had to gradually introduce “hot button” issues into the class. For example, Pietro shared student teachers’ responses after an attempt to unpack issues around identity and race with his class earlier in his career:
One time, it was actually a very hard class... I didn't feel we could stop the conversation where it ended up. It was a very hard conversation. People were crying. And so we had another class over the holiday... I had to re-introduce the content. So instead of starting with Delpit, we started out with other identity issues. And I started out really easy. Who’s a big brother? Who’s a little sister? And then we went into religion, how does Judaism, how does Christianity play into your practice or not? And then we did race. Okay what are we going to do about these other identities that are a little bit harder to talk about? And it was a whole class doing it over again because it was such a difficult thing.

Pietro recognized that by slowly immersing student teachers in discourse about race and identity, they were better prepared to unpack complex and “heavy” theoretical readings such as Lisa Delpit’s work regarding race, class, and dominant discourses. The other LTEs also developed strategies to facilitate student teachers through discussions regarding sociopolitical issues in non-threatening ways. This often began with inviting student teachers to recall and discuss personal and professional experiences related to issues like race, privilege, and class.

Beyond personal experiences, the LTEs used non-theoretical texts to introduce difficult topics. Melissa, for example, used YouTube videos to initiate conversation around difficult topics. She used videos as an “entry point to problematize issues of representation in terms of these really difficult issues, issues that a lot of times they tip-toe around.” While Maya and Dominique used children’s books to begin conversation and problematize issues related to representation, language, and race. Misa often integrated current local events (e.g., Black Lives Matter movement) as a way into deeper discussion about the relationships between equity and literacy teaching and learning.

Deliberately investigating sociopolitical issues through classroom discussion allowed for student teachers to gain a deep understanding of the influences of these factors on literacy education. Giovanni, for example, addressed issues like power, racism, and class in relation to the “erosion of the public education system.” He aimed for student teachers to consider how
issues related to power and social justice could inform literacy teaching and learning.

Giovanni, aware of how “loaded” these discussions could be, invited student teachers to draw on their own experiences to contribute to classroom discussion. He encouraged student teachers to draw on practice teaching experiences as well as personal early experiences with schooling. Through large-group discussion, Maya too wanted student teachers to recognize the ways in which their stance on sociopolitical issues informed their own literacy practices and literacy teaching practices. She said, “[I] ask them to unpack for this particular course a lot of their own literacy practices and…think about how literacy is tied to power and privilege and so analyzing your own positioning a little bit.”

While acknowledging that these difficult conversations “cause some discomfort,” the LTEs recognized the importance of addressing issues around equity in their teacher education courses. These discussions helped to shape student teachers’ approach to literacy education. For the LTEs, literacy education and sociopolitical issues were inextricably connected, so not discussing them, although difficult in most instances, was simply not an option. In a powerful statement, Pietro appreciated the complexity of addressing difficult issues in his classroom and explained why he was ultimately compelled to address them in his courses:

Someone will say something like “those kids,” or “Speaking as a white woman, I don’t have any way of understanding what that experience is like.” Somebody goes there and then, as a class, you have to deal with that. That’s the moment where the instructor is so important because if that moment goes unnoticed or unchallenged or unacknowledged, then the rest of the course is lost. You’ve lost half the class, it no longer respects either you or the topic or the other students in the room, and feelings are hurt. It’s always challenging, and I always feel on sort of heightened alert when we enter into these conversations particularly around equity and problematizing [issues]. Is it equity or is it equal? And those conversations always have me standing up on my tippy toes trying to keep everything going.
All LTEs used class-based discussions to address difficult topics with student teachers because, as Pietro noted, they resulted “in much deeper classroom discussions,” which contributed to a community of trust in their teacher education classrooms. Further, the LTEs believed discussions would push student teachers towards forming their own informed perspectives on the issues and hear other viewpoints, while encouraging them to consider how their perspective would affect their literacy teaching practice.

**Exploring the Policies and Politics in Teacher Education**


Recognizing teaching as a political act, the LTEs made space in their courses to problematize issues around teaching and learning in the current teacher education climate. Specifically, the LTEs recognized the mandated curriculum was a source of tension for student teachers; on one hand, in their academic courses, they understood literacy practices as expansive and broad, and on the other hand they experienced the mandated curriculum as increasingly prescriptive and pre-set during their practice teaching placements. During the time of data collection, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were newly adopted academic standards for literacy/English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. In their practice teaching placements, student teachers observed that meeting state standards was a top priority, and so they felt pressure to explicitly teach the CCSS in their academic courses so the student teachers could teach to the standards in their future classrooms. Misa was aware of the tension her student teachers faced: “On one level we are thrown standards and at the same time I’m saying to them be present, be in the moment, and I think that for student [teachers] that is a very difficult contradiction to work through.” Similarly, Giovanni noted his student teachers had the difficult task of “navigating contexts that are very standardized.” As a result, he and
his student teachers regularly considered: “How do I work within and against the system to enact a social justice curriculum when things are so top-down and standardized?”

The LTEs grappled with the extent to which they should include the Common Core State Standards in their courses. On one hand they recognized teaching the state standards and mandated curriculum would prepare student teachers for the reality of today’s classrooms where the curricula was becoming increasingly prescriptive. On the other hand they worried that too much of a focus on the state standards would not allow student teachers to “envision the possible” in their classrooms. Because of their experience and thoughtfulness the LTEs firmly understood the complex and paradoxical task at hand. Pietro resolved: “I’m simultaneously trying to figure out how to prepare teachers for the schools that we have, while simultaneously preparing them for the schools that we want. And I tell them that.” Similarly, Maya recognized she had to find a balance between focusing on state standards versus expansive pedagogies. She realized the possible consequences of not prioritizing the state standards in her teacher education courses: “There is a danger that if you don’t talk about [standards] at all, then they’re in shock and end up just and not questioning it, and then thinking that your program didn’t prepare you for that.” She recognized that not explicitly addressing the state standards was a missed opportunity to critically engage with the documents. Ultimately, she did not view the standards as an all or nothing issue; rather, she recognized the standards as a text with the potential to be critically analyzed with student teachers. However, she constantly had to find the right balance in her courses: “So it’s both how do you support more expansive pedagogies while at the same time thinking about the realities that teachers and students are dealing with.”
Dominique, who did not explicitly address the mandated curriculum in her courses, questioned how meaningful it would be to student teachers in the long run. She was concerned a focus on state standards would result in surface level conversations rather than deep investigations around theory and pedagogy. She explained:

I don't think there is anything wrong with [the standards] necessarily but all the conversations around them are always around evaluation. And its really never about the pedagogy and the teaching so its really hard to have a conversation around theories about how kids learn with literacy and ways that we can engage in pedagogies that push that when as soon as you bring in [state] standards, everyone’s mindset changes.

Further, Dominique worried too much of a focus on state standards would convey a message which underrated teachers as professionals. In fact, she likened the role of implementing state standards to the role of a technician:

I think that if you can pick up a manual and program a remote control, you can teach the way they want you to teach here. So you have the ability to figure that out or to operate a radio by reading a manual. It doesn’t take much. And so I really want them to see all the possibilities for re-visioning education and I try to pack every experience like that as possible.

The LTEs engaged their student teachers in the politics of teacher education by being transparent and sharing their decision making process with their student teachers. They recognized that teaching was complex and messy (Christensen, 2000), and so invited their student teachers into the conversation. Viewing them as public intellectuals, the LTEs were realistic with the student teachers, making it clear the context in which they would be working was not ideal; rather, “you need to know how to [meet standards] and you also need to know how to envision the possible” (Pietro).

Interestingly, all six of the LTEs felt it was their primary responsibility to help student teachers learn how to teach children not the mandated curriculum. While they recognized the importance of meeting standards, they had experienced several iterations of the standards in
their professional careers. Living through an era of educational reform they recognized the changing nature of reform initiatives, and so focused their efforts on ensuring student teachers would be able to engage and teach children in any circumstance. For this reason, all of their courses focused on theory, pedagogy, and praxis, which in turn allowed student teachers to develop the skills, knowledge, and dispositions, needed to effectively teach pupils regardless of the political landscape. Melissa explained,

I think we should be preparing student [teachers] for the New York City system. Most importantly, we should be preparing student [teachers] to teach children. I think that that’s one of the main things that I get to the students is “You’re not teaching Literacy, you’re teaching the student. You’re not teaching the curriculum. The student should be in the middle and to try to be fit around the curriculum because you can stretch that to fit around.” So I think that that’s my perspective. I teach them to teach children.

By focusing on helping student teachers in developing the pedagogical skills needed to effectively teach children (i.e., bridging theory and practice, valuing diversity, expanding notions of literacy, using digital technology tools to enhance learning), the LTEs believed student teachers would meet the state standards regardless of the context in which they taught. Dominique explained how in her class she purposefully revealed to student teachers they had met state standards after completing an assignment. She aimed for student teachers to understand that if they enacted pedagogy, which was centred around teaching each child, they would meet state standards; in other words, standards should not be treated as an add-on. She explained:

after they’ve done all these fabulous projects, at the end, I ask them to go through and just take a look at all the things that they did that are in these standards and that they can see. ‘Ohhhh, If my students made this digital narrative, they did all these things.’ So this isn’t plus, you know, this really is covering the standard. So I don’t think that they need to see it as either-or. Really just kind of see it as the ground for what they can build. You know? It’s like the dough of the pizza, just keep piling on top of it.
Melissa, who addressed the mandated curriculum, believed good practice and the mandated curriculum were not mutually exclusive. She believed it did not detract from her critical literacy approach. Melissa modeled how her approach could be negotiated into classrooms. She explained how after the era of No Child Left Behind she was still able to find “space” and “wiggle room” in the curriculum. However, she acknowledged the pressure student teachers faced:

One of the things that I'm very much a proponent of is being realistic…They can’t disregard the Common Core. One of the challenges for them is that they have to get to know the child. They have to document the child’s interest. But they have to be culturally responsive. But at the same time they do have to address the Common Core standards.

In response, Melissa, and the other LTEs used this palatable tension as a resource in their teacher education course.

\textit{\textit{ii. Use tension as a resource.}}

All of the LTEs noted that formal curriculum documents (e.g., State Standards) were a source of tension in their courses. In response, several of the LTEs used the tensions as teaching tools to discuss disconnects between the State Standards and the needs of diverse learners in current classrooms. For example, Maya facilitated student teachers in viewing curricular documents as text to be critically analyzed. She explained:

I try to take an inquiry approach to it. They need to know what’s going on [with the standards] and what they’re expected to do, but also thinking about where there is a little room there. Let’s not just take these mandates or these curricular examples as neutral text. But what are some of the assumptions that are here? How do you feel in relationship to that?

Maya also helped student teachers in adopting a critical stance when engaging with government documents. She described how she was able to negotiate this stance into her course by engaging student teachers in the “close reading” of texts:
when we look at any text, we have to do a close reading of texts. What are other interpretive stances that we might take? We talk about what are the representations of people of colour in children’s literature and how 93% of characters were White in published books within 2012.

Likewise, in Melissa’s course, student teachers were encouraged to “see the standards as the floor not the ceiling…they need to understand the standards to get around them.” And so, student teachers were invited to use curriculum documents as a text to be inquired into (e.g., interrogating the assumptions the documents made about pupils in the classroom).

Others recognized that practice teaching placement experiences were a source of tension for student teachers. Student teachers often experienced a difference between topics covered in teacher education and those covered during practice teaching placements. Giovanni recognized the teaching context that student teachers faced was a major source of tension in his courses. His student teachers had their practice teaching placements in a school district he felt had been “undermined” and “underfunded.” Giovanni noted the politicized teaching climate student teachers would be entering was a genuine source of tensions for them. He explained the concerns both he and his student teachers faced:

> In XXX City, we went through a very, very rough patch, for my opinion. One that was endorsing a very prescriptive reading curriculum. I think many teachers, many educators felt like they were kind of under intense surveillance. A period that almost discouraged partnerships with universities, where there was, I think, very much a critical mass of people, both in universities and especially in schools, feeling quite demoralized.

Using this tension as a resource, Giovanni recognized the a stressful teaching climate greatly “shapes all our [teaching] experiences to some degree” he was able to help student teachers’ unpack the intense teaching climate they were facing. He provided a recent example from his course:

> On Tuesday we talked about issues of language learning and we talked about the social justice issue of students who are emergent multi-linguals or bilinguals
or language learners will often get this kind of quote-unquote diagnosed in schools and placed in Special Education. And they are kind of huge disproportionate amounts of kids in Special Education, right, who are language learners.

By immersing his student teachers in conversations about the sociopolitical nature of literacy teaching, Giovanni invited student teachers to appreciate the complex work of educators while helping them think deeply about issues they would face in their classroom. He was able to use the tension in his course as a resource from which student teachers were able to make meaningful connections to the theory introduced.

In order to synthesize learning, Melissa designed an assignment, which attempted to have students consider expansive pedagogies, culturally relevant practices, and address Common Core Standards. This assignment entitled Kidwatching, which was described in the previous chapter was multi-purpose in nature. After having student teachers observe, document, interpret, analyze and reflect on one child’s reading, writing, and talking, she then had student teachers plan, teach, assess, and reflect using expansive pedagogies such as culturally relevant teaching as well as address Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The assignment asked student teachers to consider culturally relevant pedagogy by focusing on the Responsive Teaching Cycle (RTC); “carefully consider issues such as book selection” when “analyzing what you learn about the child/children in light of your current professional knowledge of language learning and literacy”; and “Synthesize and report your understandings of your child(ren)’s oral and written language in a well-written literacy portrait that considers cognitive, social, cultural, and political aspects.” The assignment integrated the CCSS when asking student teachers to create 12 lessons that explicitly made links to the state standards. Additionally, when student teachers were selecting balanced literacy approaches (i.e., read aloud, shared reading, guided reading), they were required to explain how the CCSS
Challenging Power Relationships Between Language and Power

The LTEs were acutely aware of the relationship between language and power (Gee, 1990) and were committed to “challenging the unquestioned legitimacy of unequal power relationships” (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383) in their teacher education courses. Melissa and Maya both developed a unique approach to having student teachers understand the complex relationship in authentic ways. They named challenging inherent relationships between language and power as an explicit goal in their teacher education courses. As discussed in Chapter 4, Participant Profiles, both had first-hand experiences with the unequal relationship to power tied to expertise of the English language. At a young age Maya recognized, “how school structures perceive and label [language learner] students and give very unequal types of educational opportunities.” While Melissa noted “starting all over again” when she moved from Brazil to the U.S. due to her status as an English Language Learner. Her formal post-secondary degrees were not recognized and she had to enroll in a class English 101 at a community college. These first-hand experiences motivated them to unpack issues of language, power, and class with their student teachers, and ultimately give student teachers the tools to challenge and disrupt hierarchies among language proficiency. Interestingly, they both used the same unique approach when introducing language and power relationships in their courses. Without warning to their student teachers, they conducted a session of their course in another language; Maya conducted a class in Spanish, while Melissa conducted a session in Portuguese. In her course Literacy in the Early Years, in an attempt to “de-centre English,” Maya implicitly urged student teachers to consider: “What are the things going on that you have to do to make meaning of text in other languages?” Maya noted this exercise helped...
student teachers, “step outside of their comfort zones to now see how being bilingual would be a benefit in this context and what their [pupils] are going through.” Similarly, in her course *Multicultural Teaching in the Early Childhood Classroom*, Melissa began a session of her course in Portuguese. She noted the exercise was often “uncomfortable” and confusing for student teachers: “Over the years, people just walk out of the classroom because they think they’re in the wrong room.” She further explains the response from student teachers:

> I start the class for the first twenty to thirty minutes all in Portuguese. And it’s very, very interesting because they get very frustrated, very uncomfortable, yet they all speak English. And they know that as a professor, I must speak English. But it’s one of those unsettling their comfort zone and their assumptions.

Although these exercises were “unsettling” for student teachers, Maya and Maya strongly believed it made transparent the unequal power relationships between language and power. Melissa explained that she wanted student teachers to realize, “everything has to do with equity and power.” This exercise allowed her student teachers to gain first-hand experience of being on the other end of the language hierarchy, a reality many of their pupils would face on a regular basis in the classroom. Maya described the particular class conducted in another language as “one of the most powerful experiences that student [teachers] have commented to me about often.”

The LTEs made space in their classrooms to address equity issues vital to deepening student teachers’ understanding of the complexity of literacy. By engaging student teachers in class-based discussions, exploring the policies and politics in teacher education, and challenging the power relationships between language and power, the LTEs were able to focus on sociopolitical issues, and thus actualize the third dimension of the critical literacy framework.
**Dimension #4: Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice**

This dimension of critical literacy practice focuses on using a critical awareness of literacy education to take action. In their courses, the LTEs conceptualized the notion of “taking action” to include engagements beyond social and political activism, including, “reading resistsantly, communicating new lines of thinking, and pushing others to question how they come to see the world” (Van Sluys, 2005, p. 22). Freire (1972) popularized the term *praxis*, a reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it, which is a key component to this dimension of the critical literacy framework. Through praxis, we as literacy educators and learners are urged to be creators of knowledge rather than simply recipients of it. All of the LTEs in the study engaged in praxis in a number of ways and created opportunities for their student teachers to do the same. The LTEs were able to take action and promote social justice through: taking an inquiry stance; providing student teachers with authentic learning experiences; and promoting reflective practice.

**Adopting Inquiry as Stance**

Lewison et al. (2008) describe inquiry as a cycle: “We push our beliefs out of their resting positions and engage in a cycle where new knowledge provokes new questions and where new questions generate new knowledge” (p. 17). All six of the LTEs viewed critical literacy as an inquiry stance. This stance permeated their pedagogies and practices, and was “deeply embedded in the course” (Giovanni). It was agreed by the LTEs that “intellectual curiosity” was a central quality for LTEs to share. Melissa, for example, aimed for her student teachers to understand that being an educator is a “lifelong commitment to being a professional learner.”
Through inquiry, the LTEs examined their own practice and pedagogy of literacy teacher education and encouraged their student teachers to consider how their views of literacy would influence their future practice as literacy educators. As described in the previous chapter, the LTEs often faced student teachers who entered the teacher education classroom with filters based on prior experiences. For example, many student teachers initially had an ideal practice of literacy based on their own schooling, and so, inquiry was used as a process for student teachers to “unlearn” many ideas they held to be true about literacy. For example, to challenge student teachers’ often “submissive view” of pupils, Giovanni viewed inquiry as a “learning process we are in together.” He said: “I'm understanding where the student [teachers] are and more capable of just inviting them to inquire into these issues together.”

To reconcile tensions student teachers faced in regards to critical literacy (e.g., experiencing critical literacy as a negative stance, finding a balance between developing a critical stance and developing reading and writing skills (Dozier et al., 2006)), the LTEs modeled an inquiry stance, including the following dispositions:

- **Reflective:** “[A] constant grappling with ideas, an openness to new experiences, new empirical data, new theories that would cause one to look at things from a different angle.” (Giovanni)
- **Listener:** “[A]n ability to listen to the kind of experiences that the teachers and trainee teachers have.” (Maya)
- **Learner:** “[Y]ou have to feel confident knowing that you don’t know it all and that’s okay and that there are ways we can learn together...You have to have some intellectual curiosity.” (Dominique)
- **Advocate:** “[T]eachers [must] see themselves as advocates.” (Giovanni)
By assuming an inquiry stance, the LTEs made space for student teachers to inquire into questions that intrigued them in regards to their own literacy teaching practice. When student teachers identified what line of inquiry they wanted to pursue, the LTEs facilitated their learning rather than provide them with answers. To immerse student teachers in inquiry practice and view themselves as part of an intellectual “learning community,” the LTEs thoughtfully developed assignments, which encouraged them to assume an inquiry stance in their own classrooms.

All six of the LTEs developed at least one assignment, which asked student teachers to pursue a line of questioning related to literacy teaching and learning. These assignments had two main aims. First, they wanted student teachers to independently and/or collaboratively “unpack” traditional (e.g., course readings) and non-traditional texts (e.g., blogs). They prompted student teachers’ initial inquiry by asking questions such as: “What are the major themes and ideas of the book?” (Maya); “What images of teachers and teaching are represented?” (Maya); “How are students positioned in these texts?” (Giovanni); “How does the text help us rethink what counts as literacy?” (Pietro); “What theoretical lens is the researcher using to examine literacy phenomena?” (Dominique); and “How does this text help us consider what it means to take a critical stance in the classroom?” (Melissa). Second, the LTEs wanted student teachers’ inquiry to inform a re-conceptualization of literacy and classroom practice for their own teaching. To engage student teachers in deeper inquiry, beyond unpacking texts, they asked them to consider the following: “How do we position ourselves in the classroom?” (Pietro); and “How does the book provide a lens for understanding and rethinking particular classroom literacy events and practices?” (Maya). By
asking student teachers to re-conceptualize literacy practices they promoted them taking action, and thus enacting the fourth dimension of the critical literacy framework.

Maya developed an assignment entitled Critical Literacy Inquiry Groups in her course, which asked student teachers to collaboratively inquire into academic texts, take action by recognizing the implications the inquiries would have on their teaching, and finally, facilitate inquiry into their text with the rest of their class. The assignment was described on her course outline as:

For this assignment, you will have the opportunity to work with peers around inquiries deriving from a selected academic book as it relates to your own teaching. You will spend time with your inquiry group—both in and out of class—reading and discussing your chosen text, working through structured ways of looking at classroom events in light of the themes of the text, and drawing implications for your own teaching.

Inquiry groups unpacked critical texts by scholars such as Vivian Vasquez and Anne Haas Dyson. By having student teachers work in inquiry groups over the course of the term, Maya positioned them to be “experts” on the text they were inquiring into because they worked with the texts in a substantial way. She explained:

If we are talking about [Vivian] Vasquez’s work, the rest of class will have read one of her articles, but everyone else who is in the Vasquez group will have been thinking with her ideas for half the semester. And so they will be kind of the expert group of that day so it’s not like your just doing a book report.

Through their deep thinking and new understandings derived from the texts, they then facilitated the rest of the class through an inquiry session. To help facilitate inquiry during their presentations, student teachers brought in pupil work from their practice teaching placements and asked specific questions, which guided the class through inquiry discussions. Maya noted, “They are learning about facilitating inquiry.”
Similarly, Melissa created space for student teachers to develop inquiry as a stance. By positioning student teachers as future “teacher learners and teacher researchers,” she emphasized that being an educator is a lifelong commitment to being a professional learner. In her course, she had an assignment entitled Inquiry Project, which asked student teachers to “refine and extend” their thinking about teaching and learning. She described the assignment on her course outline as:

This Expert/Inquiry project is an opportunity for you and your class colleagues to collectively refine and extend your thinking by pursuing professional questions that matter to you and are directly related to common curricular structures for teaching reading and writing in the primary grades (e.g., shared reading, guided reading, reading conferences, writing conferences, writing workshop). This project is designed to further your understanding of an area of language arts through a group expert/inquiry project. Your research will take place outside of class… You will be presenting your expert projects to the class—reviewing what you learned and reflecting on the program/topic of study.

Melissa believed engaging student teachers in collaborative inquiry work helped them to meaningfully explore topics related to literacy and teaching. She asserted: “Our job as teacher learners and teacher researchers is to refine and extend our thinking and to continually push ourselves beyond our current knowledge base.” Further, she also believed group inquiry projects helped student teachers establish themselves as professionals and intellectuals. To that end, she wanted student teachers to view the inquiry group as a “professional study group,” and establish a practice they would continue as future teachers.

In his course, *Academic Literacy*, Pietro developed a culminating inquiry assignment entitled “Literacy Case” which asked student teachers to re-imagine the literacy environment based on their earlier assignments, practice teaching placements, and course readings and discussions. This capstone assignment asked student teachers to:
Write an in-depth case study of the literacy environment in your classroom as you have come to understand it. Drawing upon the data that you have collected through your observations, interviews, examinations of text, and videotapes, describe how this environment is organized to draw upon and develop students’ literacies as well as foster their growth as readers, writers, and speakers. Through this analysis, select specific strategies that will further develop the literacy environment you envision, new literacy skills, and then create a multi-day instructional sequence where you teach these strategies in connection with the content of your course… Finally, close your case study with a letter addressed to the student in your study.

By asking student teachers to make explicit connections to their earlier inquiries, envision a literacy environment they would create, and develop an instructional sequence, Pietro engaged them in taking action through explicitly “communicating new lines of thinking” (Van Sluys, 2005, p. 22). An inquiry approach encouraged student teachers to bridge the gap between theory and practice by viewing themselves as intellectuals and researchers of their practice. Once analyzing and questioning texts, they were able to re-write, re-design and take on new positions (Lewison et al., 2008) in regards to their views and pedagogies of literacy educations.

**Providing Authentic Learning Experiences for Student Teachers**

1. **Involvement in the community.**

The LTEs engaged with their local communities to provide authentic learning opportunities for their student teachers, and in turn promote social justice. They expressed a deep commitment to their local community, through heavy involvement in a variety of ways. Several LTEs had developed and maintained strong relationships within schools in the local community: Maya facilitated professional development workshops for teachers; Melissa ran after-school programs and advised on school boards; and Dominique conducted her research in schools. However, not all stay connected to the community through schools: Pietro took his
student teachers to visit local incarceration centres, while Maya and Giovanni worked with adult literacy learners in church-based communities.

Since their work was ultimately connected to the community the need to “remain part of the conversation” was important. The LTEs viewed being involved in local communities, whether in traditional or non-traditional learning environments, was an “essential responsibility” of their position because it connected student teachers to the community in which they would be teaching. Giovanni who had partnered with the local community church conceptualized his course, *Literacy and Assessment*, around the university-church partnership. He explained that the church was comprised of several ethnic communities including, “Vietnamese, Indonesian, Latino communities, an African-American community, and old Italian-American community,” and so it was an authentic reflection of increasingly diverse urban communities student teachers would be teaching in. The partnership between the university and the local church aimed to support student teachers’ literacy learning and cross-cultural understanding, among families, community members, and student teachers. By inviting his student teachers into such community spaces student teachers had the opportunity to engage with community members and community literacy practices first-hand, and so be able to view adult learners in new ways.

Melissa developed a model for her teacher education course in which she partnered with a local and diverse elementary school. Student teachers were able to consistently engage in the community through tutoring pupils from the school, in turn providing them with authentic and realistic experiences to inform their work as teachers. She described the elementary school she partnered with:
They have a dual language program, they have a very high rate of free lunch and it’s about 65% Hispanic, about 25% African American, and the remaining 10% is divided between multi-race and White families. Inside one school there is an overarching representation of the community. Also, an overarching representation of English language learners and of children who have been identified for special needs.

The model Melissa developed had student teachers in a teacher education classroom for half the class time discussing theory or doing an “activity based on what they will be working on with their children.” In the second half of the session, student teachers were able to work one-on-one with a pupil, in a tutoring capacity and apply the theory they had just learned. They worked with the same pupil over the course of the term and in turn developed a sense of responsibility for the learning and development of that pupil. Melissa believed this model of bridging theory and practice gave student teachers authentic experiences to “really think about what it means to have a relationship with a child. To get to know children and plan around their interests and get to know their cultural backgrounds.” She further explained how the model provided student teachers’ with a true sense of responsibility:

Initially, they are a little bit overwhelmed because they realize that they do have responsibility to an elementary school child and there are specific expectations that they need to fulfill because that child is waiting for them. So there is a relationship instead of just being about the content of the course. Working with the children, they are really responsible and responsive.

Overall, all of the LTEs agreed that maintaining strong connections in the community, whether it be partnerships with schools or other community agencies, which allowed LTEs to “keep a pulse” on what was going on in the community and “remain current” as well as provide their student teachers authentic opportunities to enact critical pedagogies they were introduced to in class. In her course, *The Teaching of Literacy*, Dominique developed an assignment where students had to actively engage with their local community to document the complex literacy practices taking place. This assignment encouraged student teachers to gain
an understanding of the issues surrounding the local community and then develop their pedagogical practices around issues which were important in the lives of their pupils, rather than deliver a curriculum which was decontextualized. Similarly, Misa involved student teachers in their local communities to urge them to consider how literacy practices have the ability to marginalize pupils in schools. She said:

I think that having that K-12 teaching experience is important. But I also think community engagement is important...thinking about the teaching and learning experience beyond just what happens in the day-to-day classroom or school context. Being engaged with parents. Being engaged with community literacy practices. I think all that makes you well-rounded because too often, teachers think that it’s just about them and the students. They don’t think about how that is part of a larger community, a larger context.

Misa wanted student teachers’ teaching practice to be based on the needs of the community and the issues relevant to the lives of pupils. She focused on maintaining strong connections to the local communities so her student teachers could use the community as a resource in their learning. She said: “I’m always inviting my students to volunteer or participate in [community] activities because you have to make what you are talking about in class real.” Misa worked hard to sustain, “ongoing dialogues that extend[ed] beyond the classroom,” because they would better prepare student teachers to serve the community in which they taught and the pupils from there.

ii. Supporting praxis using digital technologies.

Freire (1972) believed literacy education could be transformative through praxis; an iterative practice informed by action and reflection. Four of the LTEs in this study, Misa, Melissa, Dominique, and Maya, used the affordances of digital technologies to provide student teachers with authentic learning experiences, in turn supporting their engagement in praxis. This included using digital technology as a tool to construct knowledge. In their courses, the LTEs
had three specific goals to engage student teachers in praxis: bridging practice teaching and the academic program (Kosnik & Dharamshi, 2016); moving student teachers from spectators to actors (Lewison et al., 2008); and having student teachers participate in authentic reflection.

Table 6 outlines the LTEs’ specific goals for praxis, which were supported by digital technology, and provides specific examples. This is followed by extended examples of the LTEs’ use of digital technologies to provide authentic learning experiences.

Table 6: LTEs Specific Goals for Praxis.

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<th>Praxis Goal</th>
<th>Example</th>
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| Bridge practice teaching and the academic program (Kosnik & Dharamshi, 2016) | • Reflect on practice teaching by sharing and analyzing photographs/videos they took  
• Use email and social media to remain connected during practice teaching and as a place for student teachers to ask questions or share concerns  
• Create a video case study of pupils which relates to a theory of literacy |
| Moving Student Teachers From Spectators to Actors (Lewison et al., 2008)    | • Creating digital Public Service Announcements on specific topic (e.g., representation in the media)  
• Examining videos student teachers created during their practice teaching  
• Creating multimodal texts as alternative to mainstream texts on specific topics (e.g. podcasts, zines)  
• Creating podcasts on an aspect of literacy to share with the broader community |
| Participating in Authentic Reflection                                     | • Use online spaces (e.g., blogs, Moodles, Wikis) to participate in reflective dialogue about material presented in course  
• Use YouTube videos to reflect on alternative teaching practices  
• Participate in online peer conferencing to develop a meaningful “critical” partnership |
Bridging practice teaching and the academic program.

For Maya, the affordances of digital technology allowed her to meaningfully engage her student teachers in praxis. Maya used applications like VoiceThread and social media to “make assignments and our class activities connected to what's happening in the classroom.” Her assignments and activities bridged practice teaching and the academic program by helping student teachers work through “questions from the field.” For example, after reading and discussing text and theory that related to immigrant and indigenous pupils, Maya’s student teachers videotaped interviews they conducted with pupils during their practice teaching placements. The videos were a springboard for larger discussion in class about theories they were introduced to in the course. Maya commented on how this exercise provided student teachers with an authentic experience while bridging the gap between theory and practice:

One of the student [teachers] teaches in a middle school that’s in South Hampton, which is both a very, very affluent area and also has a Native American reservation there. And so what she did was she interviewed, she video-taped students and asked them “Are there stories that you want to tell us?” These were stories that the [student] teachers said are really powerful. She brought that in to share with the class. Just to have children’s voices there and these other perspectives helps other people because that’s what we hear and we don’t have experience with them.

To further learn from their practice teaching experiences, Maya had student teachers use Voice Thread, an application which allows media to create a collaborative space between video, voice, and text commenting. This application was used as a tool for collaborative reflection; other student teachers were able to post comments, questions and observations on to the VoiceThread using multimodal texts (i.e., images, videos, emojis). Together they questioned what they had noted during practice teaching and then compared their observations
to critical perspectives advocated in the literacy course. Her student teachers’ engagement in praxis through authentic learning experiences, bridging theory and practice, and constant reflection (collaborative and individual) helped them to develop as educators.

**Moving student teachers from spectators to actors.**

In Dominique’s course, *The Teaching of Literacy*, she designed an assignment entitled Theory into Practice: Case Based Video Collection. To help student teachers move from spectators to actors, Dominique had her student teachers create, rather than analyze, videos based on inquiry questions (that they generated from their practice-teaching placements). On her course outline, the assignment was described as the following:

In this course, your learning should inform your practice and your practice should be a catalyst for your learning. With this notion in mind, we will have an opportunity to share how the application of theory impacts your work with school-aged children. As part of this process you will be studying your students’ learning and your literacy teaching practices. During the semester, you will make at least two video recordings that capture moments in your classroom relevant to the teaching of literacy. These video clips will serve as ongoing documentation of your inquiry into teaching literacy and how your practice is being influenced by your growing understandings of the foundations of literacy. They will also provide you with an opportunity to both inform and be informed by the practices of others who are working with children across grade levels and contexts. There will be two opportunities during the semester for you to share your practice and guide our thinking about how students engage in literacy practices within your classroom.

This assignment asked student teachers to document through video how their growing understanding of literacy teaching and learning was influencing their practice. By documenting inquiring moments from their practice teaching placements using video, student teachers were able to bridge literacy theory and practice by engaging in deep reflective conversations with peers.
In her course, Misa designed a capstone assignment, The Zine Project, which had students demonstrate their understanding of literacy as multi-modal and helped student teachers consolidate their learning. This assignment asked student teachers to become actors rather than spectators in their learning by creating a product. She had student teachers create a “zine,” which she explained as: “a multi-genre piece that explore a topic of interest in multiple forms.” This hands-on assignment had student teachers synthesize their learning into a single yet dynamic product. She further explained the assignment:

For this assignment, I will ask you to select a topic of interest, mainly through prewriting activities. Then, you will consider what genres you will enlist to convey your understanding and exploration of this topic in different, creative ways. Questions you will consider include, What will be the layout of your zine? What is the “table of contents” of your zine? To help you determine the multiple genres you will employ, here is a list of ideas. Remember, this is just a list to get you started; you will definitely generate other ideas that we should discuss in our one-on-one writing conferencing during writing workshop.

The Zine Project had to include multiple genres of writing, which included both traditional and non-traditional formats. These included: Letter from the Editor; Comic Strip; Newspaper Article or Journalistic Report; “How to” or “Self-help” Article; Interview Column; Personal Narrative/Memoir; Photos/Illustrations; Poetry; Short Story; Play or dialogue; Jokes or quotes; Book or article reviews; and Song lyrics.

**Participating in authentic reflection.**

Using video technology, Maya’s student teachers documented their practice and then reflected on it as a class. Having student teachers reflect in groups was important because it allowed for them understand the various experiences their classmates had and, together, negotiate how to reconcile the gaps they experienced between practice teaching and the academic program. Maya shared an example:
There is a very practical component that they do stuff in their classrooms that are connected to these books or these ideas. Then they bring the data back to work with their inquiry groups. So sometimes they think well my kids are in kindergarten so they don't have anything to say about gender but then they try something and the kids do and they are very surprised.

In her course, Dominique created a class blog to complement the learning and knowledge development from this praxis assignment. She asked student teachers to actively participate in the blog. Over the course of the term, student teachers were responsible for posting ten responses to course topics or to their partner’s post on the class blog. Dominique intended for the blog to have multiple purposes, including: “chronicle issues that come up for you during the readings and class meetings”; “capture the answers that evolve for you out of this inquiry”; and “trace the development of your thinking during the course.” All responses were guided by larger questions Dominique wanted student teachers to consider: “What theoretical lens is the researcher using to examine literacy phenomena?”; “What assumptions does the author have about children’s language, literacy, and culture?”; “How do these assumptions position students are learners?”; and “So what for my practice?” By re-visiting their thinking related to literacy over the duration of the course, the student teachers were able to deliberately incorporate their new insights on literacy in their practice teaching placement, and thus developing reflexivity (Lewison et al., 2008).

Similarly, Melissa had her student teachers engage in authentic reflection using digital technology. She aimed for student teachers to develop into reflective practitioners and so provided multiple opportunities for them to reflect independently, in small groups, and as a class. One of her assignments entitled Reflective Dialogue encouraged student teachers to reflect independently and with peers to exchange ideas and grapple with the complexities of
literacy, which helped them develop as reflective educators. The assignment was described on her course outline:

To be a reflective practitioner should be the goal of all teachers. This reflective dialogue will take place electronically, on BlackBoard/Moodle. You will post written reflection that “admits” you to each class session by clearly demonstrating that you have carefully read that week’s reading assignment and understand key concepts. This must summarize key points from the readings as well as reflect your “a-ha,” “oh nos,” and “not sures.” In addition, you must respond to two postings each week in a thoughtful, supportive, and professional manner, reflecting key learnings from the class period.

By identifying “a-ha,” “oh-nos,” and “not sures,” student teachers were able to monitor their learning, identify key areas of inquiry, and refine their personal philosophy on teaching.

Although Melissa’s course had student teachers interacting with pupils a great deal, she used the “virtual space” of teaching as a resource from which teachers could interact authentically with a larger teaching community. She showed videos of teachers teaching, had students comment on teacher podcasts and blogs. She described the advantages to tapping into this online space:

You have an authentic audience. You can put your pod-cast out there and people can comment. So you do have this authentic interaction. There is this virtual space in which groups can get together at synchronous or asynchronous times, and work as a group that eliminates, in a way, the time, we have to meet five times before whatever else. You can do it online. But it allows for us to bring multiple perspectives.

Misa also used the affordances of the online space to have student teachers reflect on their experiences in the teacher education classroom as well as their practice teaching placements. First, she had students participate in online peer conferencing as a way to authentically “engage in the writing process.” Assigned a “critical” friend, her student teachers used Blackboard to read, comment, and reflect on their partner’s work. Further, Misa developed a class blog for which she had student teachers use to complete an assignment
entitled The QQR (Quote/Question/Reaction) Blog. To help facilitate thoughtful, careful, and critical readings of the course texts, Misa expected student teachers to post weekly on the course blog. Understanding blogs have a specific “set of rules and is a particular discursive practice,” Misa put forth the following guidelines for blog posts:

A QQR blog entry should 1) share at least one quote/passage from the week’s “online” readings that resonated with you and briefly discuss why; 2) pose questions that you have related to the readings or that are sparked by your reading that relate to in-class discussions; 3) critical respond to the week’s “online” readings and the week’s course themes by relying on your personal thoughts/experiences and your critical reading and engagement with other course readings; and 4) be no more than 3-4 “online” paragraphs.

In an attempt to build an online community, Misa asked student teachers to comment on peer’s online entries. Misa noted that the course blog was private so student teachers developed and refined their skills with composing these unique texts; however, to involve the larger and international teaching community, she planned to eventually make the blog public.

By immersing student teachers in inquiry and providing authentic learning experiences through community involvement and praxis with the affordances of digital technologies, the LTEs were able to help student teachers take action and promote social justice. Through authentic action and reflection, student teachers had the opportunities to actively question, “who was present and absent in communities where they grew up, core values they learned in their families, beliefs they hold about people who differ from themselves, and their conceptions of what ‘good teaching’ looks like” (Sleeter, 2013, p. 154). From this questioning, student teachers could begin to re-imagine literacy education through a social justice lens.
Challenges in Negotiating a Critical Stance

As the findings in this chapter and previous chapter show, the six LTEs used a thoughtful pedagogy along with creative assignments to enact critical literacy practices in their teacher education courses. However, they faced a number of challenges when negotiating a critical stance in literacy teacher education, including: a lack of consistency across teacher education programs; student teachers who were resistant to a critical approach; and a disconnect between practice teaching experiences and academic courses.

Lack of Consistency Across Program

When asking the LTEs the level of consistency (i.e., approach, content, assignments) between their courses and other sections or courses required in their teacher education program, all reported low to medium levels of consistency as shown in Table 7.
Table 7: *Level of Consistency Across Courses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Level of Consistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1 being lowest; 5 being highest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misa</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pietro</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giovanni</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominique</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result, the LTEs often felt a critical stance was only a priority for their course rather than a philosophy student teachers were being immersed in throughout their time the in teacher education program. For example, in Melissa’s Early Childhood Education Literacy course she focused on effectively teaching bilingual children, noting the other sections of the course were “taught very differently.” Since several student teachers would be entering classrooms with bilingual learners she felt it was an important focus. Further, she also had her student teachers work with pupils in a local school throughout the school term, while other sections did not require student teachers to do so. Similarly, Misa noted a lack of consistency between courses in her teacher education program; she emphasized issues of equity throughout her course, while other courses did not. She said,
What I teach only gets prioritized in my course. So when students go into other classes they forget [what they did in my course]: ‘Oh, I was just doing this for Professor H’s class and now it’s over.’ Just because you’re focusing on assessment, for example, doesn’t mean you shouldn’t be thinking about issues of equity and diversity and whatnot. So I think that is a challenge.

As noted by Kosnik et al. (2015), “It is very difficult for a single course to expand and/or shift student teachers’ entrenched deficit views of children, expand narrow goals for schooling and challenge a belief in a limited set of teaching practices” (p. 17). Recognizing this, the LTEs understood that further collaboration across faculty in regards to course design and planning would lead to a more cohesive teacher education program, and in turn better prepare student teachers to effectively teach in diverse classrooms.
**Student Teacher Resistance**

Another challenge the LTEs faced when negotiating a critical stance into their courses was resistance from student teachers (Kosnik et al., 2015). The LTEs expected student teachers to interrogate their own privilege or experiences with marginalization, which were often points of resistance for student teachers. Giovanni noted: “Sometimes there are tensions and issues around talking about identity and de-centering whiteness and because that means often their own identities become de-centred.” The LTEs noted their student teachers often came from privileged middle-class backgrounds, so discussions exploring identity and equity were “uncomfortable” as described earlier in this chapter. Dominique experienced a range of responses from student teachers when asking them consider issues of race, class, and gender: “Some became a little defensive and other were really pushed to think deeply and they said, “I never considered this before. I didn’t realize this was a tension. I just assumed …Now I have something to think about.” When asking student teachers to do group work around race and identity, Melissa’s student teachers expressed discomfort with the topic. She wanted student teachers to explore how “Whiteness is privileged, how mainstream American English is privileged.” However, some student teachers became so uncomfortable with the topics being discussed they opted to drop the course. She shared an interaction she had with a student teacher about the focus of the course:

This morning I was teaching a course and one of my students said ‘You know, I was a little bit afraid to take this course because everyone talked about it and I felt like I didn’t have a culture as a White person. But now I’m understanding that I actually do.’ But at the same time, I can see that she was uncomfortable, she actually decided to take it in the summer because it was shorter.

Several student teachers were engaging in these types of conversations for the first time, and the LTEs recognized it was a learning process. Pietro aimed to have student teachers feel their experiences, regardless of their backgrounds, were valuable resources in discussions around
equity and race. He commented: “Even if they’re middle class women, they need to engage their own identity for their places of both privilege and vulnerability in order to be able to understand and empathize with their students and where they’re coming from.” Ultimately the LTEs wanted student teachers to understand the inequities in schooling and literacy in order to develop a critical stance in their future classrooms; however, they often met a lot of student resistance on the way.

Maya recognized there was a steep learning curve her student teachers experienced when adopting and using the language and vocabulary necessary to speak about issues of equity in inclusive and non-deficit ways. She recognized that “Many students for whom this topic is new, the discourse is also very new. And that language that they have to draw from is really situated within these larger dominant structures.” In response, Maya worked to create community in her class for student teachers to “try out language.”

1. *Perpetuating stereotypes.*

Sometimes student teachers’ initial attempts with equity-oriented discussion and/or practice re-inscribed stereotypes, another challenge of a critical stance in the teacher education classroom. Maya explained how well intentioned student teachers could perpetuate stereotypes of marginalized communities by entering in a counter-productive discourse around issues like race, class, and language. For example, in her course she asked student teachers to read a pupil’s reflection on walk through their local community:

[The pupil] had noticed there was a lot of trash on the floor and they were talking about how might they change things and what kind of change could they make in the world. And so sometimes when student [student teachers], in trying to be open-minded, sometimes they re-inscribe a certain relativism. For example, somebody said ‘Well garbage, it bothers me to have the neighbourhood look like that, but maybe, that’s just how they live.’ And I think, ‘Okay, did we just say that out loud?’
Maya described how she was able to invite student teachers to think more deeply about the text without making them feel their initial attempts with critical analysis of the text were “wrong.” She asked them probe questions as well as provided alternative perspectives to readings of the text. She explains:

I said ‘But listen to what the student is actually saying’ because the student said a very powerful line which said ‘Hey, I wonder why there aren’t any sweeper cars in our neighbourhood?’ So I was able to share, and not shut that student down.

Disconnect Between Practice Teaching and Academic Courses

Finally, the LTEs noted a critical stance had proven to be challenging to actualize in an era of top-down educational reform. Giovanni, for example, recognized LTEs as well as student teachers with a critical stance had to “work within and against” the current politicized schooling system to enact a pedagogy of social justice. He said, “I think a big [challenge] is that a lot of teachers who are very interested in these issues are navigating contexts that are very standardized.” These top-down reforms had resulted in increasingly prescriptive curricula in schools, and thus student teachers often experienced a disconnect between their practice teaching and their academic courses. Dominique faced the challenge of student teachers seeing the “opposite” of what she had introduced in her courses: “What do you do when a student [teacher] is in a space where they’re not seeing any of the things that we’re talking about, they’re actually saying the opposite?” For example, her student teacher described instances of the “opposite” happening during her practice teaching placement, with a particular pupil:

Jamal, who always gets called Al, he always has to stand by himself, or he always has to miss recess or whatever it is that we’ve talked about how, the things not to do. And the teacher ignores him when he stands or waves his hand impressively because she wants everyone to sit and raise their hand more passively. So like, you know, this kid’s being marginalized or being isolated, his abilities on display for everybody. Oh yeah, they rank them by their reading groups and that’s made public.
Noting this as a significant challenge she continued to face, Dominique wondered “how to respond to and help [student teachers] think about who they are as professionals.” She recognized the power differential student teachers faced in their placements with their teaching mentors, yet wanted them to “find some way to have some agency.” Dominique grappled with this; she said, “I don’t have the answer. I just have to be aware of it. I have to consciously be aware of it and think about what I’m going to do, but I don’t know if what I’m doing is right or wrong.”

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter concludes the analysis of the findings in this study. This chapter first presented themes which were explored in the third dimension of the critical literacy framework, Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues. The LTEs were able to negotiate sociopolitical issues into their teacher education courses in several ways: using classroom discussion to explore difficult topics; engaging in the politics of teacher education by unpacking government initiatives, standards, and educational reform; viewing tension as a resource; and challenging the power relationship between language and power. Within these themes, the LTEs demonstrated how issues such as race, language, power, and privilege were explored while simultaneously considering the complexity of teaching and learning. By designing unique learning opportunities through classroom activities and assignments, student teachers were able to develop informed views on the close relationship between sociopolitical issues and schooling.

Next, themes were analyzed in the fourth dimension of the critical literacy framework, Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice. By assuming inquiry as a stance and engaging with the local community, the LTEs were able to provide student teachers with authentic learning experiences. Student teachers were able to link theory and practice when they gained
first-hand experiences putting theory into action in the community, including classrooms, community spaces, and global on-line communities. Third, I discuss the challenges the LTEs faced when negotiating a critical stance into their teaching and research. LTEs often faced resistance from student teachers because of the personal nature of critical literacy work. Further, LTEs had to respond to inconsistent messaging student teachers received between their academic courses and their practice teaching placements (e.g., an organic teaching approach vs. prescriptive curriculum). In the next chapter, I summarize the findings of the study in regards to the research questions that guided this study. In addition, I draw implications and offer recommendations for practice and further research. Finally, I reflect on how this research has affected my own understanding of literacy and literacy education and practice in education.
Chapter 7
CONCLUSION

Introduction

I conducted this research study to explore the backgrounds, visions, and practices of six LTEs with a critical stance. From my experiences as a literacy teacher in a culturally and linguistically diverse middle school, I experienced working with prescriptive curriculum that did not reflect the pupils in the classroom or value their knowledge and experiences. Their complex out of school literacy practices (e.g., caring for younger siblings, navigating the transit system, learning the social norms of their neighbourhood) did not carry any value in their traditional school setting; rather, the school system positioned many of them as “at-risk” students with “low literacy” skills.

It was in the classroom that I first engaged in critical literacy practices. My students and I engaged with and interrogated texts in a way that felt necessary. We also extended our classroom into the community and invited our community into the classroom. Years later when I came to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), I learned about the theoretical underpinnings of critical literacy and acquired a vocabulary to analyze complex classroom pedagogies. Critical literacy is a term that conceptually resonated with me because, as I had experienced in the classroom, it had the potential to reimagine literacy for all learners.

In the middle-school classroom when using what I can now describe as, critical literacy pedagogy I was able to honour and value the knowledge my students brought to the classroom. These moments were transformational to both my own development as an educator and my students’ as literacy learners. Through my experiences as a classroom teacher, I
developed a deep interest in issues around social justice, urban education, and critical literacy pedagogies. My classroom and graduate school experiences established my belief and commitment to the importance of a critical literacy perspective in teacher education programs. This belief spurred my interest to pursue a doctoral degree in the areas of critical literacy, teacher education, and teacher educators.

Research indicates that LTEs play an essential role in educational reform (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Kosnik et al., 2014), as well as influence the approach to teaching and learning adopted by student teachers; however, there is little research that explores the work of LTES. Specifically, we know little about how LTEs’ early life experiences influence their work and their practices and pedagogies. Throughout this dissertation I have sought to improve our understanding of the backgrounds, views, practices, and pedagogies of LTEs with a critical stance. As outlined in the findings chapters (Chapters 4 to 6), the early life experiences of the LTEs greatly influenced their current practice of critical literacy, which were enacted in a range of ways. Based on the findings of this dissertation, it is clear the past experiences and work of LTEs with a critical stance was hugely complex. They are true experts on what literacy teaching needs to look like to meet the needs of diverse learners in today’s classrooms.

In this chapter I summarize the main findings of this study with respect to the influence of the participants’ early life experiences, as well as their enactments of critical literacy pedagogy as conceptualized by Lewison et al. (2008). Next, I identify implications and offer recommendations for literacy teacher education courses, pre-service teacher education programs, and further research. Finally, I discuss how the findings from my research have
informed my practice as a critical educator and influenced my approach to literacy teacher education.

**Summary of the Main Findings**

In this section I summarize the findings from this dissertation. The themes discussed in Chapters 4 through 6 respond to the research questions, which have guided this research study:

1. In what way do LTEs’ backgrounds and experiences influence their practices and pedagogies?
2. What are the LTEs conceptualizations of literacy in teacher education?
3. What are their goals and practices/pedagogies of LTEs with a critical stance?
4. What challenges do they face and what supports do they receive when enacting critical literacy practices in their teacher education courses?

**Influence of LTEs’ Backgrounds and Experiences**

Early life experiences deeply affected the six LTEs. They identified key formative experiences that influenced their views and practices as LTEs. Naming early schooling experiences as turning points in their lives, they recognized how linked teaching and learning were to socio-political issues, such as language, power, and race. As students, they experienced how politicized the school context could be. Describing their first-hand experiences with marginalization (i.e., English Language Learner, new immigrant, working class family, learning disabilities) they witnessed the type of unequal educational opportunities afforded to students. In other words, they gained a deep understanding of how socio-political issues such as class, race, and language could directly affect the type of education opportunities one could access in school.
Allan Luke (2000) argues critical literacy education requires a “theoretical and practical ‘attitude’ towards texts and the social world” (p. 453). Through their commitment to textual analysis, social justice, and transformational education, the literacy teacher educators in this study demonstrated a certain ‘attitude’ they brought to their work. There were strong and direct connections between their early life experiences and their current practices. For example, Maya experienced being placed in a low-track class and now focuses on having her student teachers interrogate their assumptions of students, curriculum, and schooling. Further, Misa who grew up in a working class family strongly focuses on how to understand community literacy practices in her teacher education courses. The literacy teacher educators with a critical stance all described experiencing marginalization in the past (two participants were new immigrants to the country; one was labeled with a learning disability; and two described their upbringing in a working-class family), which they noted as influential to their current views and practices. Lived experiences such as identifying as part of a marginalized visible minority group or being labeled and then be placed in low-track streams have contributed significantly to the ‘attitude’ of the critical literacy teacher educators. The link between lived experiences with marginalization and a critical consciousness may serve as the cornerstone of the critical literacy “attitude.”

In this study, the literacy teacher educators with a critical stance essentially taught who they were. These formative experiences influenced their current views and practices in their literacy teacher education courses. Their courses aimed to help student teachers disrupt traditional notions of literacy to include more expansive and evolving understanding of literacy, and in turn help student teachers realize all pupils are already literate. In order to actualize this goal, the LTEs helped student teachers develop the knowledge, skills, and
dispositions required to assume a critical stance in their future classrooms. And so, they
designed opportunities for student teachers to gain an understanding of the inherent
relationship between language and power in the classroom and recognize, value, and celebrate
the knowledge and experiences of each pupil in their future classrooms.

**Conceptualizations of Literacy in Teacher Education**

All six of the LTEs held broad and expansive conceptions of literacy which transcended
traditional notions of literacy such as the autonomous skills of reading and writing; rather,
they viewed literacy as a practice in which we make sense of and in the world, including the
complex out of school literacies students engage with regularly. They introduced expansive
literacies by engaging student teachers with a wide range of texts including traditional print-
based, social media, spaces such as transit, videos, blogs, spoken word, children’s/adolescent
literature, and on-line games. The LTEs wanted student teachers to appreciate young children,
shed any deficit perspectives they held, and understand children to be already very literate.

Further, the LTEs viewed critical literacy as an inquiry stance. This stance permeated their
pedagogies and practices. It was agreed that “intellectual curiosity” was a central quality for
LTEs to share. Through inquiry, the LTEs handled pressures they faced like addressing
government initiatives (e.g. State Standards). They chose to use these regulations as the
subject of inquiry; for example, they involved student teachers in interrogating assumptions
these documents made about pupils in the classroom. The LTEs often faced student teachers
who entered the teacher education classroom with filters based on prior experiences. For
example, many student teachers initially had an ideal practice of literacy based on their own
schooling, and so, inquiry was used as a process for student teachers to “unlearn” many ideas
they held to be true about literacy.
To reconcile tensions student teachers faced in regards to critical literacy (e.g., experiencing critical literacy as a negative stance, finding a balance between developing a critical stance and developing reading and writing skills (Dozier et al., 2006)), the LTEs modeled an inquiry stance, including the following dispositions: learner, advocate, listener, and being reflective.

The LTEs stated that having student teachers unlearn what they knew about literacy was a priority because many came to the teacher certification program with a narrow understanding of literacy. First, the LTEs wanted to help student teachers disrupt notions of literacy as a set of autonomous skills. Student teachers often viewed literacy as a discreet set of autonomous skills (e.g., reading, writing) separate from a pupil’s social, cultural, and historical contexts. Second, the LTEs noted that many student teachers understood literacy in the same way it had been presented to them as school-aged children. To help them unlearn, the LTEs created space for new discourses in their classrooms.

**Goals, Practices, and Pedagogies**

1. **Adopting an organic teaching style.**

In order to negotiate a critical stance in the teacher education classroom, the LTEs adopted an organic teaching style; this allowed the course to evolve from their contexts and student teachers’ experiences. For example, Giovanni demonstrated his reflexivity when he used examples of student writing as a platform to generate discussion about issues such as poverty and mental health. However, the LTEs acknowledged that this organic style would be challenging for their student teachers to assume in their own classrooms given the pressure they were under to adhere to State Standards and Common Core Curriculum. The LTEs acknowledged the contradiction student teachers faced when receiving conflicting messages
about preparing to teach in today’s classrooms (e.g., focus on standards vs. focus on child’s interests/experiences).

In reaction, the critical LTEs made a significant effort to create spaces for critical conversations in all parts of their course as questions arose naturally. All participants spoke of brokering conversations about issues like race, class, privilege, and power with student teachers. When the opportunities presented themselves for teaching and learning about pedagogical approaches, Pietro presented questions to student teachers such as: “How do we position ourselves in the classroom?”; and “How do our own identities inform our teaching practices?” The LTEs identified that developing a critical stance was a process, which involved reflexivity, including “observing, listening, adjusting, and reacting” (Misa).

ii. Exploring tensions in the classroom.

Exploring difficult issues in a deliberate manner was a strategy to help student teachers appreciate the complexity of education. The LTEs aimed to have student teachers recognize how social inequities and power disparities can manifest themselves in teaching. Class discussions regularly addressed issues of power or racism and class. To understand the complexity and long-term impact of these systemic issues, student teachers were encouraged to draw on both personal and professional experiences, which they shared in class discussions.

These discussions were often difficult and/or challenging because student teachers’ reflections/comments were rooted in their lived experiences, Giovanni noted: “When you take a socio-cultural perspective and you address the politics of literacy and identity and culture and power, it’s really intense.” Similarly, Dominique acknowledged the difficulty her student teachers faced because the issues cannot be easily resolved. She described the process of
taking up difficult topics as “nerve racking.” However, as “nerve-wracking” and “intense” as the conversations could be, all of the LTEs how important and necessary they were.

**iii. Being involved in the local community.**

Paulo Freire (1972) has written extensively about social justice being a form of praxis—a meeting of action and reflection to create transformation (p. 96). The findings of the study align with the Freirean view yet provide a lens from which to see the personal nature of the teacher educator’s praxis. The LTEs expressed a deep commitment to their local community, through heavy involvement in a variety of capacities. Several had developed and maintained strong relationships with the community, including facilitating professional development workshops for teachers; running after-school programs; advising on school boards; and conducting research in schools. Not all stayed connected to the community through schools; two teacher educators worked with adult literacy learners in church-based communities. The LTEs felt they had to be well-informed of what was happening outside of the higher education context since both their teaching and research was ultimately connected to the community. The LTEs viewed being involved in the community, in schools, and with families as an “essential responsibility” of their position.

Further, the LTEs involved student teachers in their local communities. Through course design and assignments they encouraged student teachers to gain an understanding of the issues surrounding the local community and then developed their pedagogical practices around issues, which were relevant to the lives of their pupils, rather than deliver a curriculum which was decontextualized.
Challenges and Supports

i. Challenges.

The LTEs faced a number of challenges when negotiating a critical stance in their literacy teacher education courses, including: student teachers who were resistant to a critical approach; and a disconnect between practice teaching experiences and academic courses.

The LTEs often experienced resistance from student teachers when negotiating a critical stance in their courses. Student teachers were invited and expected to reflect on their own position in larger social structures and gain understanding of how this position influenced their work as teachers. For example, all the LTEs asked student teachers to interrogate their own privilege or experiences with marginalization in some way. This was a point of resistance for student teachers because their assumptions about teaching and learning were often purposefully unsettled and disrupted. Ultimately the LTEs wanted student teachers to understand the inequities in schooling and literacy in order to develop a critical stance in their future classrooms; however, they were often met with a lot of student resistance on the way. Student teachers often expressed that the focus of the literacy methods courses should be on teaching literacy skills (e.g., guided reading, reading and writing assessments) not on esoteric topics like race, class, and power.

Further, when exploring the relationship between issues like poverty and class and teaching and learning, the LTEs noted there was a risk of student teachers perpetuating dangerous reductive stereotypes about certain pupils and communities. However, the LTEs recognized many student teachers were discussing these topics for the first-time, and so they faced a steep learning curve when “trying out” vocabulary needed to constructively discuss
issues related to equity. By focusing on building a classroom community, LTEs hoped student teachers would feel safe to attempt new discourses around difficult topics.

The LTEs discussed the disconnect student teachers experienced between their practice teaching placements and their academic courses. Student teachers often returned from their practice teaching placements noting the schooling context to be standards-focused, which they felt was often in direct opposition to the critical perspective being advocated for in some of their academic courses. Further, many of the LTEs who relied on the affordances of digital technology throughout their course acknowledged this would not be the case for their student teachers; they recognized technology was often more regulated in schools.

ii. Supports.

The LTEs in this study received support from a variety of sources, both within and outside of their academic institution. However, for the most part, the support they received was a result of their own initiatives rather than formalized processes/resources from their institution. In regards to navigating the context of higher education as they entered the institution, several LTEs spoke about having mentors they found along the way. Some had mentors from their time as doctoral students, while others gained mentors from professional groups they joined (e.g., a mentoring group for new scholars of colour). When asking how they knew what to do with pedagogy (e.g., digital technologies), most responded they had to “figure it out,” which meant relying on their colleagues, friends, and children to remain current with trends such as social media and new educational websites.

While the findings of this study were organized into themes in which the LTEs shared commonalities, I do not mean to suggest they had cookie cutter practices in their teacher
education courses; rather, their practices were nuanced and varied although their goals for student teachers’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions were similar. For example, Misa aimed to disrupt notions of literacy as autonomous by providing opportunities for student teachers to be involved in their local community and experience out of school literacy practices. Melissa, on the other hand, helped student teachers gain broad understandings of literacy by integrating a range of multimodal texts into her courses (e.g., podcasts, blogs, social media).

Further, they had a range of teaching styles. Maya and Pietro demonstrated a gentle approach to student teacher learning in particular when dealing with difficult topics. Maya aimed for student teachers to arrive at their own understandings of the course of the semester, while Pietro took baby steps when discussing “hot button” issues like race and privilege. Whereas other LTEs such as Melissa and Misa felt student teachers could only outgrow themselves from moments of being “uncomfortable.” Their style in the classroom was more direct. Although the LTEs broad goals for their student teachers (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) were similar, the ways in which they realized their goals were unique.

**Implications and Recommendations**

The purpose of this research was to explore the backgrounds, visions, practices, and pedagogies of LTEs with a critical stance. Based on the findings, it is clear that the LTEs placed issues related to equity at the centre of their courses; they designed learning opportunities for student teachers to critically examine issues like race, class, and privilege throughout their teacher education course while simultaneously helping student teachers learn the pedagogical tools of the trade. They used rich and varied practices to actualize a critical
stance in their teacher education courses. LTEs are at the cornerstone of educational reform; they directly influence the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of future classroom literacy teachers. It is therefore essential that literacy teacher education programs incorporate practices and pedagogies which prepare student teachers to work in increasingly diverse classrooms. The implications and recommendations that arise from the findings in this study can be categorized into three areas: implications for literacy instruction in teacher education; implications for pre-service teacher education; and implications for further research.

**Implications for Literacy Courses**

The LTEs in this study approached their work with a critical stance; a stance towards texts, social practices, and dominant discourses which valued diversity. Their courses reflected their stance while providing opportunities for student teachers to gain new understandings of literacy. The complex work of LTEs with a critical stance needs to be further encouraged within the institution, and opportunities for collaboration within and across institutions needs to be supported. The following are implications and recommendations for literacy education courses.

*i. Include a range of texts and genres.*

Literacy is an evolving practice, which should reflect the shifts in contemporary cultures, communication strategies, and societies. LTEs should carefully and deliberately select a wide and expansive range of texts and genres in their courses that transcend traditional notions of literacy as autonomous skills such as reading and writing. The LTEs in this study included a range of texts including blogs, videos, maps, theatre, laundromats, spoken word, greeting cards, and children’s and young adolescent literature. Incorporating expansive texts into teacher education courses will help student teachers broaden their conceptions of literacy.
while demonstrating that there are multiple ways in which to be literate. Additionally, LTEs must provide student teachers with opportunities to understand the influence of issues like culture, race, class, and privilege on their own literacy development and how this can affect their role as a literacy teacher. Using a range of texts and genres, the LTEs can select texts, which consider socio-political issues to help student teachers unpack their own, and others’ assumptions about these issues. Finally, LTEs must create opportunities for student teachers to demonstrate their learning in dynamic ways, which account for the changing conceptions of literacy. These could include multi-modal assignments, community-based projects, digital compositions, etc.

ii. Use tension as productive resource.

LTEs and student teachers often face pressure to adhere to government initiatives (e.g., State Standards). For LTEs it is often easier to offer student teachers “best practices” and teaching “tips and tricks”; however, they must work to create opportunities to problematize dominant discourses in education and understand how dominant discourses are revealed in literacy practices, and ultimately help student teachers get beyond the standards. The LTEs in this study used inquiry and classroom discussion as approaches to interrogate the curriculum documents. This often resulted in tension because the student teachers experienced a disconnect between curriculum mandates and the needs of their diverse pupils and schools. LTEs should view this tension as a productive resource in the classroom. Grappling with these issues helps student teachers appreciate the complexity of teaching and learning. Through classroom discussion (e.g., small group, whole class, inquiry groups) student teachers have opportunities to negotiate tensions and develop new understandings of equity.
iii. Remain connected with teachers.

LTEs need to conduct research and seek feedback regarding literacy teacher education courses from beginning teachers. They need to gain a clear understanding of how beginning teachers actualize pedagogies and practices emphasized in their academic courses. This information should be used to refine and improve literacy teacher education courses.

Further, LTEs should extend opportunities to beginning teachers to be involved in research projects. This would be a mutually beneficial practice for both the beginning teacher as a way of staying connected to the academy, theorizing their practice, and professional development and the LTE as a means of remaining connected to the local community and context in which student teachers will teach in the future.

iv. Build on Critical Literacy Framework.

This study contributes to our understanding and application of the critical literacy framework developed by Lewison et al. (2008). Although this framework was initially proposed for K-12 classrooms, this study suggests the four dimensions of the critical literacy framework is a relevant framework for LTEs to conceptualize their literacy teacher education courses. Therefore, these four dimensions (Disrupting the Commonplace; Interrogating Multiple Perspectives; Focusing of Sociopolitical Issues; and Taking Action and Promotion Social Justice) of critical literacy practices can be used to inform a critical stance in teacher education classrooms; however, the framework will need to be elaborated and expanded upon to highlight the needs of student teachers in the teacher education context.

**Implications for Pre-service Teacher Education Programs**

The LTEs in this study had to go above and beyond the course curriculum to effectively integrate critical literacy practices while designing opportunities for student teachers to gain
expansive views of literacy. This was both physically and emotionally demanding on the LTEs due to how time-consuming the work was. This is not sustainable, and it is clear LTEs require more support. Therefore, the complex work of LTEs with a critical stance needs to be further encouraged within the institution, and opportunities for collaboration within and across institutions needs to be supported.

*i. Build partnerships in the community.*

Pre-service literacy teacher education programs must build and maintain educational partnerships in the community, including both traditional and non-traditional learning spaces. School-based partnerships should be formed across teacher education programs and local schools. This will provide opportunities for teacher educators, student teachers, in-service teachers, and school administrators to collaborate in the areas of teaching and research. The LTEs who formed educational partnerships in this study reported how demanding this was on them because of how time consuming it was. This is not sustainable for LTEs who already have several demands placed on them, so the academic institution needs to play a larger role in the areas of coordination, communication, and logistical planning to ensure the longevity of these partnerships. These partnerships could help in bridging the divide between theory and practice. For example, literacy teacher education courses could be taught in the community, either in local public schools or community spaces. Physically holding academic courses in the community models to student teachers the importance of being connected to community and will help in recognizing and then responding to the needs of the community at large. Further, establishing relationships in the community will allow LTEs with the opportunity to involve student teachers in community events. Student teachers will gain first-hand experience working with community members and understanding community-based literacy practices.
This practice will model for them a basis for knowing why and how to tap into resources outside of schools. Their increased understandings about out of school literacy practices will be helpful as they consider how literacy matters to meaning making, identity, and agency. Using this knowledge, they will be better prepared to implement inclusive literacy strategies in their content area classrooms.

\textit{ii. Provide opportunities for collaboration and professional development.}

As noted by Kosnik et al. (2015), “For decades professional development for teachers has been commonplace yet it has been overlooked for teacher educators” (p.52). LTEs need opportunities to collaborate within and across institutions. As noted earlier, lived experiences with marginalization and opportunities to develop a critical consciousness may serve as the basis of a critical literacy “attitude.” However, it is unrealistic to expect all literacy teacher educators to have these defining experiences, hence there is a need for collaboration among faculty in the forms of mentoring, co-constructing curriculum, and team-teaching. Pre-service teacher education programs need to create the time and space required for literacy teacher educators collaborate on an on-going basis. This will allow literacy teacher educators to learn with and from one another, while broadening the experiences from which they construct their literacy education curriculum.

Further, within the institution, literacy teacher education faculty need time to work with their colleagues to discuss ideas surrounding literacy and further refine literacy courses. Additionally, they require time to reevaluate and refine their courses in order to best meet the needs of their student teachers and appropriately reflect the context in which they teach. Collaborative course development is time consuming, and so LTEs need support from their academic institution to carry out this important work. The institution needs to value
collaboration amongst faculty and encourage them to dedicate time regularly to refining their courses. Outside of their own institution, LTEs need to be supported and encouraged to work with colleagues in larger academic communities and conferences to share knowledge around literacy education research and pedagogies. Professional development within and across institutions and mentoring for new faculty are essential.

**Implications for Further Research**

The findings presented in this study highlight the experiences, backgrounds, visions, and practices of six LTEs with a critical stance, and in turn offer important contributions to our knowledge of critical literacy, literacy teacher education, and LTEs. However, this study explored in-depth only a small sample of LTEs. It is clear that more time and more research is needed to more completely understand this unique professional group. There is a need for systematic inquiry in the following areas:

First, while my doctoral research considers LTEs with a critical stance, little is known about their use of digital technologies to inform a critical stance in literacy teacher education courses. Thus, a continuing line of research is framed by the question: *To what extent and in what ways are LTEs using digital technologies to enact critical literacy approaches in teacher education?*

Second, we know little about how student teachers conceptualize and actualize critical literacy practices using digital technologies in their K-12 classrooms. Further research questions that can be studied from the perspectives of classroom teachers is: *What are beginning teachers’ experiences and practices with digital technologies to enact critical literacy pedagogies?*
Several additional possibilities for further research surfaced in light of the findings:

- Conducting a longitudinal study into the visions, practices, and pedagogies of LTEs with a critical stance, and understanding how these shift over the course of their professional career.
- Studying LTEs who do not have a critical stance to gain insight into their visions, backgrounds, and practices to effectively prepare student teachers for 21st century classrooms.
- Increasing the methods of data collection from this research to include observations enactments of critical literacy practices by teacher educators as well as student teacher responses.
- Expanding the participant sample to include LTEs with a critical stance from additional countries (beyond the U.S.), including both English and non-English speaking countries.
- Investigating ways in which to better support and encourage novice and experienced teacher educators in negotiating a critical stance into their courses.

**Connections Between My Research and My Teaching Practice**

This research has profoundly influenced my own practice as an educator, as well as deepened my understanding of contemporary literacy practices. While in the midst of my doctoral work, I had the opportunity to work with a range of adults, including adult literacy learners. For the past four years, I have been working as an educator in a Liberal Arts program in a large community college located in Toronto, Canada. The program largely serves traditionally marginalized populations including: learners with previously negative schooling experiences, newcomers to the country; and English Language Learners. Over the years I taught several
courses both in traditional schooling spaces and non-traditional schooling spaces (e.g.,
community centres); however, it was the Communications course (also known as College
English), which I spent a significant amount of time developing and teaching.

The Communications courses were required for all learners in the Liberal Arts
program, and focused largely on skills related to composition, research, and media literacy.
While re-developing the course curriculum, I was in the middle of data collection for my
doctoral research. I was also deeply immersed in the data analysis process and was beginning
to arrive at preliminarily findings from my data. At this point, I had gained new
understandings of broad and expansive literacy practices. I had developed awareness around
the importance of including, valuing, and celebrating multiple perspectives into classroom
practices. Further, I gained insight into how valuable the local community could be as a
resource when inquiring into critical issues in the classroom.

My doctoral research directly informed the development of the course curriculum as
well as my practice as a critical educator. Working with historically marginalized populations
(i.e. newcomers, English language learners, learners with previous negative schooling
experiences), I wanted my students to see themselves as already literate and knowledgeable;
however, I wanted them to arrive at these understandings on their own. In my research study,
several of the LTEs worked to disrupt notions of “what counts as literacy?” and “who is
literate?” by introducing multimodal texts into their courses and have students engage in
reflective work. Knowing how powerful these practices would be in disrupting assumptions
around literacy, I decided to design opportunities for the learners in my class to work
extensively with multimodal texts and use their personal histories as curricular resources.
For one particular assignment I designed, learners created digital narratives in which they were to share an “untold story” from their lives. This prompt positioned learners as knowledgeable, aimed to value their experiences, and used their lives outside of the classroom as curricular resources. Using varied digital technologies (e.g., Smartphones, digital cameras, voice recorders) learners spent days in an alternate classroom, their neighborhood and communities, documenting untold stories. They captured photos from their community and conducted interviews with certain community members to include in their digital narratives. This practice is consistent with Lewison et al.’s (2008) critical literacy framework, which highlights how to interrogate multiple perspectives in the classroom. What resulted from this assignment were powerful counter narratives to the dominant discourses persistent in their lives.

By telling an “untold story” from their lives, learners were able to invite in diverse and varied perspectives into the classroom, which resulted in an interrogation into our assumptions around issues like class, race, and privilege. The digital narrative topics included: the life of a graffiti artist; the unsung heroes of the local hospital; the disappearing green space in Toronto; and the relationship between transit systems and class in Toronto. Learners presented their digital narratives to the class, in their communities, and at professional teaching conferences. Using critical literacy practices in my classroom helped learners to re-imagine literacy in their own lives.

My learners found the re-designed course, and in particular the digital narrative assignment, to be a transformative experience. Having the opportunity to share their own lives and experiences in an academic setting using multimodal texts, helped them in seeing themselves as “knowledgeable” and “smart.” Further, several learners commented that
spending classroom time in their communities was a memorable experience because they experienced their neighbourhood and community as a classroom.

Although these experiences were not in teacher education classrooms, the findings have strengthened my professional and personal belief in ensuring future teachers value, celebrate, and respond to diversity in the classroom. My in-depth research study of six LTEs with a critical stance along with my various classroom experiences informed by my findings have deepened my commitment to the importance of a critical literacy perspective in literacy teacher education programs. I envision critical literacy education as important for all learners; a practice, which involves reading texts including our own lives with an awareness of systems of power to inform a critical stance, response, and action.
References


Appendix A

Interview # 1

Spring/Summer 2012

Main focus: Exploring personal history

Background

1. Tell me about your work experience here at the university (when did you join the faculty, what is your rank, have you had leadership positions).
2. What jobs/positions did you have prior to joining the university (e.g., teacher)?
3. Tell me about your educational background. What degrees do you hold? Where did you do your schooling? What were your major areas of interest?

Influences on Your Current Practice

4. Thinking about your previous educational experiences and work experiences which do you see as being the most useful in your current work as a literacy teacher educator?
5. If you were a classroom teacher tell me about these experiences. To what extent do you draw on your experiences as a classroom teacher in your current work as a teacher educator? How do you draw on them?
6. Do you tell your student teachers about your educational and work experiences? Why do you? Why do you not?
7. How important is it to the student teachers that you were a classroom teacher? Why do you think it is important?
8. When you go into a school, what is your comfort level?

Qualities of a Teacher Educator

9. What background work experiences do you think are important for a teacher educator?
10. To what extent are you able to stay current with the educational trends and priorities in school districts?
11. To what extent should teacher education programs prepare students to implement the initiatives of the school district? the government ministry/state department of education
12. Can you provide a job description for a literacy teacher educator?
13. How did you acquire skills for teaching adults

Knowledge + Academic Community

14. What qualities/strengths do you feel you bring to literacy teacher education? Now, let’s look on the flip side, do you feel there are any gaps in your knowledge for being a literacy teacher educator? What are they and why do you feel this way?
15. Can you tell us about your reading habits?
16. Can you tell us about your own early school experiences with literacy? (see if there is a connection between them and their views)
17. What journals do you go to – your favourite must read or the ones you turn to for your teaching or writing?
18. What conferences do you go to?
19. Which is your academic community?
20. Do you have a community of scholars in your university
21. Thinking about your life – from preschool to where you are now, were there any turning points in your career? (Draw out the timeline)

**Identity**

22. What qualities do you feel that you bring to your work as a literacy teacher educator?
23. When you are asked by someone outside of the university (e.g., someone you meet at a social gather) what you do, how do you describe your job/profession (teacher educator, literacy researcher)?
24. Which of these terms best describes you:

- teacher educator
- literacy professor
- literacy educator
- researcher
- teacher
- professor
- hybrid teacher and teacher educator
- other

25. How comfortable are you being labelled a teacher educator?
26. In your university, how do you feel that you are perceived and assessed by faculty in your department? Outside of your department/school of education? Do you feel that as a teacher educator you are perceived differently than a scientist or a professor of English literature?
27. Is there a hierarchy in your university?

**Experiences with research.**

28. Tell me about your experiences with research.
29. If you have a Ph.D. what was your area of research? How well is that research connected to your current work as a teacher educator? Had you always planned to get a Ph.D.? If no, when did you decide to pursue a degree? Why did you do this?
30. Would you like to have a greater involvement in research? If yes, what are the barriers to doing research?
31. Do you tell your ST about your research?
32. Do you think it is important for teacher educators to be doing research? If yes, why? If no, does this present any problems?
33. Should classroom teachers be encouraged to be researchers?
34. If you have written any books, who are they written for? (teachers, researchers, teacher educators)

(d) Other experiences

35. Tell me about any other education-related experiences that you have had (e.g., writing literacy textbooks for students, external consultant for an organization).
36. To what extent have these experiences influenced your practice as a teacher educator?

Any other comments you want to make about being a literacy teacher educator are welcome.
Appendix B

Interview #2

Spring/Summer 2013

Main focus: Investigating the vision, content, and pedagogy of their literacy courses

(a) Framework and goals for your literacy course(s).

1. Tell me which literacy courses you teach. How many years have you been teaching these courses?
2. Choose one literacy course that you teach or have taught and this course will be focus of this interview. What is the name of the course and how often have you taught it?
3. Let's talk first about some of the logistics of this course.
   a) How many classes? How long is each class? How many students in the course? Do you have a TA?
   b) At what point in the student’s program do they take this course?
   c) Is this a survey course or can you go in depth with the topics?
   d) Do you the students do a practice teaching placement before, during, or after your course?
4. Having taught this course X times, what has surprised you about the students' reaction to it?
   a) In general how do students respond to your course?
   b) Possible probe – course evaluations
5. Would you describe your course as organic in nature (topics develop from the students) or is it fairly pre-set?
6. What topics do you cover? (Can I have a copy of your course syllabus?)
7. What do you think students need to know?
8. What are the particular goals for this course? How did you determine these goals? Why are these goals important for beginning teachers?
9. What is the balance between theory and practical teaching strategies?
10. To what extent are you able to connect your course with fieldwork/practice teaching?
11. Which literacy theorists resonate with you?
12. Which literacy researchers do you feel that student teachers must learn about?
13. Do CR teachers come into the ac program to deliver any of the lectures/sessions?
14. Do you feel that you have the necessary support from your department to deliver/teach your literacy course?
(b) Pedagogies used and reasons for using them.

15. Are there other sections of this course? Do you use a common syllabus? How much freedom do you have in designing this course? How similar is your course to their course?
   On a scale of 1-4 with 4 being the highest, to what extent is your course similar to other sections?
16. Tell me about your teaching style.
17. Do you have a typical structure/organization for each of your literacy classes? (e.g., always start with lecture, usually have small group discussion)
18. What do you feel are some of the highlights of this course?
   For You? For the student teachers?
19. What do you find most challenging about teaching literacy courses?
20. Do you model your course on a particular literacy/English professor or classroom teacher?
21. Is there something that you hold dearly to your heart that you want to be part of your teaching?

(e) Assignments and Readings

22. Do you use a textbook? Why have you chosen this book or series of readings?
23. To what extent do you use children’s literature/YAL in your teaching? How do you use it?
24. What assignments do you assign? Why have you chosen them? What do you feel the students learn from these assignments?
25. Would you describe your requirements as demanding, just right, not too heavy?
26. Are you able to assign the assignments that you want? Or are you limited by certain factors (e.g., other demands in the program)?
27. Is there anything that you would like to change about the course? Timing. Length. Topic. Sequence in the program.

(d) How and why your views and practices have changed over the years.

28. You have been a teacher educator for X years. Looking back on these years, how has your practice as a literacy teacher educator changed? Why have they changed?
29. How much did your own teacher education program influence how you work as a teacher educator? (if applicable)
30. How much has your own experience as a classroom teacher, consultant, principal influenced your practice as a teacher educator? (if applicable)

Any other comments you want to make about being a literacy teacher educator are welcome.
Appendix C

Interview #3

Spring/Summer/Fall 2014

Main focus: Investigating Critical literacy practices and uses of digital technologies

Thank you for agreeing to do a third interview. So how has it been going since we last interviewed you?

(a) Updating Your Activities

1. How has it been going?
2. What have been some highlights of your work this past year?
3. On the flip side, have there been any challenges you want to tell me about?
4. Have there been any significant changes in your teaching responsibilities and/or your research activities?

(b) Critical Literacy

1. Looking back at our first two interviews and your studying your work, your approach seems consistent with a critical literacy approach. Would you be comfortable being called a critical literacy teacher educator or is there another term you prefer?
2. To what extent do you address issues of equity including power, race, and privilege in your courses?
3. Can you provide some examples?
4. What are some difficulties/challenges you experience when addressing these topics.

(c) Teacher Education Programs

In this section we want to ask you about your views on teacher education programs.

5. As we know from the literature and our own experiences all of teacher education is not ideal. We do not want to put you in a difficult position but we are really interested in what you consider to be poor practices in teacher education.
6. What would you like to see in your literacy teacher education program that is currently not part of it?
7. Have you noted any contradictions in your work as an LTE? (if stuck prompts – practice teaching, mission statement of university, deployment of funds …)?
   • What topics should we be addressing as Literacy/English Teacher Educators?
   • Do you feel the political pressure in your context is affecting what you can do in your literacy teacher course?
(d) Digital Technology

8. In our 21st century context, what should teaching look like in a literacy teacher ed program?
9. What place should digital technology have in a teacher education program?
10. What kind of DT do you use in your course?
11. What does digital technology provide for you as an LTE that is different from what you could do previously?
12. What does digital technology provide for your ST that is different from previous generations of student teachers?
13. What are some effective digital technology practices that LTEs you have seen or heard about?
14. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest, how comfortable are you using DT in your teaching?
15. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest, how important is it for LTEs to be using DT in their teaching?
16. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest, how much do you actually use DT in your teaching?
17. Do you have an example of when you used DT that worked really well? (on a small or large scale)
23. Let’s turn our attention to social media (e.g., blogs, Wikis, twitter, FB, Instagram, google docs). To what extent do you use social media in your course?
18. Do you include digital technology in any of your research, either as a focus or as a means of data collection or analysis?
19. To what extent have you had support from your institution on integrating DT into your literacy teacher ed courses?
20. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest, to what extent do you find it a challenge to remain current regarding DT?
21. To what extent do you use digital technology in your personal life?

(e) Personal/Professional

22. Where they would like to be in 5 years, personally and/or professionally? 10 years?
23. Thinking about how you got to where you are on May talking to us …. what would you do differently in your journey?
24. What advice they would you give new LTE