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## Exploring Teacher Candidates' Civic Efficacy Through Civic Engagement And Critical Literacy In A Literacy Methods Course

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EXPLORING TEACHER CANDIDATES' CIVIC EFFICACY THROUGH  
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CRITICAL LITERACY  
IN A LITERACY METHODS COURSE

Dana M. Karraker

201 Pages

Public school spaces play a large role in developing people's understandings of civic knowledge and responsibility. Teachers, administrators, and policy-makers design school curriculum to reflect the types of citizens they believe a society needs, and thus, determines approaches to teaching and curriculum development (Labaree, 1997). This action research study examined the civic efficacy and critical literacy understandings of seven elementary education teacher candidates enrolled in a content area literacy course. The course and the study were designed using a critical literacy and civic efficacy framework as literacy practices are closely connected to the ways in which people are able to enact their citizenship (Shor, 2009). In order to be civically engaged, people must effectively use literacy skills to make sense of a wide-range of messages presented in a variety of modes and to produce texts for a variety of audiences and purposes. Opportunities to develop these literacy practices can start in the elementary classroom (Vasquez, 2010). As the instructor of this course, I was interested in discovering how teaching the course from a critical literacy and civic engagement perspective shaped teacher candidates' civic efficacy and their beliefs about their roles as teachers, and how those beliefs were reflected in their coursework. I used ethnographic methods (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) as a participant observer and data consisted of researcher fieldnotes, participants' work samples, and

interviews. Data were analyzed using various coding strategies (Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2009) and memo writing which highlighted the teacher candidates' civic efficacies and understandings of critical literacy.

Findings suggested that the teacher candidates in this study 1) developed understandings of the importance of teaching the literacy skills needed to participate in democratic ways, 2) acknowledged the importance of teaching for a public purpose and working collaboratively with a variety of people, and 3) were able to integrate a wide range of multimodal resources and strategies in their teaching, all while keeping students' needs and interests at the center of their decision-making. Teacher candidates viewed their roles as teaching students the skill needed to accomplish real-world tasks, which included speaking and listening in addition to reading and writing. They also recognized that elementary classrooms could be spaces for children to discuss and understand real-world issues. In addition to these views of their roles as teachers, the teacher candidates often implied that their roles as teachers was to fix communities which implied a deficit view of the families and communities they imagined they would someday be teaching. Implications for this study provide suggestions for promising practices in a literacy method course that have potential for developing teacher candidates' civic efficacy and understandings of critical literacy so that they see their role as developing citizens who can fully participate in a democratic society.

**KEYWORDS:** teacher education; critical literacy; civic engagement; civic efficacy, preservice teachers

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CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CRITICAL LITERACY  
IN A LITERACY METHODS COURSE

DANA M. KARRAKER

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Embarking on the journey of pursuing a doctoral degree in the latter phase of my career, may seem a bit unconventional. But as I come to the end of this process and look back on the path that led me to this point, I cannot imagine doing it any other way. I have been blessed with a life that afforded me an array experiences, including a teaching career of over 30 years, which have brought me to this point. A journey such as this can never be accomplished alone and I, certainly, had a team of teachers, family, friends, mentors, and colleagues to whom I owe my heartfelt gratitude for helping me achieve this goal.

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D. M. K.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

As the fall 2014 semester was drawing to a close, world events came crashing into our university classroom. While we were away for a late fall break, the not guilty verdict in the shooting death of Michael Brown, a black man, at the hands of Darren Wilson, a white police officer, in Ferguson, MO, was announced and rioting erupted. Our country was trying to make sense of what was happening; how to interpret the public discourse and what these events meant for us as a society and how we should interact with each other. I was teaching a Language Arts methods course with fifteen Early Childhood, Middle Level, and Special Education majors. All semester long, we had been talking about critical literacy and its connection to civic engagement. Particularly, how to incorporate literature and real-world texts and how readers can interact with texts in ways that allow them to engage in their worlds in powerful and meaningful ways. As I watched the reports of what was happening in Ferguson through various news and social media outlets, I had to decide how (or if!) I would bring this into our final class meeting of the semester. This was a critical moment for me as a teacher educator. Everything unfolding in the wake of what was happening in Ferguson tied into our readings and discussions over the semester. I could not ignore it.

I recognized this moment in time as pivotal to my own teaching. While many events and experiences have led me to where I am now in my journey as an educator, this event is one that I remember as signifying a feeling of personal importance and responsibility for civic engagement. On our last day of class, we had a very difficult conversation about topics such as racism and social inequities, and about how the ever-

present images of the riots and the destruction we were seeing were designed to make us feel and respond in a particular way. We talked about the stories and voices that were privileged and those whose stories and voices were silenced. We had to come to some understanding of what our responsibilities were as teachers. And from that point, I knew that I had the responsibility for making my university classroom a space for exploring issues of racism, classism, oppression, and social justice. It had to be.

As I explored civic engagement and its role in the P-20 curriculum, I did so from the position of a teacher educator. I embarked on this dissertation project because I have come to recognize the importance of examining my own teaching so I could better understand what practices hold promise for the work I do with teacher candidates. My understandings about teaching and learning have been continually evolving through my ongoing experiences as a long-time educator, my doctoral coursework, my professional role as a faculty developer working with university faculty from a variety of disciplines. In this work, I have had many opportunities to explore ideas related to civic engagement and its connections to critical literacy. I use my position as a teacher educator to promote ideas that I truly believe in, that our educational practices have the potential for developing active, justice-oriented citizens who can work toward a creating a world where all people have equal access to resources and opportunities.

### **A Brief Overview of Public Schooling in a Democracy**

As I started this inquiry, I wondered how citizens in a democracy learn what it means to be a citizen and how to be engaged participants in such a society and what role does the public school system play in civic learning. I thought it would be necessary to review some of the historical contexts of public schools to understand what types of events have led us to where we are today. The United States' public school system claims to offer education to all citizens. The

mission statement of the Department of Education says the purpose of schools is “to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Public school spaces play a large role in developing people’s understandings of their roles as citizens and teach them the skills they need to be civically engaged. A multitude of voices have debated the roles of schools, what citizenship education should entail, and how curriculum decisions mold the types of citizens that public school students eventually become (Labaree. 1997; Kliebard, 2004).

The purpose of the American public education system has continually been a subject of debate in political and social discourse. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jane Addams worked with the growing immigrant population in Chicago (Lagemann, 2002). While other civic leaders of her time believed that the education of immigrant children should be limited to developing them into effective factory workers, Addams (ca. 1910) believed differently and wrote

Even to this it is sometimes added that it is absurd to educate him [the immigrant], immoral to disturb his content. We stupidly use the effect as an argument for a continuance of the cause. It is needless to say that a Settlement is a protest against a restricted view of education. (Addams, ca. 1910, p. 428).

Addams introduced the idea of settlement houses, places in the large cities that served the immigrant families by providing education, health services for women and children, and opportunities to participate in the arts (Chicago Historical Society, 2005) as a counter-measure to these beliefs. In addition to services, Hull House, located in the growing immigrant communities of late 19<sup>th</sup>-centruy Chicago, also offered college-level classes on science and literature in the attempt to create a socialized education. (Addams, ca. 1910)

John Dewey developed a close friendship with Addams, frequently visiting Hull House and serving on the Board of Directors while working at the University of Chicago. The two shared similar beliefs about education for a democracy and their relationship influenced his beliefs that schools are places for students to learn about the world through experience and meaningful learning activities (Lagemann, 2002). Dewey's work laid a foundation for the idea that learning is a social endeavor, as he wrote what would become his seminal beliefs on educational pedagogy:

I believe the school is primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all of those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in inherited sources of race and to use his own powers for social ends. (Dewey, 1897, p. 7)

In contrast, other educational leaders of the time, such as Franklin Bobbitt, Edward Snedden, and John Thorndyke, believed schools were the places to prepare students for the world of work and promoted a "social efficiency" model of education (Kliebard, 2004, p. 84). At the end of the nineteenth and moving into the twentieth century, in addition to the growing numbers of people emigrating from Europe, the United States was moving from an agriculture economy to an industrial economy (Kliebard, 2004; Lagemann, 2002; Mehta, 2013). With the economic change, so came the need to adjust educational practices to meet the needs of the changing economy. Schools were to be the places that cultivated the workforce that would contribute to, sustain, and grow the country's economy (Lagemann, 2002; Kliebard, 2004; Mehta, 2013). Social efficiency approaches to school can be seen in several school reform initiatives such as the standards movement that resulted from *No Child Left Behind* (2001) legislation and the

*Common Core State Standards* (2011) movement with its explicit purpose of preparing students to be college and career ready.

David Labaree described the purpose of school as having three distinct, and often-times competing, goals, *democratic equality*, *social efficiency*, and *social mobility* (Labaree, 1997). *Democratic equality* means all young citizens should have equal access to an education that would enable them to assume full responsibilities of being citizens, thus empowering them to take political roles. The *social efficiency* approach, much like Bobbitt, Snedden, and Thorndyke, charges the education system with the job of creating a workforce that can contribute to the country's economy. Labaree describes the third goal of school as *social mobility*, an approach that teaches students the knowledge and skills they need to compete for the social positions they desire. These goals and their perceived or actual importance, shift and change as social and political events prompt particular changes in educational policy.

Paulo Freire, another fundamental voice in education, argued against the type of education which he referred to as the "banking model." The banking model positions educators as the sole experts in the classroom, whose job it is to "deposit" knowledge into their students. Instead, Freire sees education as a vehicle that allows people to fight against oppressive societal practices (Freire, 2006). Freire's "problem-posing" approach to education encourages teachers and students to work together inquiring into issues of power, inequality, and the forces that sustain oppressive practices within those societal frameworks. Working together, they can use their knowledge and skills to take action and challenge those practices to influence change for the good of all citizens. Freire's critical pedagogy approach holds promise for an empowering civic education that positions students as active participants who are capable of creating change.

A pivotal moment that shifted the discussion about the purpose of public schools toward the standards movement came later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner, et al., 1983). This report lamented that U.S. students did not have the skills necessary to compete in a world economy and that schools should be places that prepared students to “secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself” (United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 4). Pushing against the recommendations of *A Nation at Risk*, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, two scholars who have written extensively on critical pedagogy, wrote a piece in *Harvard Educational Review* (1986) that described the effects of accountability and testing reform initiatives on the mission of public schools. They argued that the reforms that resulted from *A Nation and Risk* which had “an emphasis on quantification” (Giroux & McLaren, 1986, p. 218) prompted schools to move away from the type of schooling imagined by Dewey and Freire to a “restricted definition of schooling, one that almost completely strips public education of a democratic vision where citizenship and the politics of possibility are given consideration” (Giroux & McLaren, 1986, p. 221). They concluded that schools were spaces where students can participate in learning activities that will develop their citizenship skills and that teacher education programs have a large responsibility for developing teachers who can teach these skills.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, two significant U.S. federal initiatives shaped the purpose of public education, *No Child Left Behind* (2001) and *Race to the Top* (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Both of these initiatives brought about an emphasis on school and teacher accountability with an increased focus on standardized testing that narrowed the curriculum by focusing on reading and math scores as a measure of school success. This, in turn, kicked-off a decline in the

time spent teaching social sciences (National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2014; National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2007). The *Race to the Top* initiative produced *The Common Core State Standards* for language arts and mathematics with their “college and career readiness” standards which define the purpose of schools as preparing students to be ready for college or a job upon graduating from high school (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010). These policies and initiatives have all shaped the curriculum and defined the purposes of public education in the United States.

Looking back on this brief historical context of U.S. public education highlights the complexities teachers face. Many different voices make decisions about what children should be learning in the classroom and oftentimes, the classroom teacher’s voice is not a part of that decision-making process.

### **Researcher Positionality**

In my 30-years as a classroom teacher and a teacher educator, I have come to see school as a place where all students can learn to become citizens who have the power and knowledge to work toward a socially just world, the type of education imagined by Dewey, Freire, and Giroux and McLaren. With technological advances and social media, world events like the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on The World Trade Centers in 2001, numerous school and public shootings, racial protests in places like Ferguson, MO, Baltimore, MD, and Charlotte, NC, and the Syrian immigration crisis and at the border of U.S. and Mexico are only a few of the complex and important issues at the center of our lives that have made their way into our classrooms. We have politicians sending messages, making promises, and using rhetoric to persuade citizens that they must act in certain ways in order to “make America great again.” Our students come to school



with questions and wonder and worry in attempts to make sense of it all. They interact with information from multimodal sources such as 24-hour news channels, social media, signs and messages, which require them to sift through it all and wonder what it all means. Whose messages and truths should they believe? What, as citizens of this country, can they do or should they do? The teacher's role in such a learning environment is unavoidably complex. How can they help students understand these social, political, and cultural dynamics and while also instilling the knowledge and dispositions that, as citizens in a democratic society, they have the power and responsibility to respond to the world in a way that promotes equity for all? The vast diversity of the U.S., even within smaller communities, means that children come to school with a wide array of experiences and needs. Adding to the complexity of a teacher's responsibility is designing and facilitating learning that helps students negotiate the tensions that are inevitable within those diverse communities, experiences, and needs. Teachers must navigate all of these responsibilities because it is imperative for helping children develop into thoughtful, well-informed citizens who are able to actively participate in a democracy. John Goodlad and his colleagues (2004) wrote, "...a nation that fails to take seriously the need to prepare its young citizens for democratic citizenship is a nation that places its democracy in serious jeopardy" (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 37).

Some education scholars have written about how teachers can effectively teach for a democracy. Teaching can be described as a public act and teachers can position themselves as change agents who believe that education has the power to bring about change (Murrell Jr., 2000). Teacher also must work against the policies which position them as "technicians," people who follow the prescribed requirements made for them by others, and instead, question "habitual pedagogical practices" (Smyth, 2011, p. 19) that deny access of quality education for some and

move toward taking the lead in school reform (Zeichner & Liston, 2013). In order to do this, effectively, teachers must have a deep knowledge and understanding about the children they teach, their families, and the communities in which they teach and incorporating what they know about their students' outside of school lives into their classroom teaching (Murrell Jr., 2000; Villegas, 2007; Gay, 2010). As community teachers, they can inspire students to be activists by making connections in their communities so teachers, students, and community members can work together to challenge oppression and work toward social justice, a part of critical pedagogy (Smyth, 2011, hooks, 2003).

### **Challenges facing Public Education in a Climate of Standardized Testing**

Education policies that prioritize high-stakes standardized testing initiatives has resulted in a decline in teaching about citizenship and civic engagement. Policies that lean toward a social efficiency approach with the goal of preparing students to be successful in the workforce have narrowed public school curriculum, prioritizing the teaching of reading and math over the social studies. Following the passage of *No Child Left Behind* legislation in 2003, The National Center for Educational Statistics (2007) reported a decrease in the amount of time spent on teaching social studies in grades one through four, which they attributed to the increase in mathematics and reading instruction; which are the scores used to measure Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) that determines how well a school is performing (Fitchett, Heafner, & Lambert, 2012; Lucey & Meyer, 2013; McMurrer & Kober, 2007; Vogler & Virtue, 2007). Other reports have shown a performance decrease on tests of civic knowledge of U.S. students (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011; Kanter & Schneider, 2013; National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Of greater concern, students from ethnic and cultural minority groups have fewer opportunities for civic learning and to participating in civic

engagement than white, middle-class students (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; McMurrer & Kober, 2007; Tupper, Cappello, & Sevigny, 2010). Without opportunities to develop civic skills and knowledge through civic education and engagement, students, and especially those from underrepresented groups, are denied opportunities to participate in the democratic processes or take on political roles (Labaree, 1997).

The Obama administration commissioned *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012), a report to explore civic knowledge and engagement in higher education. A step in this process included round table discussions with academic and student affairs representatives from a variety of higher education institutions, civic and government agencies, disciplinary organizations, and higher education professional organizations. In addition to the roundtable discussions, they reviewed current and ongoing research about college students and civic engagement in order to assess the current state of civic knowledge and engagement that would inform the task force's recommendation. Through this work, the task force developed a framework of knowledge and skills that they believed were necessary engaged citizenship. As many institutions of higher education have adopted this framework and incorporated it into its curriculum and co-curricular programming, the report also charged K-12 schools to be "the initial pathway to civic knowledge and responsibility" (National Task Force, 2012, p. 27). In response to this report, the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOED) commissioned a study that explored the need to "reinvigorate civic learning" in public schools and outlined their recommendations in *Advancing Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to Action*. This study included guidelines for K-12 schools on how to implement civic engagement initiatives (U.S. DOED, 2012). Both reports outlined several action items and

among them were calls for K-12 schools and universities to incorporate quality civic learning and engagement experiences for their students, the development community partnerships, and a directive for scholarly research to determine specific classroom practices that hold promise for developing engaged and active citizens.

These calls to action outlined in these reports affects teacher education programs in three ways. First, the courses that are a part of a teacher education program should hold civic engagement at the center of their curriculum, where teacher candidates are partnering with the community in the process of learning to be teachers. At the same time, teacher candidates are also learning how to incorporate civic engagement in their own teaching. The challenge that we face in teacher education is that many of the traditional-age college student teacher candidates started school in the *NCLB* era and, as discussed above, are likely to have had limited experience with civic engagement before coming to the university. Lastly, these reports also called for the need to research civic engagement practices both in the elementary/secondary schools and at the university level. A language arts methods course like mine, where teacher candidates are learning to integrate literacy and content areas, is a space where this type of research can take place.

### **Focus and Rationale for this Study**

It is my belief, as a teacher educator, that schools in a democratic society are the places where all students can learn to become citizens, and classroom teachers are in a position to help students develop the civic efficacy along with the knowledge and skills necessary to become socially conscious, engaged, and active citizens. Freire's critical pedagogy and problem-posing approach to education is at the heart of teaching for a democratic society. In order to prepare teachers to teach in a democratic society, they also must develop certain dispositions and skills,

which include understanding and acknowledging the importance of teaching for a public purpose, the ability to work collaboratively with a variety of people, and the ability to integrate a wide range of resources (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009; Zeichner, 2013). As teacher education programs make decisions on how to structure course learning experiences, both in the university classroom and out in the community, and select materials that can foster teacher candidates' understandings of teaching citizenship and civic engagement, they must first uncover teacher candidates' beliefs about the roles and responsibilities of teachers working in a democracy in order to examine them in relationship to education theory. This helps teacher candidates develop a critical stance about teaching as they critically examine the often-times unchallenged and systemic inequitable policies and practices of school systems (Villegas, 2007). Teacher education programs must determine how to facilitate the development of skills and dispositions needed to become community teachers. This study will explore the ways in which teacher candidates in the literacy methods course I teach develop their civic efficacy and how they view their roles and responsibilities as teachers in a democratic society.

The research questions for this dissertation focused on how teacher candidates develop their understandings about civic engagement and critical literacy and how their decisions reflect what they believe about their responsibilities as teachers. Specifically:

1. How do teacher candidates view and understand civic education and critical literacy as they participate in civic engagement in a teacher education literacy methods course?
2. How do teacher candidates attempt to integrate critical literacy and civic engagement into their course assignments?

3. How do teacher candidates describe the ways in which the curricular and experiential learning I incorporated in a literacy methods course shape their civic efficacy and the ways in which they view their roles as literacy teachers?

### **Key Terms and Concepts**

When taking the stance that schools are places where children and adolescents learn what it means to be citizens in a democratic society, it is necessary to define citizenship in a democracy. It is also important to understand and develop the skills needed to perform the roles and responsibilities of citizens. A helpful way to describe citizenship came from the work of Westheimer and Kahne (2004), who developed a framework to describe three types of citizens: *personally responsible*, *participatory*, and *justice-oriented*. A *personally responsible* citizen is one who “acts responsibly” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 240) in his/her community by following laws, taking care of others, and contributing to the economy. The *participatory* citizen takes more of an active role in the community including leadership roles in organizing activities for the betterment of the community or environment. The *justice-oriented* citizen notices the inequalities and problems of their community and works towards solving such problems. Westheimer and Kahne also say that citizenship must go beyond being a good person and doing what is right; that it is more than good deeds. Citizenship in a democratic society also means that one should work toward the improvement of society for all people and critically examine issues of power and oppression (Westheimer & Kahne, 2003). With these qualities in mind, Westheimer and Kahne see citizenship education as teaching the skills needed for civic engagement. This framework is useful for describing how school curriculum promotes certain types of citizenship.

The ways that teachers, administrators, and policy-makers shape the curriculum can speak to the types of citizens a democratic society needs: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. In a very broad sense, any teaching and learning that occurs in schools contributes to the development of one's definition and understanding of citizenship (Westheimer, 2015). The way that the physical learning environment is structured and the decisions that are made about what students learn and how they go about learning, reflect what the decision-makers value in their citizens. More specifically, The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) defined citizenship education in *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* and lists Civics as one of its primary disciplinary concepts (NCSS, 2013a). In their definition of Civics, they state that students “contribute appropriately to public processes and discussions of real issues.... not only to study how others participate, but also to practice participating and taking informed action themselves” (NCSS, 2013a, p. 31). Civic engagement must be a part of teaching civics that incorporates learning about oneself and others, understanding personal responsibilities to others, recognizing power and oppression, and the importance of political participation to work toward opportunity for all. Schools are the places where students can develop skills to make informed decisions about how to act as citizens.

Within the context of education, the term civic engagement often refers to partnerships between classrooms and community partners for the “mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (New England Resource Center for Higher Education, n.d.). Partnerships can include businesses, schools, and social service organizations. Civic engagement moves beyond volunteerism when it includes the identification of problems and issues and the working toward collective agreement on a solution. Civic engagement also includes reflection on how the experiences affected others in the

community at large. Civic engagement activities, at any level of education, can include volunteering, participating in the political process, or becoming involved in an organization (American Psychological Association, 2016). Including civic engagement as part of the school curricula offers potential for students to develop skills and knowledge in a variety of disciplines, while also addressing societal issues and contributing to public good.

Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, and Corngold (2003) assert that civic engagement is an integral part of educating for a democracy and delineated three student-centered pedagogical strategies that must be incorporated the curriculum. First, is *service learning*, where students apply course learning in partnership with a community organization in a way that benefits both parties. Second, is *experiential learning*, which can include service learning, but can also include simulations, role play, internships, fieldwork, and action research. This type of learning can take place in the community or in the classroom. The third strategy, *problem-based learning*, can also take place in the classroom or the community and allows students to explore real-world issues and problems while developing solutions. An important aspect of these types of experiences is that students work collaboratively with each other and community partners; the teacher acts as a facilitator and resource. The teacher's responsibility in civic engagement requires to expand beyond the classroom into the community. She must have an understanding of and appreciation for the cultural and linguistic resources, practices, and ways of knowing that are unique to that community (Murrell Jr., 2000). Reflection on the learning and how it occurred is also key in the learning process as students bridge the experience, challenge prior assumptions, and articulate the significance of the experience (Jacoby, 2014).

If schools are able to function as spaces where teachers help students develop the skills needed to participate in a democratic society, we must also provide a description of those skills.



Caryn Musil (2009) developed the *Civic Learning Spiral* which defines the knowledge, dispositions, and skills that citizens need. A summary of these civic competencies are as follows:

- Knowledge - an understanding of civics and political processes.
- Judgment/deliberation - ability to use reasoning to justify claims, present evidence in support of a position, and weigh competing claims.
- Skills - the ability to engage in civic discourse and processes (e.g., developing communication, critical thinking, as well as information and media literacy skills)
- Attitude - a willingness to work to improve the community through self-awareness.
- Motivation - being interested in public affairs, feeling committed to being actively engaged, and feeling a sense of political efficacy.
- Values - examination of personal values in the context of promoting the public good.
- Public action - disposition to participate in social change and be a member of community.
- Communities & cultures – a curiosity to learn about diversity of groups locally & globally. (Musil, 2009, p. 61-63)

Teachers in public schools can take responsibility for creating a learning environment that facilitates the development of civic competencies. They also have the responsibility for developing a curriculum that affords this type of learning and the potential for developing the student's disposition to work toward making social contributions.

In reading about the various definitions and descriptions of citizenship and civic engagement, I need to clarify these terms I used in this dissertation. I will use Freire's critical pedagogy as a framework for the approach to teaching citizenship and civic engagement, combining with it Dewey's notion of experiential learning, and Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) *Three Types of Citizens*. I also drew from the work of James Banks (2007) who maintains that

citizenship education requires groups to assimilate to standards and norms set by those in power and, much like Freire's discussion of power and oppression, works to maintain the status quo. Banks' multicultural citizenship education approach calls attention to the idea that Indigenous and First Nations People, cultural and ethnic minority groups, and immigrants also have the right to maintain their languages and cultural practices while participating in a democratic society (Banks, 2007, p. 152). To this end, citizenship education must afford students opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge needed to participate in a way that promotes equity and understanding for all and to be able to make ethical decisions. Civic engagement, as I use it in this study, involves the teaching and learning of skills through civic education as well as having the opportunity to apply them to authentic experiences. It includes opportunities to discuss societal, cultural, and political issues, interact with ideas critically and then having opportunities to act for change (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002). Community engagement, more specifically, offers the opportunities to go outside of the classroom and use the skills and knowledge to work toward social change in community partnerships (Crawford-Garrett & Riley, 2016).

I also use the term civic efficacy to describe the willingness to engage in acts related to citizenship. This draws on Bandura's (1982) work discusses the ways in which people approach certain situations in their lives and how their beliefs about themselves and their abilities impact the ways in which they feel able and willing accomplish a task. When I describe the civic efficacy of the participants in this study, I am referring to the words and action that reflect their beliefs about civic engagement and their personal beliefs about their capacities for civic engagement.

Freire's (2006) teaching for a democratic society describes teachers and learners working together to construct knowledge. His notion of "reading the word and reading the world" (Freire, 1983, p. 10) draws together the act of justice-oriented citizenship with critical literacy in a way that says students must use literacies critically in order to work for social justice. When teachers teach from a critical perspective, they create spaces in their classrooms where children read texts in an active and reflective manner in order to consider multiple perspectives, challenge assumptions, and act for social change (Vasquez, 2010). Critical literacy, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, is a framework for teaching literacy where students engage with multimodal texts and read the world as a text (Freire, 2006). Through this approach, teachers construct learning that encourages students to explore relevant and important issues while using texts to take action for social change and thus developing the skills and dispositions needed to be justice-oriented citizens.

### **Significance of this Study**

As I read the works calling for a rejuvenation of civic learning, juxtaposed with what I was witnessing in the social and political worlds, I concluded that, in the current social and political climate, it is my responsibility, as a teacher educator, to critically explore how I could facilitate the development of our future teachers, specifically in a literacy methods course. In this particular course, teacher candidates learned how to incorporate civic engagement and critical literacy in their teaching so that they would someday offer these types of learning experiences that have the potential for teaching their future students to be active citizens who use the critical skills needed to fully participate in a democratic society and act for social change. When considering my approach to teaching this content area literacy course, I felt my task was two-fold: 1) to help them articulate their understandings of citizenship and the ways we enact it

through civic engagement and 2) to guide them in discovering how, as teachers, they could effectively teach the literacy skills that would afford their future students opportunities to actively participate in their worlds in transformative ways. This is the challenge I felt compelled to take up.

### **Contributions**

My intention with this study is to offer my own findings to the civic engagement and teacher education knowledge base in two ways: first, to further legitimize practitioner research as a valuable type of research and second, to illuminate practices that promote the development of undergraduate teacher candidates to become justice-oriented educators. Using action research, teachers can look into their classroom practices and discover what contributes to meaningful learning (Borko, Whitcomb, & Byrnes, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Smyth, 2011; Zeichner & Liston, 2013). Qualitative approaches to research from a critical stance broaden the notion of who gets to ask the questions and seek the answers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 1999).

For teacher educators, it is particularly important that our teaching serves a dual purpose: while we are teaching content knowledge, we must also model the practices that we know are effective in helping people learn. Action research is a way for teachers to take control of their profession and to be a strong voice in the conversations on school reform. It can be a way for teachers, those who closest to the work being done, to be part of the discussions about student achievement and teacher education; and push back against “the authoritative role of outsiders in school improvement” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999 p. 22). Reflecting on and analyzing my own practices and interactions with the teacher candidates can provide much-needed insight on how they develop as professionals. This study also contributes to conversations on civic engagement and teacher education. One of the Core Values of *Educating Illinois* (Illinois State

University, 2002), the mission statement for the university, is Civic Engagement. Faculty are called to engage students in learning that will prepare them to be informed global citizens, which is also necessary of future teachers.

This study also responds to the recommendations in the *Crucible Moment* (2012) and *Advancing Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to Action* (2012) that calls for institutes of higher education to conduct research that explores the information of civic engagement and development of civic habits and dispositions of college-aged students, specifically future teachers. While many there are many studies on civic engagement and higher education, this moment in time is unique. In an era of high-stakes standardized testing and the emphasis on math and reading over the past ten years, the students who are entering teacher education programs now have had limited for opportunities for civic learning. This study also offers an account teacher candidates' civic engagement in a socially and politically dynamic time.

In Chapter II, I will review of the literature exploring teacher education, teacher candidates' dispositions and civic efficacy, and teacher education programs that incorporated critical literacy and civic engagement. In Chapter III, I will discuss the methodology for this action research study in the reading methods course that I taught in the spring, 2017 semester. Following the methodology chapter, I will tell the story of the semester that I spent with teacher candidates learning about critical literacy and civic engagement and conclude with a discussion of what I learned and areas I need to continue to explore as I engage in this work of preparing future teachers. Through this project, I will share how critical literacy and civic engagement can be powerful tools for developing the skills and dispositions of global citizens, from P-12 to the undergraduate level. Teaching these skills becomes even more high stakes in teacher preparation,

as we ready our teacher candidates to equip their own students to become productive citizens through critical literacy and civic engagement.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Civic engagement can be an important curricular component that makes learning empowering transformative (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004; NCSS, 2013) and teachers need to have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to develop and implement opportunities to use literacy learning in meaningful and transforming ways (Shor, 1999; Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011). I described civic engagement and its connection to critical pedagogy and critical literacy in Chapter I as learning that affords people the opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills needed to be active citizens and in turn enables them use their learning to work toward equity and social justice.

In this literature review, I synthesized the research conducted in teacher education programs related to civic engagement and service learning, critical literacy, and teacher education. To find relevant studies that investigated the work that has been done in university classrooms with teacher candidates, I used Google Scholar and ERIChost database through the university library using search terms, *teacher education*, *civic engagement*, *service learning*, *critical pedagogy*, and *multicultural teacher education*. I also searched *teacher efficacy and civic efficacy*. Since my study was taking place in a literacy methods course, I also searched for studies using terms *literacy teacher education*, *language arts*, and *critical literacy*. Using Google Scholar, I followed the suggested “related searches.” I also looked at some of the seminal studies and a few large-scale reviews of the literature to find other studies that cited these works. Through citation chasing, following works that were often cited in the studies I was finding, led me to the work of Ken Zeichner, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Peter Morrell Jr., and Christine Sleeter. I read the works of these researchers in my doctoral coursework and whose presentations

I attended at American Education Researcher Association (AERA) conferences who have conducted extensive research on teacher education. As I collected a number of articles, I also considered dates. With the implementation of policies such as *Race to the Top* (2009) and the adoption of *Common Core State Standards* (2010) and the ways that public responded to these programs and curriculum, it was important to consider studies that occurred in the shadow of those policies. What follows is a synthesis of the research in the area of teacher education, developing teacher dispositions, and literacy teacher education and an explanation of how my work contributes to this body of research.

I begin with a discussion of critical literacy and civic efficacy, the theoretical framework which guided my inquiry. Following this, I explore the literature on civic dispositions and civic efficacy of college-aged students, both in general and studies conducted with teacher candidates. I also reviewed research that took place in teacher education courses that incorporated aspects of critical literacy, civic education, civic engagement or service learning and what has been learned about promising teacher education course design that has the potential for developing teacher candidates' civic efficacy. Much of this research was practitioner research, or action research, which connected to the methodology of this study. This exploration of the literature highlights what others have discovered about the ways in which teacher candidates apply what they are learning about teaching civics, and how to involve children in authentic experiences that encourage them to notice societal inequalities, challenge the status quo, and the ways they can act for change. If the purpose of civic engagement is to transform learners into citizens who are interested in and able to act in ways that can transform themselves and their communities, then it is imperative that we, as teacher educators, explore how our practices support such transformations.



## Theoretical Framework

Critical literacy theory was one theory that guided me as I considered my approach to data analysis and how my position and subjectivity influenced the research process and the findings. Action research, based on critical theory, has its roots in Freire's work and was an appropriate methodological approach for understanding the learning that was happening in the content area literacy course that is the focus of this study. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2006), Freire described the importance for humanist educators to examine their own realities and take action to transform them. This is in line with "problem-posing education" (p. 104) where educators analyze their situation, identify problems, and reflect on their conditions in order to imagine a better reality.

Goetz and LeCompte describe theory as "assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and values" (1984, p. 33). In other words, a theory can help explain how the phenomena around us work. Maxwell (2013) uses the similes of a "coat closet" or "spotlight" (pp. 49-50) to describe how a researcher can use theory to describe what is happening. Thinking of theory as a coat closet, the researcher connects her data to a broad theory and discusses them through that particular theory's ideas. Thinking of theory as a spotlight, the researcher takes the ideas of the theory and points to the data as if to say, 'Here is an example of...'. Theoretical frameworks help explain why something is worthy of being studied and make the argument for why something matters (Maxwell, 2013). What follows is an explanation of two theories, Critical Literacy and Civic Efficacy, and how I combined the two to analyze and describe teacher candidates' learning about civic engagement.

## Critical Literacy

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ira Shor (2009) described a society that was moving toward standardized, skills-based literacy instruction which would maintain a status-quo of educational inequalities (Giroux & McLaren, 1986; National Council of Teachers of English; 2014; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007). Critical literacy provides opportunities to critique and engage society along with its inequalities and injustices (Shor, 2009) in ways that allow the text consumer to envision multiple possibilities, and act for change. He also discussed the ways in which literacies can shape individuals. We can use critical literacy to understand who we are in the world and how we interact with it. Schools are the prominent sites for literacy learning but homes and communities also play a large role in literacy development.

Luke and Freebody (1990, 1999) developed a Four Resources Model to describe the role of the reader, the reader as code-breaker, text meaning-maker, text user, and critic. In their later work, they revised their description of the roles to a “family of practices” (Freebody & Luke, 1999, p. 4) to reflect that readers are performing these tasks with some flexibility in order to successfully navigate a variety of social contexts and adapt to the ever-expanding modes of texts they may encounter. Readers must also understand that texts are not neutral and they are created by someone for a particular purpose and serve to position the text consumers in particular ways. Critical literacy can be used to “reshape” worlds (Luke, 2012, p. 9) that is to say critical literacy calls on the text user to use their literacies to understand and transform power relations.

When teachers teach from a critical perspective, they create spaces in their classrooms where children read texts in an active and reflective manner in order to consider multiple perspectives, challenge assumptions, and act for social change (Vasquez, 2010). Critical Literacy is a framework for teaching literacy where students engage with multimodal texts which includes

reading the world as a text (Freire, 2006). Vasquez (2010) described ten tenets for teaching from a critical literacy perspective.

- Having a critical perspective
- Using students' cultural and multimedia practices
- Understanding that the world is a socially constructed that is created by someone for some purpose
- Understanding that texts are never neutral
- Texts position the reader in some way
- Readers need to understand how/recognize how their own position when they interact with a text
- Readers make meaning of the world through their own lives
- Understanding the relationships between language and power
- Literacy practices can contribute to change
- Text production can provide opportunities for critique and transformation (Vasquez, 2010, pp. 2-4).

Critical literacy approach also involves other classroom practices. Literacy practices are used to “get things done in the world” (Vasquez, 2010, p. 8). To accomplish this goal, teachers can pair children's literature with real-world, multimodal, and non-fiction texts. These texts are tools that bring the outside world the real-world social issues that matter to the students into the classroom and into the curriculum. In addition to discussing important and relevant issues, students are encouraged to consider ways in which they can use their literacies to bring about change and then they are offered opportunities to share their learning with authentic audiences

through the use of technology (Vasquez, 2010; Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002; Comber & Simpson, 2001).

Understanding that texts are constructed from a particular perspective which must be questioned and interrogated and realizing that literacy is a vital tool for challenging power and social injustice are at the heart of teaching in a democracy. Teachers can design learning that encourages students to explore issues that are important and relevant to their lives through various texts. They can also facilitate student conversations with others about the issues that lead to formulating plans to take action for social change. A critical literacy approach to literacy instruction has the potential for helping students develop the skills and dispositions they need to be justice-oriented citizens.

### **Civic Efficacy**

Bandura's social cognitive theory describes how, oftentimes, learning can occur through social interactions. This learning can happen through four sources; *personal experiences, social models, social persuasion, and emotional and physical reactions* (Bandura, 1982). Personal experiences play a part in a person's learning in that they will engage in activities they feel they can accomplish and when they believe their behaviors will have desirable outcomes. Personal experience also transfers from one situation to another when a person believes that they were successful with one activity, they can also be successful with another (Schunk, 2016). Social Modeling is an important component of Bandura's theory. Through observing others engaging in particular behaviors or tasks, learners can be prompted to act in similar ways (Schunk, 2016). Modeling alone does not promote learning; other factors must be present in order for learning to occur. Among these factors are that the learners must perceive the model to be competent, the outcomes of the learning must be seen as valuable or important, and that the outcomes of the

learning align with the goals or aspirations of the learners. These experiences help people develop a sense of efficacy; the feeling that they have the agency to individually or collectively act in their world and that such actions can somehow influence change.

Civic efficacy describes the mind-set that one's actions can influence change combined with the skill set that will enable them to carry out the actions (Serriere, 2014; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). That is to say, that one can not only take a stance on an issue but knows what they can do to act on it. In their 2016 position statement outlining quality social studies education, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2013b) set forth six characteristics of effective social studies curriculum that would help students develop practices and literacies needed to fully participate in a democracy. These criteria include meaningful lessons that explore and issues that are relevant to the students, integration of all of the social studies that looks at the past, present, and future, offer opportunities to examine values from multiple perspectives, challenging by incorporating analysis and inquiry, and offer opportunities take action using the skills they have developed. In the case of teacher candidates, do they know how their actions in the classroom can spark civic habits and do the learning opportunities they create teach the critical literacy skills needed that can lead to justice-oriented actions?

Watts and Flanagan (2007) describe a framework that involves four components for civic efficacy: worldview and social analysis, sense of agency, opportunity structure, and societal involvement behavior. The worldview and social analysis components refer to the beliefs that personal behavior impacts social behavior and social conditions. Sense of agency is considered a “moderator” (Watts & Flanagan, 2007, p. 786) in the framework in that one's individual or collective efficacy spurs a person to move from social analysis to the component of social action. The final component, opportunity structures, refers to the availability of meaningful

opportunities for action. This framework for civic efficacy shifts social actions from behaviors that maintain the current social and political structures to actions that are more justice-oriented.

Civic Efficacy can be a useful lens to analyze teacher candidates' beliefs about their roles as teachers and to describe how they use their understandings of critical literacy to design learning in activities that promote civic efficacy. I can turn the civic efficacy lens on myself as an instructor in a teacher education program to uncover the ways in which I have fostered civic efficacy in teacher candidates in the literacy methods course I designed.

I combined Critical Literacy and Civic Efficacy to frame my discussion of how teacher candidates are understanding critical literacy and civic engagement. Continuing with the spotlight metaphor, I will shine the light on the teacher candidates' understandings of critical literacy and at other times, I will highlight their thoughts and behaviors that reveal their civic efficacy. Spotlights can also merge and create a different effect and in a similar fashion, these two theoretical lenses can overlap and reveal the teacher candidates' civic efficacy through their integration of critical literacy.

Using these two theoretical frames, Critical Literacy and Civic Efficacy, helped me describe teacher candidates' understanding of civic education and its connections to critical literacy and how the understandings shaped their views of their roles and responsibilities as teachers. The theories also helped me describe the ways they integrated critical literacy and civic engagement into their course assignments and how they imagined they would in their future classrooms. I will also explore how the curricular and experiential learning experiences I incorporated in a literacy methods course shaped the development of teacher candidates' understandings of critical pedagogy, critical literacy, and civic engagement and their ideas about future classroom practices.

## **Civic Efficacy and Teacher Candidates' Civic Engagement**

At our institution, our education program offers majors in Early Childhood Education, Elementary, and Middle Level. Ninety-nine percent of the students in our teacher education program fall in the age range of 18 to 25 years old (Planning, Research, and Policy Analysis, 2016). All of the students enrolled in the content area literacy class in spring 2017 fit this demographic which means they entered kindergarten at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. For the class members who attended public schools, their schooling was in the era of *No Child Left Behind* (2001) and *Race to the Top* (2009), two eras marked by high-stakes testing and school accountability and placed an emphasis on reading and math scores which took time away from other subjects such as the social studies (Fitchett, Heafner, & Lambert, 2012; Lucey & Meyer, 2013; McMurrer & Kober, 2007; Vogler & Virtue, 2007). Considering the age of the teacher candidates in this study (19-21), it is important to explore the literature on the civic dispositions of late adolescents to what others have learned about the civic efficacy of college-aged students.

### **Civic Dispositions**

Several scholars have turned their attention to the civic dispositions of adolescents and late adolescents, whose ages range from fourteen to twenty-five (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002) because it is a time when civic skills and disposition develop (Flanagan, 2004; Youniss & Yates, 1997). Many teacher candidates fall into this demographic, and as a group, they may have had few opportunities to engage civic activities through their schools (Finley, Wray-Lake, & Flanagan, 2010). Therefore, it was necessary to consider how teacher education programs might facilitate the development of civic skills. Some contextual factors that foster the development of civic efficacy are “building curriculum from students’ lives, modeling and fostering the skills of activism, promoting inquiry, and valuing diversity in groups” (Serriere, 2014, p. 47). When

teacher candidates engage in civic learning practices in the college classroom, they potentially will implement these practices promote civic efficacy in future classrooms.

Torney-Purta, Richardson, and Barber (2005), collected survey data from practicing teachers and teacher candidates in 27 countries in order to examine civic knowledge and beliefs. Among their findings, data indicated that teacher candidates more likely developed civic efficacy through outside of school experiences rather than academic training (Torney-Purta, et al., 2005). Even so, their data analysis indicated teacher education programs that incorporated elements of civic learning had the potential for improving teacher candidates' civic efficacy. Providing opportunities for the teacher candidates to interact with others in the community was shown to be a promising practice for better preparing teacher candidates as successful civic educators. Another finding of this study pointed to alignment between what is taught in the teacher preparation programs and what is expected once the teacher candidates enter the school systems. When there is alignment, the teachers felt more confident in teaching civics. However, confidence does not always translate to student success and the authors recommended further study.

A study conducted in England surveyed the teacher candidates in their program about their roles as civic educators. They found that as the teacher candidates progressed through a program with mandated "democratic citizenship education" (Peterson, Durrant, & Bentley, 2015, p. 344) they had a strong sense of responsibility to teach active citizenship and viewed themselves as civic educators. However, there was some variation on how they were defining active citizenship. The teacher candidates who were specializing in citizenship education viewed active citizenship as being able to critically participate by taking action and bringing about change. Those who did not have this specialization viewed active citizenship as working toward



the common good and participating in the political process. In other words, the teacher candidates who were studying social studies were more likely to understand justice oriented citizenship while the other teacher candidates viewed citizenship as being personally responsible or participatory.

Villegas's (2007) work discussed the importance of content and pedagogical knowledge and skills as important for teaching active citizenship. In addition, teacher disposition toward teaching social justice also played an important role in teaching children and adolescents to become active citizens in a democratic society. Villegas defined disposition as "tendencies to act in a particular manner under particular circumstances, based on their beliefs" (Villegas, 2007, p. 373). As teacher candidates enter teacher education programs, they bring with them certain dispositions about the roles of schools and their roles as teachers (Lowenstein, 2009). This is the starting point from which to develop their understanding of critical literacy and teaching for social justice through course work. Articulating these beliefs and examining them in relationship to education theory increased the likelihood that the teacher candidates carry the pedagogical practices with them as the move from the university into the profession (Villegas, 2007). However, teacher educators must have a clear definition of what this means. Villegas (2007) critiqued previous research because the knowledge sets and dispositions of social justice educators were not clearly defined.

### **Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Citizenship**

When considering teacher candidates' beliefs about teaching citizenship, it would be important to unpack what they view as the characteristics of good citizens. Often, teacher candidates viewed a good citizen as someone who helps others, follows laws, and is loyal to their country (Tupper, 2006; Martin, 2004). These characteristics are representative of personally

responsible and participatory citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). As teachers, they see their roles as helping others as they are working in the teaching profession (Martin, 2004). Many teacher candidates go into teaching because they feel they can make a difference (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013) and that they haven't really thought deeply about what kind of difference they want to make and nor have they considered how their ideas may conflict with the lived experiences of the students they teach.

To focus more closely on elementary teacher candidates, Fry and O'Brien (2015) found similar results when they surveyed teacher candidates enrolled in teacher education courses across the U.S. who had not yet taken a social studies methods courses. These participants also described citizens as being personally responsible or participatory and did not indicate promoting social justice as a characteristic of a good citizen. Even after taking a social studies methods course, the same belief systems were present; that good citizens were people who followed laws and helped others. In addition, many of the teacher candidates' discussions of social justice were tied to historical events and not to current events. The researchers concluded that teacher educators should incorporate service learning which would give teacher candidates opportunities to examine their belief systems about citizenship and civic engagement.

### **Critical Literacy in Teacher Preparation Courses**

The curriculum of a teacher education course should offer teacher candidates opportunities to challenge their understandings about their roles as teachers and to develop their content and pedagogical knowledge. Developing teacher candidates' understandings of historical and social inequalities of our society is an important curricular approach could potentially increase the likelihood that they will work for social change once they enter the teaching field (Hyland & Meacham, 2004). The studies discussed in this section explored and described the

relationships between course curriculum teacher candidates' understandings about critical pedagogy and civic engagement, deficit thinking about marginalized groups, and teacher candidates' developing cultural competence.

As I explained earlier, the traditional-age teacher candidates who are now in our teacher education programs spent all or most of their school in the high-stakes testing climate brought about by *NCLB* mandates (Darling-Hammond, 2007) and literacy instruction was primarily to develop the skills needed to perform well on high-stakes, standardized tests. Therefore, their experiences with reading and literacy may have been limited to the types of reading skills that could be tested with multiple-choice tests, thus leaving out possibilities for critical literacy (Haddix, 2015). To counter this trend, teacher educators designed courses that offered opportunities for teacher candidates to learn other ways of teaching literacy by engaging them in critical literacy experiences across their methods courses.

In these courses, teacher candidates engaged in a variety of learning activities intended to broaden their understandings of critical literacy. Learning activities included reading foundational critical literacy theory (Klehr, 2015, Tinkler & Tinkler, 2013, Villegas & Lucas, 2002), explicit teaching about the negative impact of deficit thinking, and discussions about *Funds of Knowledge* (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Rogers, Marshall & Tyson, 2006) and showed promise in helping teacher candidates seeing themselves as civic agents and community professionals (Mirra & Morrell, 2011). Open discussion about privilege and emphasizing reflection (Swartz, 2003; McDonald, 2005) was also was an important curricular approach to preparing teacher candidates for civic engagement.

Connecting theories to explorations and critiques of personal literacy learning histories prompted teacher candidates to “unlearn” (Riley & Crawford-Garrett, 2015, p. 67) taken-for-

granted practices that often limited the purposes of literacy (Riley & Crawford-Garrett, 2015; Robertson & Hughes 2012) prompted teacher candidates to consider different literacy practices and ways to structure literacy learning. In addition to planning learning activities that invited teacher candidates to explore their personal experiences with literacy learning, teacher educators encouraged the teacher candidates to consider how they will respond to the demands of *Common Core State Standards* and consider how they may, at times, need to resist and challenge the practices or reframe them to fit their justice-oriented curriculum (Agarwal-Rangnath, Dover, & Henning, 2017). Providing opportunities for teacher candidates to observe and critique a variety of teaching approaches helped teacher candidates develop, what Vasquez (2010) calls a critical perspective about teaching. This means they are in the habit of noticing what is happening in their world and their students' worlds, problematizing it, and determining how it connects to classroom learning (Vasquez, 2017). Reflection and reflexive practices can help teacher candidates develop habits of looking inwardly at their own stances and how the decisions they make about pedagogical approaches and materials can impact their students and consider their potential to be change agents (Tinkler & Tinkler, 2016).

Intentional, overt instruction is key to developing teacher candidates' knowledge and understanding of critical literacy (McDonald, 2005; Riley & Crawford-Garrett, 2016). When teacher candidates participated in learning that moved beyond the narrowed curriculum brought about in the era of accountability and high-stakes standardized testing and experienced the possibilities of more transformative, inquiry-based practices it helped them better understand concepts about social justice. This learning included incorporating multicultural texts and texts that presented counter narratives to many unchallenged narratives that are often perpetuated through the school curriculum (Crawford-Garrett & Riley, 2016). Barbara Comber and Anne

Simpson (2001) refer to these as critical texts; texts that tackle social issues, challenge stereotypes, or offer counter narratives about social, cultural, or historical issues. These texts can be used to launch critical conversations as course instructors modeled critical literacy teaching strategies which included discussions on the sociopolitical nature of texts. Other strategies included a digital book talk where the teacher candidates shared a text with a social justice message and discussed it using components of critical literacy; multiple perspectives, how the text challenged commonplace thinking, and considerations for social action. Teacher candidates were able to successfully select texts with social justice themes, discuss the social issues within those text, and identify multiple viewpoints. However, they did not interrogate the texts or consider ways that the text could motivate social action because the teacher candidates had not had opportunities to interact with texts in this way during their K-12 education. Findings suggested that integrating more modeling and practice in the literacy methods courses could be a valuable addition to the course.

Haddix (2015) connected critical literacy with community engagement in a writing course for secondary English and language arts teacher candidates. She incorporated explicit discussions about their roles as educators and professional identities. Connecting with the community through a community writing project allowed the teacher candidates to recognize and value the vast funds of knowledge of the community and consider ways to bring that into the classroom. Learning about the community and critical literacy allowed teacher candidates to consider how classroom literacy practices connected with the needs and values of the community.

Critical literacy instruction does not have to be limited to literacy methods courses. Two studies showed how course instructors in a social studies method's and an art course

incorporated critical literacy learning experiences with teacher candidates. In the social studies methods course, teacher candidates engaged in critical reading activities that connected with the social studies topics they were learning about (Reidel & Draper, 2011). Through critical reading activities, the teacher candidates had opportunities to apply critical reading strategies such as questioning the authors' intent, perspective, and purpose and then were encouraged to connect their personal experiences and challenge historical narratives. Art education students explored critical literacy through a community art project (Sanders-Bustle & Lalik, 2017). This collaboration between an art education professor and literacy professor partnered art education students with a community center to design a piece of public art. They created public mosaic representing the struggles of poverty. Working in the community helped change teacher candidates' perceptions of their roles as educators and to value and utilize the experiences that students bring to class. They were also starting to consider what actions their literacies enabled them to take. The findings of these studies highlight the importance of creating opportunities for collaborative literacy experiences that help teacher candidates learn about the needs and capabilities of the communities in which they teach.

There were very few studies about critical literacy practices in the elementary education literacy methods' courses. A number of studies focused on the critical literacy practices of students in the K-12 setting. If we believe that children develop their critical literacy skills and use them to enact their citizenship in schools, then their teachers must have the skills, knowledge, and disposition to teach those skills. Exploring the ways that teacher candidates understand and use critical literacy and subsequently incorporate it in their teaching would be useful in determining promising practices for literacy methods course

## **Civic Engagement in Literacy Methods Courses**

Teacher candidates who participated in service learning where they were able to interact with families and other community members had a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the values, customs, and language and literacy practices students brought to the classroom (Bell, Horn, & Roxas, 2007; Castro, 2014; Marri, Michael-Luna, Cormier, & Keegan 2014; Mirra & Morrell, 2011). In an effective service learning experience, a variety of people support teacher candidates' learning (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008). The community partners are "indigenous experts," (Edmonds-Cady & Sosulski, 2012, p. 51) those who are closely connected with community and can guide the teacher candidates through the community. Throughout the service learning experience, teacher candidates must engage in discussion about and reflection of their learning with peers, community partners, and course instructors. Through these interactions, teacher candidates begin to understand the diverse perspectives, needs, and cultural influences of the communities in which they teach so that they can structure classroom learning to meet those needs (Banks, et al., 2015).

Dooley and Mays (2014) studied the practices of teacher candidates enrolled in a literacy methods course that had a service learning component. Teacher candidates participated in a family book festival by preparing and distributing informational brochures about literacy development, raising funds for a children's books to be given to the children in the community, and volunteering at the event. Findings related to civic learning suggested that the teacher candidates had a greater awareness of what was happening in the community and the types of literacy materials the community had available and showed them the benefits of forming community partnerships that could enhance classroom learning.

Participating in communities of practice allowed teacher candidates to discuss their practices, set goals, and try new strategies which have been shown to have a significant positive influence on their likelihood to teach for social justice even when working against curriculum and school practices (Picower, 2011). The role of the university instructor was also vital in these communities of practice to help guide discussions and make connections about theory learned in the college classroom and the practices teacher candidates experience when they are in the field and also extend this support into the first years of teaching (Klehr, 2015; Ponder, Veldt & Lewis-Ferrell, 2011; Whipp, 2013).

These studies conducted in literacy methods courses paint a picture of how curriculum and service learning experiences develop teacher candidates' understandings of their roles as teachers. They also highlighted the importance of connecting teacher candidates with communities in which they are teaching. Literacy methods courses could be sites where this kind of work can take place. Looking closely at how teacher educators connect critical literacy and civic engagement, reveals some promising practices that transform literacy learning from acquiring a set of skills to using literacy for empowerment.

### **Action Research**

In the educational setting, action research has the potential to bring about change as teachers examine their own practices and make decisions about effective practices for their particular students and situation (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). This methodological approach involves working in a community of practice and is iterative in nature. Communities of practice bring together classroom teachers, university faculty, teacher candidates, community partners, and students. Members all share a common interest in examining phenomena of interest and importance to all the participants and work over extended period of time gathering data,



analyzing, reflecting, and making decisions about what changes need to take place based on what they have discovered (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2011; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). As practitioners take what they have learned from such a close investigation of and reflection on practice, action research holds promise for sustainable implementation of effective teaching practices (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, 2009; McNiff, 2013)

Several action research studies in the areas of critical literacy and civic engagement were cited in this literature review. Barbara Comber and Vivian Vasquez (2010, 2017), Mary Cowhey and Sonia Nieto (2006) have all conducted critical literacy action research in early learning school settings. Ernest Morrell and Nicole Mirra, (2007, 2008, 2011) have done extensive critical literacy and critical media literacy work using Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and Allison Skerrett (2010) has worked exploring adolescents' literacies in outside of school contexts. Marcelle Haddix's (2015) work with teacher candidates in her literacy methods courses involves them in community engagement outside of the typical classroom clinical experience so that they can begin to examine and better understand that their roles and identities as teachers. All of these action research projects were undertaken in collaboration with teachers and students. They worked together to determine the research questions they will explore, what data would collect, and determined how their experiences were interpreted and represented. While the main goal of action research is to improve and transform the practices in the research setting, dissemination of the findings also extend to an audience of practitioners who can take what is learned through the study and apply it to their own situation.

### **Conclusion**

Reviewing the body of literature related to teacher candidates understanding of civic engagement and critical literacy enabled me to familiarize myself with what others have learned

and has given me sense of where my research fits into this discipline. Many have inquired into their teaching practices through action research and offered insights on how we as teacher educators can better prepare our teacher candidates for the important task teaching children the literacy skills that will enable them to participate in their worlds in the ways that are meaningful and transforming.

I have learned that many of teacher candidates come to the university from education systems that may not have offered robust civic education or social studies curriculum due to the emphasis on skills-based reading and math brought on by high-stakes standardized testing. I have learned about promising practices such as pairing with community partners, as they are a wealth of indigenous knowledge about their communities that they are willing to share with teacher candidates. I also know that while service learning and community engagement can help teacher candidates grow in their cultural competence and dismantle deficit thinking about others, if it is not undertaken with care, the experiences have the potential for reinforcing deficit perspectives. The literature also showed me how promising practices such as uncovering and interrogating taken for granted teaching practices while reading about or experiencing new ways of teaching can also help teacher candidates imagine new ways of teaching.

Even with the amount of research that has been undertaken by others, there is still more work to do in the area of teacher education and civic engagement. The types of experiences described in the studies I reviewed, involved teacher or school activities; tutoring programs in community centers or in classrooms or schools. Few studies have discussed teacher candidates interacting in the communities doing the things that are a part of “outside of school” lives, in partnership with members of the community. The teacher pipeline study (Lee, Eckrich, Lackey, & Showalter, 2010) described community activities that the teacher candidates participated in

and their survey data showed a change in their attitudes and dispositions, but there was no research published that explored the impact on practice that being involved in these experiences had on the participants. My study contributes additional knowledge about teacher by describing how teacher candidates view critical literacy and civic engagement, and how it reveals their civic efficacy.

Another noticeable gap in the literature is that most of the studies looked at teacher candidates' skills, knowledge, and dispositions as a result of participating in the larger teacher education program at the university and not as a result of participating in a particular course. Also, most of the studies took place in some type of social foundations, diversity, or multicultural education courses, or social studies methods courses. A self-study, looking more closely at critical literacy and civic engagement in a content area literacy course could lead to a more nuanced understanding of how we can prepare teacher candidates view their roles as change agents.

We can learn a great deal through exploring critical pedagogy in connection with service learning and civic engagement and developing teachers' civic efficacy to work toward justice-oriented education. We can also explore the learning that takes place beyond the classroom walls where community members work alongside university faculty. Incorporating this in a literacy methods course holds potential for preparing teacher candidates to teach children who come from diverse backgrounds and experience the world in very different ways. This type of study fits with Freire's (1983, 2006) vision that education can be a vehicle for people to fight against oppressive societal practices help teacher candidates learn to teach for a democratic society.

### CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

In my work with teacher candidates, I continually ponder the purpose of public schools in a democracy and the roles and responsibilities of teachers. I think it is important for educators to critically examine the expectations of students, parents, administrators, and policy-makers and understand how those expectations shape the work that teachers do. In the courses I teach, we discuss critical pedagogy and critical literacy and explore ways that teachers take this approach with students in preschool through high school classrooms. Peter Murrell, Jr., described the notion of community teacher and how teaching is a public act. To be a community teacher one must have a deep understanding of the children and families who are in their schools and the communities in which they teach (Murrell Jr., 2000, p. 340). When they have this understanding, teachers can design classroom learning in ways that make use the vast cultural resources that students bring from their homes and communities, make connections between the community and classroom and inspire students to be activists who work together to challenge oppression and become justice-oriented citizens (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1992); all characteristics of a critical approach to teaching and learning (hooks, 2003; Smyth, 2011).

Our teacher candidates come to the university classroom with varying degrees of experience with citizenship education and civic engagement schools (Finley, Wray-Lake, & Flanagan, 2010). Teaching from a critical literacy stance and incorporating civic engagement requires particular knowledge and skills and I wonder how prepared our teacher candidates are to teach about social inequalities, social justice, and to create classroom learning environments that

will help their students develop into personally responsible, participatory, or justice-oriented citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Repeating the research questions stated in Chapter I, I set out to explore and understand the pedagogical decisions teacher candidates make related to civic engagement, specifically:

1. How do teacher candidates view and understand civic education and critical literacy as they participate civic engagement in a teacher education literacy methods course?
2. How do teacher candidates attempt to implement critical literacy and civic engagement into their course assignments?
3. How do teacher candidates describe the ways in which the curricular and experiential learning I incorporated in a literacy methods course shape their civic efficacy and the ways in which they view their roles as literacy teachers?

### **Qualitative Research**

To fully explore the learning that occurred during the semester the teacher candidates and I spent together, it was necessary to answer the research questions using qualitative methods. Qualitative approaches offer ways to make sense of people's lived experiences and stories (Glesne, 2011). Growing out of sociology and anthropology, qualitative research in education affords educators the opportunity to understand the very complex nature of teaching and learning. Since teaching and learning is about relationships among teachers and students and schools and communities, it is important to look closely at the interactions to discover what works and why (Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), 2008). Wendy Luttrell (2010) explains that, because of the very personal nature, "there is no clear path to discovery in qualitative research but there are principles and procedures to enable the journey" (Luttrell,

2010, p. 1). To embark into qualitative research, one must recognize the human factor that is central to a qualitative study and the relationship between the researcher and the subjects.

In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2006), Freire described the need for humanist educators to examine their own realities and then take action to transform those realities. When taking a critical stance to qualitative research, there is an expectation that some type of transformation will result (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 1999; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). Not only is the researcher trying to discover and understand what is happening, but she also must consider multiple perspectives and ways of knowing (Gitlin & Russell, 2014; Luttrell, 2010), as she is searching for ways in which things might be changed and improved (Charles & Ward, 2007; Glesne, 2011).

I find the metaphor of a *bricoleur* used by Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 5) useful in explaining the work of a qualitative researcher. A *bricoleur* takes a variety of objects and assembles them into something meaningful. As a *bricoleur*, the qualitative researcher spends time doing extensive fieldwork (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) and collects data from multiple sources to be analyzed such as observations, interviews, artifacts, documents, and correspondences. The researcher then takes this information and relates a descriptive, analytic, or interpretive account of the story (Wolcott, 1994).

This is not a haphazard process, as it may seem from the description, as one interpretation of a *bricoleur* is that they are a tinker which connotes a ramshackle result. What results instead is an account that shows the multiple perspectives of a story that can reveal the complexity of a situation (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). To make sure the story is not a mishmash of the compilation, the researcher has tremendous responsibility to the participants to ensure that the description or interpretation is an accurate representation of their experiences and stories

(Luttrell, 2010). Responsibilities include being mindful of the power dynamics between the researcher and participants, making the subject position of the researcher clear, paying attention to how the story is being told and making sure to “give voice” (Luttrell, 2010, p. 13) to the participants. Qualitative research can give us a nuanced and multifaceted understandings about very complex issues.

### **Type of Study**

Action research is one of many ways to approach qualitative research. It had its start with psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1930s (Adelman, 1993). Lewin researched the experiences of immigrant factory workers as they took part in job training. The approach Lewin took with the training differed from other approaches of the time, which were top-down approaches where workers had no opportunity to engage in the training. Lewin’s approach, which is considered to be “more democratic” (Adelman, 1993, p. 9), included opportunities to discuss, offer alternative ideas, and give feedback on the training. It was through these types of interactions that the researchers noticed increased motivation in the workers. Education researchers have adopted Lewin’s methods of collecting and analyzing data, then reflecting on the findings and making changes based on the findings (Adelman, 1993, p.11). This process of “decision, action, evaluation and revision” (Adelman, 1993, p. 15) became the basis for the action research that has been increasing in use since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (McNiff, 2013).

Action research started growing in its use and acceptance as epistemological paradigm shifts about knowledge started to question whose knowledge and what knowledge is valued and “what counts as knowledge” (McNiff, 2013, p. 2). Action research values the “practical knowledge” of the people who are most closely associated with the subject of inquiry, which includes the participants (Berg, 2004; HGSE, 2008; McNiff, 2013). Because of the shared

construction of knowledge between researchers and participants, other types of action research include *Participatory Action Research (PAR)* and *Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)* where the participants are involved in the decision-making processes of generating research questions, data collection, and interpretation (MacDonald, 2012; McTaggart, 1991). Because of the in-depth look into issues important to the researcher and participants, reflection and using that information to plan for change, action research, in its many forms, has promise for having a direct impact on professional growth.

The very nature of action research positions the researcher as an integral part of the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, I needed to be cognizant of how I impacted what was going on in the classroom (Peshkin, 1988). Luttrell discussed the *Four I's of Qualitative Research*, one of which is to “make explicit what is implicit” (2010, p. 7) and suggested writing memos as a part of the reflexive process (p. 470). I started the research process examining my experiences and beliefs so I could better understand what was important to me, what I was curious about, and why this was important to study (Ravitch & Riggans, 2012). As I discuss the context of the study, I will start with a description of who I am, how this impacted my research (Chiseri-Strater, 1996), and how I came to my research questions.

Banks (2010) described the different viewpoints of a researcher that is based on her membership in the group. As such, her position plays a large part in the construction of knowledge throughout the research process. I am both an indigenous insider and an indigenous outsider (Banks, 2010, p. 46). I am an insider in that the research I was conducting took place in the course I was teaching. I had been teaching literacy methods courses for several years, adjusting the content and teaching strategies. But I was also an outsider in several ways. I am much older than the teacher candidates in my course, they were the age of my own children, and



I often take a maternal/nurturing stance with them. I also was in a position of power because in the end, the university required me to evaluate each student and assign a grade.

Since it is exploratory in nature, action research also allowed me to better understand a problem and develop a solution. The problem, as I have stated in my introduction, arises from the need for greater attention to civics, citizenship education, and civic engagement in schools. The accountability initiatives that have been put in place in schools in the last 14 years have limited the opportunities for the teacher candidates, who are now enrolled in our teacher education programs, to develop a deep understanding and knowledge of civics and civic engagement because of the limited time schools have spent on teaching social studies (Lucey & Meyer, 2013; Kanter & Schneider, 2013). Incorporating readings, discussions, and opportunities to participate in civic engagement activities, I hoped to understand how the teacher candidates in my class were understanding the importance of civic engagement and critical literacy. The “action” in action research is some type of intervention strategy (USC, 2016). In the case of the literacy course I was teaching, the interventions were the course materials and learning activities I selected and implemented, which I will describe in more detail in the methods section.

Any research method has its affordances and limitations, which I must consider when deciding on what approach to take. Since I considered our classroom a learning community, this research approach was a good fit for helping me discover how the work we did as a group developed our understandings about effective teaching in a democracy. I needed to be mindful that as a participant observer the timing and attention to my reflective teaching memos was important and made sure to write them immediately following each class and community experience, being attentive to the detail and description as I wrote. There were limitations put in

place by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to manage potential risks to the participants, who were the students in my class. I will discuss this in detail in the limitations section.

Action research has great potential for understanding how learning is occurring in my classroom. I felt it was important to undertake a research approach which has potential for change and could give teachers a voice in education reform. Taking a critical stance toward research disrupts the notion of whose knowledge is valued (Greene, 2010) and allows for the practical knowledge of practitioners to facilitate change. Historically, teachers have had decisions made for them by people who are not in the classroom (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Labaree, 2003; Lagemann, 2002; McGill, 2015; McNiff, 2013). Action research is a way for teacher educators, classroom teachers, and students to co-construct knowledge that allows schools to become the “center of inquiry” (Mehta, 2013, p. 279). It is vital that educators analyze our practices, make adjustments based on our analysis, and try out new ideas. This is how professional knowledge can grow from the classroom outward. Action research has the potential for creating a well-developed knowledge base that can contribute to the professionalization of the teaching field (Labaree, 2003; McGill, 2015; Mehta, 2013).

### **Study Context**

The study took place in a public university located in the Midwest. Its teacher education program enjoys a reputation for educating a large number of the teachers who are teaching in the state (Illinois State University College of Education [COE], 2016a). The School of Teaching and Learning, which is a part of this college, offers undergraduate programs in Elementary, Bilingual Elementary, Middle Level Education, and Early Childhood Education.

Elementary Education majors who are earning a reading endorsement must take a content area literacy course. The focus of this course teaches the teacher candidates to develop

curriculum and explore instructional materials used in the content area and to teach disciplinary literacy. The spring of 2017 was the first semester that I taught the course.

I have been teaching literacy methods courses at the university for the past ten years and dabbled with the idea of critical literacy. My interest in this approach to teaching grew out of the work I was doing in my master and doctoral programs where I read the works of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Sonia Nieto, Mary Cowhey, Vivian Vasquez, and Ira Shor, to name a few. In some of courses I taught, the teacher candidates read *Getting Beyond "I Like the Book": Creating Space for Critical Literacy in K-6 Classrooms* by Vivian Vasquez (2010) and *Comprehension and Collaboration: Inquiry Circles Illuminated* by Stephanie Harvey and Harvey Daniels (2009). Over the years, I observed teacher candidates incorporating critical literacy components and inquiry they learned about through these readings with children they worked with in clinical settings.

As I started my work in faculty development, I had the opportunity to work with faculty from a wide-range of disciplines who were incorporating civic engagement into their courses. Through my work with them, I became familiar with the works of Caryn McTighe Musil, Thomas Ehrlich, and Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne. Their work and the work I was doing on campus with civic engagement prompted me to redesign my courses to incorporate civic engagement. In doing so, I began to see how critical literacy and civic engagement were connected and felt they were important components of a teacher education program and saw the need to infuse them into literacy methods courses. I spent a couple of summers revamping the courses I was assigned to teach, figuring out ways to structure learning that challenged the teacher candidates to view reading and writing not just as a set of skills to be taught but as an approach that empowered students through using their literacies. Through civic engagement, I

wanted the teacher candidates to consider how their roles and responsibilities as teachers positioned them as agents of change.

Throughout the time I have been teaching literacy methods courses, I have come to realize that there is some very interesting learning happening; for both teacher candidates and myself which would be valuable to research. I developed this action research project that used course activities, projects, and my reflective teaching notes to explore how teacher candidates in this content area literacy course describe their understandings of civic engagement and critical literacy and how they incorporated it in their own teaching.

### **Method**

I used ethnographic methods to collect data for this study. I considered myself a participant observer since I was working with the teacher candidates as their course instructor and accompanied them into the community doing fieldwork (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Data sources included beginning of the course surveys, participant interviews, quick writes and exit slips during class activities, and written reflections that were a part of the coursework. Additional data included course artifacts such as projects, assignments, and my own fieldnotes taken during class activities.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study enrolled in a section of an undergraduate content area literacy course that I was the instructor of record. The 26 students in this particular section of the course were in classified as juniors at the university, 24 were majoring Elementary Education, one in Early Childhood Education, and one was a Special Education major. This course was an elective that they were taking to fulfill the requirements to earn a reading endorsement. Some of the teacher candidates were in their second semester of the elementary education program, had

already taken several literacy methods courses, and had several hours of clinical experiences in the area classrooms. Many of them were looking toward either participating in a year-long student teaching experience in the Professional Development School (PDS) program or their senior block from which the student teaching semester would follow. Other class members were just starting their major coursework which included their first literacy methods course, an issues and practices course education course, and two-day a week clinical experience in an area school. There were also a small number of teacher candidates enrolled for whom this was the first major course they had taken and therefore their first literacy methods course.

On our campus, the student population is 75% White, 8% African American, and 10% Hispanic, 2% Asian. Fifty-six percent of the students at the university identify as female (Planning, Research and Policy Analysis (PRPA), 2016, p. 4). In the fall of 2016, of university's declared education majors 82% were White, 3% African American, 1% Asian, and 11% Hispanic, and 88% are female (PRPA, 2016, p. 25-26). The students in my courses disclosed that they mostly come from the Chicago suburbs or from one of the small rural communities in the central part of the state. The demographics of the students in my courses, for the most part, mirrored that of all education majors at this institution.

Eight class members consented to participate in this project. Since all participants identify as female, I will use the pronouns *she*, *her*, and *hers*, in referring to them. Four of the eight participants were available to participate in interviews which I conducted in the summer following our semester together. I selected four teacher candidates, Jennifer, Lauren, Elizabeth, and Olivia, as a "criterion sample" (Hatch, 2002, p. 99). These four had completed all of the assignments that I used as the data sources, spent time in the community garden which that connected with the final project for the course and were available for interviews after the

semester ended. The other four teacher candidates, Eve, Maria, Joanie, and Sarah's data sets included all of the course assignments. Joanie did not have a complete set of course assignments and therefore, I did not include her data in the analysis. Also, none of these four spent time in the community garden and were not available to participate in interviews. Eve's data were included when she collaborated with Elizabeth on the academic conversation and also as a variation sample (Hatch, 2002, p.99), where her understanding of the roles of teachers varied from the others. I included Sarah and Maria's data in the descriptions critical literacy in academic conversation as an "intensity sample" (Hatch, 2002, p.99) to illustrate how their understanding of critical literacy differed from the others.

At the beginning of each semester, I met with each member of the class individually to get to know them and to learn what experiences they had with literacy teaching; through their coursework, their employment, or volunteer work. Using the information from the interview and some "getting to know you questions" on the beginning of the course survey (Appendix E) helped me tailor the course content to their experiences. I learned a lot about the participants through these the surveys and the interviews. All of the participants were elementary education majors. They identified as White females who were in their early twenties, mirroring the demographics of a majority of the elementary education majors at this university.

Of the seven, only Lauren and Eve came to the university upon graduating from high school. Jennifer, Olivia, Elizabeth, Sarah, and Maria had transferred from community colleges the previous fall semester and this was their second semester enrolled at the university. Jennifer was the only participant who had not taken any courses in the elementary education program at this university and thus, this content area literacy course was her first course in the program. The other six had started the core courses of the elementary education program the previous semester.

They had already taken the first literacy methods course and an issues and practices in elementary education course which and spent two days each week in an elementary classroom. At the same time they were taking this content area literacy course, these six participants also were taking second literacy methods course where they spent time in a local elementary classroom engaged in literacy tutoring.

Three of the participants, Lauren, Jennifer, and Elizabeth, all came from small, rural towns that were about an hour away from the university. Olivia and Sarah were both from a city about an hour west of the university known for its manufacturing industry. Eve was from a suburb of a large Midwestern city and Maria had moved from out of state to start at a community college so that she could eventually attend the university for its education program. Sarah, Maria, Lauren, and Eve were all looking forward to the year-long PDS experience and Elizabeth and Olivia were taking the traditional route and were looking forward to student teaching a year later. Jennifer would start the core elementary education courses the following semester.

At a few points in the semester, the teacher candidates had opportunities to articulate their views about citizenship and to share their personal experiences about how they learned about citizenship. I asked a question about it on the beginning of the course survey, they wrote about their views in several assignments throughout the semester, and we discussed the views again during the interviews that took place after the semester was over. In their surveys, they named some of the issues that were important to them which included diversity, school issues such as Common Core and year-round school, respect for the country and for others, the Trump presidency and the seemingly tense social and political environment, and issues surrounding religion. Lauren described herself as being very involved, that she was a member in Educators Rising, a professional organization for future teachers. Elizabeth and Jennifer were involved with

her church in their hometowns and volunteered time working with children and teenagers, tutoring and helping out in several of the churches programs. Volunteering was the way all of the teacher candidates described the importance of involvement and they all pointed to encouragement and inspiration from family members as one motivation for engaging in this kind of work.

### **Data Sources**

I used course assignments, observation fieldnotes, and interviews as data sources. The course assignments were those already embedded in the course and were collected throughout the semester. Throughout the semester, I recorded instructor fieldnotes, taken while teaching and in the field with the teacher candidates. These notes were, at times, handwritten while I was teaching or engaging with the teacher candidates in our meetings or in the field. I also typed notes immediately following our class meetings, during my planning sessions, and after fieldwork (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). The fieldnotes were a part of a teacher reflective journal which I keep as a regular part of my teaching practice. Assignments included discussion board posts, lesson plan ideas, and an end-of-the-semester paper describing their reflections on critical literacy and civic engagement activities. I was able to collect data through follow-up interviews the summer following the class. After the course has ended and I submitted grades, I was able to conduct semi-structured interviews (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) with individuals who indicated on their consent forms that they would be willing to participate in interviews.

### **Data Collection**

Gathering information from a variety of data sources helped me to construct a thick description, a detailed account, of what was happening in the content area literacy course over



the semester (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). In this section, I describe in more detail, the data sources I collected and analyzed.

### **Initial Reflection and Survey**

At the start of the course, I wanted to uncover the teacher candidates' understandings about the roles of teachers and their perceptions of their abilities to fulfill those roles. I structured a context where the teacher candidates could explore the ways in which classroom teachers incorporate civic engagement by sharing videos and readings where I asked them to notice, name and analyze teaching practices. One example they viewed was TEDx Talk by Jennifer Magiera, called *Power to the Pupil* (2014). The other engagement was to read a chapter from Mary Cowhey's *Black Ants and Buddhists* (2006). Using Google Forms, the teacher candidates shared their reactions to the teaching and learning saw depicted in these two examples and the possibilities and pitfalls of structuring classroom learning in such ways (Appendix E). They articulated what they noticed about how these two teachers in the examples viewed their roles and responsibilities as teachers. They also listed the literacy skills the students in the classroom illustrations were using and the purposeful ways they were using those literacies. They followed describing their thoughts on what they were seeing and reading and what they needed to do as teacher candidates to teach such literacy skills so that their future students could successfully participate in the classroom activities described. The questions were designed to elicit their thoughts and understandings at the beginning of the semester and to be the starting point for how their understandings developed.

### **Class Discussions and Reflections**

Throughout the semester, after class sessions where we focused on critical literacy, civic engagement, and being a community teacher, I asked the teacher candidates to share what they

were coming to understand about these topics. These were in the form of quick writes or exit slips, where they would jot down responses to prompts such as, “what does it mean to be literate?” “how do you see your role as a literacy teacher now?” or “what is one big idea about teaching literacy that you took away from our discussion?” In the beginning of the semester, I facilitated the class activities and discussions and then handed over the reins to them later in the semester. Part of this included planning and leading class discussions on topics of their choice which they had to connect with something that was happening in the world around them. The class determined the discussion topics, and they worked in pairs to plan their discussion. The assignment required them to develop essential questions to explore, select texts for the class to use, and to engage the class in a discussion on the topic. This assignment gave me insight into how the teacher candidates attempted to implement critical literacy and civic engagement into their teaching.

### **Lesson Plans and Teaching Materials**

The community in which our university is located has an active community organization that serves section of town that is a United States Department of Agriculture food desert. Among the various projects of this community organization, is the Community Garden. The garden is located in land donated by the city. Volunteers from all over the community, including a group of Master Gardeners, prepared beds to be given to individual community members, a home for women transitioning into the community from the state Department of Corrections, and to the local Boys and Girls Club, worked to plant and maintain the garden and the people donated plants through several community program. Community volunteers and the children who were participating in the programs at the Boys and Girls Club planted and cared for the beds. The woman who directed the garden time for the Boys and Girls Club expressed that she was having

a hard time coming up with learning activities for the children to do when they came to the garden. This was an ideal project for the teacher candidates in the content area literacy course. As the final project for the course, they would develop the learning activities and select the materials for the Community Garden summer gardening program. The lessons integrated the six language arts with science, social studies, arts, health, movement, and music. Another expectation was that the lesson would incorporate a variety of multimodal texts, which they compiled into a multimedia log. We purchased these texts and added them to a kit that the garden volunteers could use for the summer program. This course assignment also gave me some insight into how the teacher candidates attempted to implement critical literacy and civic engagement into their teaching.

### **Reading Reflections**

Throughout the semester, the teacher candidates wrote reflections and self-assessments in which they discussed issues related to being a community professional, teaching for social justice, and critical literacy. They completed these reflections periodically throughout the semester to help them think about the ideas they encountered in the course readings. The reflections were prepared before class and the teacher candidates used them to help prepare to participate in class discussion and activities. Throughout the semester, some sort of written reflection or response was completed each week, with a few exceptions and they were typed and stored in the Google folder they used in this class to share assignments with me. Handwritten reflections were turned in each week during class time. As they read, they were to write thoughts, connections, or questions in an *I read/I thought chart* or prepare a *3,2,1 Response*, three ideas, two connections, and one question, which they would use in class discussions. I sometimes gave them prompts to consider as they are reading an article or a blog post, mainly

“how does what you just read make you think about your roles and responsibilities as a teacher? We read about Peter Murrell Jr.’s (n.d.) *Defining Community Teacher*, critical literacy, and Musil’s (2009) *Civic Learning Spiral*. Class discussion and reflection were integral parts of these learning experiences. When reading their reflections, I used what I learn from them to modify, clarify, and expand the course content, and incorporated this into my research, as is expected in action research.

### **Teaching Journal**

I kept a teaching journal for reflective purposes. My teaching journal was a data source and I used what I had written to write analytic memos. Sometimes, particularly in the community or during class, I had to take handwritten notes. To make sure I would remember events accurately, I was mindful to write up fieldnotes from this fieldwork as soon as I could following the events (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). Entries in my teaching journal included my thoughts about how I wanted to structure the course and my planning processes. I also wrote about the world events occurring at the time and the how I decided I would connect them to course learning and why. I reflected on class sessions, to make sense of the learning that occurred, the teacher candidates’ interactions with and responses to the materials that I brought in. I also kept track of the texts and PowerPoint presentations that I used for each class meeting. We spent time out of the classroom this semester, as well, so I wanted to record what happened at the History Museum, the Community Garden, and at the Horticulture Center.

### **Participant Observations**

Participant observations, where I spent time with the teacher candidates in the community (Glesne, 2011), took place at the Community Garden. They were given several options of times to work with the volunteer in the garden and I was with them each time. During these garden

work days, we readied the beds for planting, weeded existing plots, planted various food propagating plants, and planted the bed of pollinating plants. Working alongside the teacher candidates afforded me the opportunity to make introductions to the community members, help them to transition more comfortably into an unfamiliar space, and to have discussions about what was happening in the community and make explicit connections between what was happening in the community and the course content. Going with the teacher candidates in the community helped them to see how me in my role as a community educator, as well, and how this role was something that was truly important to me outside of the university classroom.

As the person who designed the course and taught it, I was a participant observer in this classroom learning community. I structured the key assignments and class activities in a way that probed into teacher candidates' current understandings about their roles as literacy teachers (Appendix A). I also asked the teacher candidates to articulate these understandings in the survey. In an early class activity, I incorporated a way for them to react to and share their thoughts on specific classroom practices illustrated through a reading from *Black Ants and Buddhists* (Cowhey, 2006) and *Power to the Pupil* (Magiera, 2014). In class discussions, documented in teaching notes, continually returned to the question of the teacher's role in teaching civic engagement and examples in their lesson plans and learning activity ideas reflected teaching about citizenship. Using Westheimer and Kahne's *Three Kinds of Citizens* (2004), I was able to examine what type of citizenship their lessons promoted; personally responsible, participatory, or justice-oriented

## **Interviews**

I interviewed the participants after the semester ended which allowed me to further explore the teacher candidates' thoughts about critical literacy and civic engagement. I emailed

the participants who consented to an interview soon after the semester ended. Of the eight participants, In spite of busy summer schedules and some moving out of the area, I was able to interview four of the teacher candidates. To make the interviews more convenient and comfortable for the participants, I had them select the location and time so for two of them, I was able to meet with them in their hometowns. They each selected a coffee shop which set the stage for a comfortable collegial conversation which lasted about an hour. I followed a semi-structured format (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) to make them more conversational (Appendix B) and had permission from all four participants to audio-record them. After meeting with each participant, I transcribed the audio-recordings myself because in doing so, I was able to become more familiar with interview data. Listening to their voices and our interactions actually became a first step in data analysis as I started noticing small stories and patterns in what they were saying. In analyzing the responses to the interview questions, I learned how they were understanding the concepts of critical literacy and civic engagement that we discussed in class and their thoughts on what they understood their roles as teachers to be.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative research using ethnographic methods generates a great deal of data to analyze and interpret. To manage the data, I needed to be systematic and organized. I kept data accounting logs (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) of the data generating events (Appendix A). I also had to make decisions about the stories that were revealed through the data and which of those emerging stories answered my research questions (Denzin, 1994, as cited in Willis, Jost, & Nilakanta, 2007). I used my theoretical framework throughout my data analysis to help me make those decisions. Maxwell (2013) uses the metaphor of a spotlight to describe how a theoretical framework can be used to point to particular phenomena in the data and helps a researcher tell a

story. My theoretical framework was useful in helping me determine the story that I would tell. Critical literacy and civic efficacy theories helped to draw “attention to particular events or phenomena, and sheds light on relationships that might otherwise go unnoticed or misunderstood” (Maxwell, 2013 pp.49-50). I used several coding strategies to analyze the data and, each time, I used components of critical literacy and civic efficacy, such as Vasquez’s 10 Tenets of Critical Literacy (2010) and Watts and Flanagan’s (2007) four components of civic efficacy, to describe what I was seeing in the data.

### **Organizing the Data**

The matrices of transcribed data helped me explore themes related to the participants’ understandings and discussions about civic engagement and their roles as teachers (Table 1). When faced with a pile of data, these two theories offered the concepts to explain what was happening and what story I would choose to tell. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) recommend matrices for creating visual displays of data, particularly when analyzing several data sources. To start my data analysis, I created a matrix to determine which data sources would help me to best answer my research questions (Appendix C). During the analysis process, after in vivo and descriptive coding, I used matrices to create a display of the data for further analysis. The raw data came from a variety of sources; surveys, written assignments, and reflections generated by each participant. I designed a matrix for each participant so I could see what they were saying about critical literacy and civic efficacy across each of the data sources. The visual displays helped me focus on my research questions and hone in on the data that answered those questions. Within each matrix, I color coded the data to show the data source from which it came. This process allowed me to triangulate data across several sources and to look for shifts in understandings throughout the semester.

Table 1

*Civic Efficacy Matrix*

Civic Efficacy Component	Data Source: Reader Response		
beliefs that personal behavior impacts social behavior and social conditions	some really great citizenship education in the fifth grade classroom that I was in this semester for my EAF 228 course. The teacher had begun a project with them in November and worked until February where the fifth graders began by doing a random act of kindness in the school. The teacher modeled this by bringing treats for the students to distribute to the other teachers in the building. They then decided what ways they wanted to raise money for the community, they brainstormed ways that were possible for a school of low socio-economic status (80% low income) to raise money and canned goods for the local food pantry.	It reminded me that there is so much more to learn about being a teacher and how we wear so many hats.	It truly reminded me of how much we have to teacher our students as people, not just learners of the core subjects. It demonstrated how accountable we are for the future of our nation as well.

I also created matrices for each participant that included examples of critical literacy found in their data sources and from which source the data came. I used Vasquez’s *10 Tenets of Critical Literacy* (2010) and arranged examples from four sources related to each tenet. The data sources I used were the Responses to Reading Assignments, Academic Conversation Assignment, Exit Slips, and the Final Reflection. Using these same data sources, I created a second set of matrices for the *4 Components of Civic Efficacy* (Watts & Flanagan, 2007) for each participant. I shared the matrices with my writing group to get feedback on the trustworthiness of my interpretations of the data represented in the matrices.



## **Coding the Data**

One analysis tool I found useful was low-level coding which required little inference on my part (Carspecken, 1996). One type of low-level coding is in-vivo coding, which I used for my first round of coding. In vivo coding is a first-cycle coding method that takes the actual language used in the data source revealing the language of the insiders and the words and terms used by the members of a particular group (Saldaña, 2009). By paying close attention to the language used by the participants, I could get an idea of what the teacher candidates were understanding about civic engagement and critical literacy through the way they described their visions of their roles as teachers and what they felt was important to teach. Since I was trying to understand their civic efficacy, I wanted to analyze the language that they used to describe their beliefs about their ability to be change agents in classrooms. Saldaña (2009) also note that in vivo coding is particularly useful in action research because it helps the researcher interpret the phenomena using the participants terms. Some of the codes that I identified from this coding step included, understandings of texts, classroom environments, conversations, reading strategies, relationships, helping students, and work of teaching. The teaching profession is rife with lingo so looking for how teacher candidates are using the language of the profession will shine light into their understandings of their roles as teachers.

After coding each set of participant data, I wrote analytic memos on each participant. Charmaz (2010) describes memo writing as an important step between coding the data and writing the draft of the analysis. Writing analytic memos is piece of the analysis process that allowed me to elaborate on what I was noticing in the data. Memos serve a variety of purposes and formats (Maxwell, 2013). I wrote memos to capture my fieldwork, to explain how I came to my research question (Luttrell, 2010), and memos that connected my coded data to my

theoretical framework and research questions (Figure 1). Through this process that the stories of each of the participants was starting to unfold and where I could also see connections in the raw data, both within each individual part pants story and among them.

Following the first-cycle coding and memo writing, I coded the data again. Using my theoretical framework of critical literacy and civic efficacy, I looked at each participant's data set for discussions or applications of the components of critical literacy, their views on connecting with the community, and how they were understanding their roles as teachers. This round of coding highlighted their civic efficacies; their beliefs and actions that showed their willingness or ability to engage in civic actions.

**Memo Explaining In Vivo Coding (November 11, 2017)**

**Beliefs about Teaching** In several of Jennifer's written reflections, she discussed the importance of teachers listening to their students to find out what they were interested in so that those interests could be incorporated into the curriculum. After experiencing inquiry herself, she saw the value of student choice. She revealed, on several occasions, that the open-endedness of inquiry was a struggle for her because she felt she needed more structure and guidance from me, the instructor. In her final reflection, she stated that although it was struggle, the inquiry learning experience she had helped her develop as a learner and a teacher. She wrote in her final reflection, "From the beginning of the semester until now, I truly feel that I have grown my confidence in my work and that I don't underestimate myself as much." As a result of this, she wanted to be able to offer the same experiences to her future students through inquiry.

*Figure 1. Analytic memo example*

Storytelling is a central part of remembering and understanding human experiences (Casey, 1995-1996; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Historically, researchers have used narrative approaches to expand the interpretations of events and experiences to include more voices; voices that have not traditionally been included in published research (Casey, 1995-1996).

Narrative approaches have been used across a wide variety of disciplines such as education,

sociology, and anthropology as the researcher employs a variety of sources to make meaning. Researchers using narrative approaches in the humanities gather data from life writing, personal interviews, personal narratives and accounts, and autoethnographies, to name a few. The sources I used to construct the story that follows included the fieldnotes I wrote throughout the semester, teacher candidate reflections, their work samples and papers, and interviews. I coded the data, as previously described, and then wrote analytic memos (Glesne, 2011; Luttrell, 2010; Cohen & Crabtree, 2017). Therefore, narrative representation is an appropriate for interpreting the experiences of teacher candidates as they developed their understandings of their roles as teachers.

The data analysis process helped me look for patterns and categorize a vast amount of information in order to reveal the answers to my research question. The matrices also highlighted patterns and revealed some gaps that showed what wasn't there. Writing the memos allowed me to interpret what I was seeing in the data and construct the story of our semester together (Glesne, 2011; Luttrell, 2010; Cohen & Crabtree, 2017).

### **Trustworthiness**

In a qualitative study, ensuring trustworthiness is important and I attended to this by clearly discussing my researcher positionality, data triangulation, and member-checking. Action research is a collaborative process that is specific to the site, context, and participants where the research is conducted (HGSE, 2008). Being a part of the research and the person who designed the learning in the course where the work will take place, considered an intervention, positions me as an indigenous insider, in some ways, and in other ways, I am an indigenous outsider (Banks, 2010). I am an insider in that it was my class. I have been a teacher educator for several years, and I modified the content and teaching strategies in response to student feedback and

other information I gathered along the way. But I was also an outsider in several ways. I was much older than most of the students, as they were the age of my own children and I often would take a maternal/nurturing stance with them. This nurturing stance often took the form of listening to them when they wanted to share pieces of their lives beyond the scope of the class, or offering advice during a very academically demanding semester for them. I think because of our age difference and because I did share parts of my personal life as a mother, they felt comfortable developing a relationship with me outside of the classroom. I think that as the semester progressed, they believed that I wanted them to succeed in the course and as teachers which also contributed to our trusting relationship.

Even though I felt we developed a trusting working relationship, I was also in a position of power because, in the end, the university required me to assign a grade for each teacher candidate in the class. In various informal written and verbal feedback about the class and in the course evaluations, the teacher candidates stated that they recognized and appreciated extensive and varied experiences in the education field and that I had a deep knowledge of the course content and the experiences of teacher candidates in the program which also increases trustworthiness (Glesne, 2011).

I was also a research participant and needed to be reflexive about my position and influence the story that I discovered and told. Because of the nature of this type of study, I needed to continually examine and reveal how my participation and the connections to the participants were an integral part of the research process and I explicitly made visible my subjectivity (Luttrell, 2010; Peshkin, 1988; Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). I used reflexive memos on researcher identity as a part of the analysis process. These memos helped me address my biases and consider how they might be influencing the research process (Glesne, 2011).

I took other measures to ensure trustworthiness. Triangulating qualitative data allows for a richer, more in-depth description of the phenomena being studied (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). In this study, I used triangulation in a couple of ways. First, I looked at the data through different theoretical lenses, both critical literacy and civic efficacy. Multiple data sources allowed me to triangulate the data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Maxwell, 2013). Looking across multiple data sources allowed me to see patterns, commonalities, and changes. These data sources included the course assignments, transcripts of the participant observations, interviews, my teaching notes from key class meetings, and my fieldnotes and reflexive writings. My processes for triangulation included comparing my fieldnotes and memos that I wrote with data from participant reflections. The interviews were also useful for clarifying and confirming my interpretations of the course with the participants and what they learned about critical literacy and civic engagement.

As I completed writing the research texts describing the data, I sent drafts to each participant to member check and make sure I had interpreted the data accurately (Glesne, 2011). I created a document for each member that included the introduction to the findings chapter, my interpretations of their responses in the beginning of the course survey and the exit slips they completed after the immigration mini-inquiry, and their responses to the advance organizer. I also included my description of their academic conversation and their reflections on the community garden project. All four participants responded, three within a day of receiving my email and the fourth with a reminder a few weeks later. All of them confirmed that my interpretations and descriptions represented their experiences in the course. They each shared anecdotes about either their student teaching and their current coursework and how they were using what they had learned during our semester together in their current situations.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Since I was the instructor of record, research protocols on our campus set some parameters on action research. Because the participants in the study were members of course I was teaching and I was responsible for giving a grade, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) required that I have safeguards in place to minimize risk factors for the participants. A member of my dissertation committee had to manage the consent process with the teacher candidates. She explained the project using a recruitment script (Appendix D), asked for consent and kept the forms in her office so that I did not know who had consented to participate until after I submitted grades for the semester. This reduced the likelihood that the consent to participate in the study could impact a participant's grade in the course.

I made efforts to maintain confidentiality of the participants. The consent form informed of minimal possibility of social or psychological risk in this project that I would take precautions to protect their identities. I secured data on a password protected computer or in my locked office. Participants selected their own pseudonyms that I used in all dissemination of the findings. I also used pseudonyms for locations described in the findings.

## CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use the metaphor of soup to describe the narrative form of research writing. Like a soup, composed of a variety of ingredients, the research text can also be made up of a variety of stories. The stories of a narrative research texts are “rich descriptions of people, places, and things” which can also “argue for the relationships between people, places, and things” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 155). I drew the stories I present in this chapter from particular moments throughout the semester; my interactions with the participants individually and as a group, key learning experiences in the classroom, and the stories that were told through their written work and their performances in particular class activities. I wrote the descriptions to convey how the teacher candidates and I grew together as educators (Wolcott, 1994). I have described key class meetings and explanations of my course planning processes to illustrate the relationships among course components and the influences on teacher candidates’ understandings of what literacy teaching should entail, how they were understanding their roles as literacy teachers, and the ways they were incorporating critical literacy in their teaching.

### **Constructing Narratives**

Research texts can take a variety of forms. The purpose of a research text is to represent the data and answer the research questions. Through the analysis, I decided which “particular ‘story’ to tell from the data” and then created “the literary form” (Glesne, 2011, p. 218) that would tell the story. I used the teacher candidates’ direct quotes in the narratives of the findings to support or illustrate my interpretations (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The sociopolitical climate also made its way into our decision-making and descriptions of what was going on in the world around us have become a part of this story. All of this was then woven together to describe the

semester the teacher candidates and I spent together, co-constructing understandings of what it meant to be a literacy teacher in a democratic society. Because what we experience in our present time derives from what we experienced in the past and also help us “construct an identity for the future” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50), I also interwove the stories the teacher candidates told about their educational experiences, the social and political events of the time, and how the teacher candidates imagined how what they were learning would influence their future teaching. The stories that follow include rich descriptions (Wolcott, 1994) of my experiences and decision-making processes as I planned and taught the course. I also constructed stories from each of the participants’ written work that reveal their civic efficacy as teachers. In some cases, the stories of the teacher candidates intersect as they worked together. I end with the stories that were constructed from their final reflections and their interviews that tell what they have come to understand about their roles as teachers and how they imagine using what we learned during our semester together as they continue into the next phase of their teaching journey. What follows are the teacher candidates’ stories about their learning through the semester, as revealed through their coursework that highlight their understandings of critical literacy and civic engagement. I also tell my own story as a teacher educator, describing the decisions I made throughout the semester.

### **Reading the World: Bringing the Outside World into the University Classroom**

In the spring 2017, as I prepared to teach this content area literacy course for the first time, world events were certainly on my mind as I decided how I wanted to approach the course. The teaching assignment came soon after the November 2016 elections. The country was in a turmoil brought about by the election of a new president. News sources and social media were filled with stories about white supremacy, islamophobia, anti-immigration, and promises to



reverse legislation granting equal rights to members of the LGBTQ+ community, all in an effort to “Make America Great Again.” The events following the election and my feelings about what the future would hold would certainly shape the decisions I made about content and structure of the course. While I was pretty certain at the time that I, a White, middle-class, heterosexual, cisgender, educated female, could probably weather the change promised by this new administration, I still felt an overwhelming responsibility to use my power and position as a teacher educator to work toward what I viewed as a more inclusive, just world.

The sociopolitical climate leading up to and following the 2016 presidential election and the ways it was affecting me personally and professionally, prompted me to reevaluate my role as a teacher educator and consider what actions I could take to work against the injustices and social inequities I was witnessing. A social media post by a former teacher candidate who had taken two of her literacy methods courses with me caught my attention and exemplified why an approach combining civic engagement and critical literacy was imperative. At the time, she was teaching sixth grade language arts and described a situation in her class where some students were chanting, “Yeah, let’s build a wall,” referring to one of the presidential candidate’s campaign promise of a wall to be built between the United States and Mexico. This classroom teacher expressed some alarm that her students would say this, especially since the immigration policies promised by one of the candidates, if elected president, would greatly impact many of other students in the class. She stated that she felt a responsibility to discuss such controversial issues and that it was her job as a classroom teacher to help her students develop the reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills to have productive conversations so that they could tackle these real-world issues. While some people would tell her that this was not her job as a teacher, she disagreed. She continued to say in her post that she went into teaching because she was

educating her students to be productive citizens which, to her, meant teaching the literacy skills needed to be able to have tough conversations, be respectful, and to be educated. She felt it was her job to instill in her students that knowledge can be very powerful (Facebook post, October 17, 2016).

This display of civic efficacy in my former student really got me thinking about the teacher candidates presently enrolled in my courses. How did they understand their roles as teachers and their responsibility for teaching the critical literacy skills? What did they understand about the ways they and others could use their literacies to transform the world in powerful ways? How could I, as a teacher educator, facilitate this understanding? These questions led me to this project and my interest in discovering how a content area literacy course could facilitate teacher candidates' understandings of civic engagement and critical literacy.

### **The Beginnings, Teacher Candidates Civic Efficacy**

In the beginning of the semester, I asked the teacher candidates to articulate their understandings of their roles and responsibilities as teachers, specifically related to literacy teaching. The first homework assignment was to read the prologue of Mary Cowhey's *Black Ants and Buddhists* (2006) where they read about how a first grade teacher took a conversation that transpired among her students and turned it into a critical inquiry on religious beliefs and practices. The other text that was a part of the homework was a TED Talk by Jennifer Maniera (2014), describing critical inquiries of several upper elementary students and how they were able to use the skills they were learning through their critical inquiry to taking social action. In a survey, the teacher candidates responded to these texts and shared their thoughts about what they noticed about the type of classroom experiences the teachers in the two texts were providing. I designed the survey to capture their civic efficacy as they were introduced to the idea of critical

literacy and civic engagement (Appendix E). During the first few class sessions of the semester, we defined and described critical literacy and they started to articulate their understandings through exit slips and short reflections. They also discussed how the learning experiences in the texts compared to what they had experienced in their own schooling or had observed in their clinical placements.

Olivia wrote in her survey response that she was looking forward to learning how to teach literacy in science and social studies. When she described what she felt she needed to develop to be a successful literacy teacher, she mentioned being able to use different modes of communication to meet the variety of learning needs of the students in a classroom. In her community college children's literature course, she had learned how to use read-aloud strategies to "engage students in higher-order thinking," which she felt she already developed the ability to do.

Olivia also wrote in her survey that the type of teaching she observed in the TED Talk and the reading was new to her. She had not experienced learning situations where students were "pushed" to think about and/or discuss or explore different perspectives on the cultural beliefs of their peers. She recognized that the teachers in the two examples showed that they believed that schools were places where students could be encouraged to learn about and think critically about social issues that were important to students. She wrote, "These teachers are creating an atmosphere to talk about topics/issues that might be more on the critical/controversial side, but they are doing it in a way that greatly enhances the student's process of thinking and learning" (Beginning of the Course Survey, January 26, 2017).

Olivia articulated some problems she could foresee if she were to teach in this manner. The main challenge she identified was receiving criticism from others, particularly parents and

colleagues, who disagreed with the idea that schools should be places for students to discuss social issues. “Many people have very different opinions on what they think teaching should entail, so it may be a challenge to fight against that ‘norm’ of how some people believe education should be taught.” In spite of the difficulty that she imagined, Olivia noticed how teachers could create “an atmosphere to talk about topics/issues that might be more on the critical/controversial side, but they are doing it in a way that greatly enhances the student's process of thinking and learning.”

Elizabeth also recognized the ways the teachers depicted in *Black Ants and Buddhists* and *Power to the Pupil* were taking the issues that mattered to their students and structuring the classroom learning around them. She stated that she was beginning to see that school learning should not be just about learning “core subjects” but also “an educational experience for life.” She was coming to understand that this type of learning incorporated opportunities to develop conversation and communication skills which could not happen effectively without building trust and understanding, which she viewed as an important responsibility of teachers.

Just as Olivia had stated, Elizabeth also felt this kind of teaching would not be easy. Elizabeth had an awareness that changing one’s teaching from what they had experienced in their own schooling would be a slow process: “The challenges are just trying to break the mold of how we teach, we have all been taught a certain way to teach in which the teacher is the facilitator, the guide, and the voice of the classroom” (Beginning of the Course Survey, January 29, 2017). Because of this, she knew that it would take some effort to commit to a way of teaching that gives over some control to the students in the classroom. Elizabeth recognized that it would take some work to get to know students and to involve them in their learning.

Lauren commented on the introductory texts extensively in her survey, comparing her experiences with her own schooling and clinical experiences with what she observed in the texts. She started with saying that in her experiences, difficult conversations were “not brought into the classroom,” as Cowhey had described. To the contrary, Lauren’s experiences with discussion on topics such as religion and racism were often “shut down.” These introductory texts helped Lauren see how teachers could bring in topics that impacted the students in the classroom and teach them not only content, but also about social justice issues and how to be “productive members of society.” She did not elaborate on what she meant by “productive” in the survey.

Lauren’s take-away from the reading was that she saw the value in a teacher learning alongside her students. It showed that “If you can learn along with your students through inquiry and learning together, you set the example that learning is life long [sic]!” She went on to say that for her, it might be difficult. She described teaching in a way in which she had not experienced as a learner would be similar to “looking for a lightswitch [sic] in a dark room.” She could imagine herself trying out a critical pedagogy approach to teaching but knew that it would take some trial and error. In her final thoughts on the survey, Lauren expressed a desire to be a teacher like Mary Cowhey when she wrote, “If I can be half as good as a teacher (and person) as them I will consider myself successful in my career in education” (Beginning of the Course Survey, January 29, 2017).

Jennifer appreciated what the teachers in the texts were doing and how the teachers really knew their students. She also focused in on how the students’ literacies were not just reading and writing but also included an emphasis on speaking and listening in the classrooms:

I think the readings and video describe the purpose of school being much more than just the basic curriculum. It’s important that students gain the skills needed for their future

and their life. Specifically, speaking and listening skills. Speaking and listening skills seem to be big things that these students are developing. It's important that when a student is speaking that they are using relevant information that also others can expand on. As a listener students need to be able to paraphrase what another is saying and also dissect it to form and also evolve their own opinions. (Beginning of the Course Survey, January 29, 2017)

Bandura's (1982) social cognitive theory tells us that efficacy can happen through social modeling, seeing what others do. I had selected *Power to the Pupil* and *Black Ants and Buddhists* as introductory texts because the teachers saw themselves as agents of change and structured their classrooms in ways that allowed their students to meaningfully engage with literacy and use those skills in ways that made a difference for them and their communities. They were teachers who noticed what was important to their students and used what they discovered to structure the learning in the classroom. As the teacher candidates started comparing what they thought teachers should be doing in the classroom and how they should be interacting in the classroom, they started challenging their beliefs as Elizabeth did with her "break the mold statement." I also was starting to see that they had some understandings that literacy was more than just reading and writing and that conversations among students and with the teacher were a valuable way to learn. All of them recognized that it would not be easy but felt up to the challenge because what they observed in these two initial texts. These texts gave the teacher candidates a common experience to connect the ideas they had about teaching and learning they were bringing into the class with them and then launch discussion of the ideas we would be discussing throughout the semester.

## **Critical Literacy and Reading the Word and World**

Paulo Freire wrote about educational practices where the teacher and students work together to discover enduring understandings about their worlds. He described this as “Reading the Word” and “Reading the World” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 18). It is not enough to just teach the skills of reading and writing, or reading the word, but to teach how our literacies help us to understand the world and how we can use those literacy skills that we have learned in ways that can change our worlds. Through reading the word and the world, teachers and students explore their curiosities together and determine how they can use reading and writing as a way to better understand and then change the world. Throughout the semester, we explored the ways we could learn about our world and how as teachers we would structure the learning activities that would teach students the literacy skills they could use in authentic, meaningful ways. What follows is description and analysis of a class session that took place during our second meeting together where we took what we were noticing in the world and, through a variety of texts, worked to understand the events that were going on in the world around us.

### **Group Inquiry on Immigration**

A second opportunity I had to gauge the teacher candidates’ understandings of their roles and responsibilities as literacy teachers came following a class meeting where we engaged in a mini inquiry on immigration. The semester started with the inauguration of the new president. As I decided on the materials I would use to teach some of the concepts, I knew I would need to tie the course concepts with what was happening in the world around us. The Women’s Marches followed Inauguration Day, a major one in Washington DC with others in many, many cities around the U.S. and the world. On January 27, 2017, President Trump signed an Executive Order restricting visas for people from seven Muslim majority countries, Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Iran,

Syria, Sudan, and Libya. The executive order also put a hold on refugees entering the country. (Executive Order No. 13769, 2017). These events were the impetus for an exploration of multiple perspectives. We spent a class period exploring a variety of texts to get a deeper understanding of some of the issues involving immigration and then to have a conversation about how we were using our literacy skills to engage with this topic.

I had few goals for this lesson. First, I wanted to model how, as teachers, they could facilitate academic conversations in a classroom and how such conversations could promote inquiry. I introduced them to Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions. Enduring Understandings were the big ideas that we would be exploring through our inquiry, ideas that were central to understanding a concept (Figure 2). The Essential Questions would be the questions that guided our inquiry, which we would seek to answer through a variety of texts (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). We explored these questions through a variety of texts that told stories from a range of perspectives about immigration (Appendix F). In working with these texts, my intention was to spark the teacher candidates' thinking about whose voices we heard in the stories and what we, as consumers of this information, needed to know and be able to do in order to better understand stories of immigration.

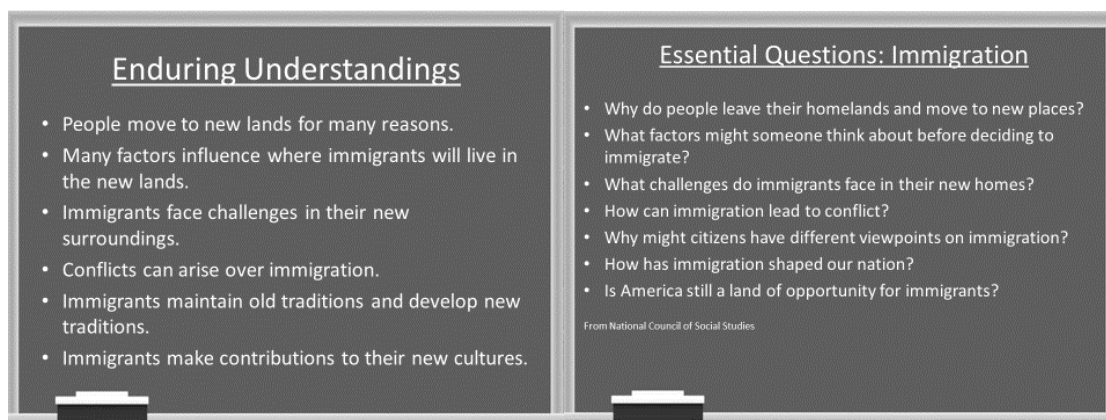


Figure 2. Immigration lesson PowerPoint introduction



I started with a photo of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. I read Emma Lazarus's poem, *The New Colossus* (1883). Then we had a whole-group discussion where they shared their interpretations of the symbol of the Statue of Liberty and the messages the poem about immigration that the poet had written. The teacher candidates also shared their beliefs about whether or not the messages were true and for whom they might or might not be true. Then I showed a photo that had been making its way through social media in which the Statue of Liberty appeared to be crying and we talked about why this picture had gone viral. Following this discussion, I shared the Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions we would be exploring. Teacher candidates engaged with a variety of texts to search for answers to the questions.

I also wanted to know how they critically read the texts and their understandings of the inherent political nature of texts and pointed them back to Vasquez's *10 Tenets of Critical Literacy* (2010). As they explored materials, I listened to their comments. I made note of some of the comments that showed that they were aware that the texts were created by someone who had a specific purpose for creating the message (Luke & Freebody, 1999). Some of the comments I jotted in my teaching notebook included, "Huffington Post is a bit liberal." "What's 'The Onion?'" That comment was followed by quick internet searches where they learned that *The Onion* was satire. Someone expressed surprise when they noticed the content of children's books would take up some serious real-life issues. Two examples they noticed were Edwidge Danticat's *Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation* (2015), about a child wrestling with the emotional experience of having her mother detained in a detention center for undocumented immigrants, and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Amigos del Otro Lado, Friends from the Other Side* (1997), which described interactions with immigration officials from the undocumented boy's perspective (Teaching Journal, January 27, 2017).

Through these comments, I was starting to see that these teacher candidates were becoming aware of the how multiple viewpoints and perspectives on a topic could be explored through a variety of texts and that children’s texts can be used as springboards to discuss some serious social issues in ways that are accessible to children (Vasquez, 2010). As the class progressed, they continued to work together, exploring texts to answer the essential questions and to connect what they were reading to the enduring understandings. We finished with a discussion on the different perspectives we encountered.

### **Seeing Literacy Practices Differently**

My other goal for this lesson was to spark their thinking about how we were using literacy skills to engage with this topic. I had intentionally selected texts that had very different perspectives so, as readers, we needed to interrogate those texts and narratives and consider other vantage points. The welcoming image of the Statue of Liberty and, as the poem’s similar message that “from her beacon hand glows world-wide welcome” (Lazarus, 1883) prompted our discussion of the accuracy of a common narrative about how country welcomed immigrants. We also discussed why it was it important to have the literacy skills necessary for exploring texts in such a way and how we were using critical literacy. Following the class, they completed an exit slip addressing the following:

- What does it mean to be literate?
- What is a teacher’s role in educating students to be literate citizens?
- How do literacy teachers structure the learning environment to help students become literate citizens?

In her response, Jennifer discussed the idea that literacy was “constantly changing and growing.” In the children’s literature course she had taken at her community college before

transferring to this university, they had discussed the concept of *transliteracy* and that we get meaning from many different formats of texts. "...visual, digital, print, or oral are a few that come to mind. These formats are also changing. Specifically, technology plays a huge role in how we are using these formats to teach literacy." Adding to this understanding of literacy, following our inquiry on immigration, Jennifer was starting to see that being able to discuss the ideas in texts was also a part of being literate. Being able to read texts, "one should use that information to one must be able to take an issue, pick a side, and find evidence from multiple sources to back up that issue" (Exit Slip, February 6, 2107). Jennifer had a clear understanding of the multimodalities and multiliteracies and was coming to see that this was not enough, it was also important to be able to do something with the information.

At this point in the semester, Jennifer saw that her role as a literacy teacher was to teach children to interact with multimodal texts for a variety of purposes. She also articulated the importance of teaching students how to use technology.

"...today's children live in a much more technological world then what we did growing up. I think it is important that we teach children to use this technology to learn about ways in which they can find an issues [sic], support or defend them and use multiple sources to do so" (Exit Slip, February 6, 2107).

Going along with teaching technology, Jennifer stressed the importance of teaching students how to communicate in variety of ways and that the classroom environment that a teacher creates can facilitate this type of learning. She shared a resource from another class that she had taken which discussed a variety of effective teaching practices for literacy classrooms, which included having a strong understanding of how people develop their literacies, knowing students and valuing what they bring to the classroom, and engaging students in purposeful literacy practices. One of

Vasquez's (2010) tenets for critical literacy is to use children's cultural knowledge and multimedia practices to make meaning. Jennifer's response showed that she understood that children needed to use multiple sources to find information which would include internet resources. She was connecting the learning from a course she had taken at her community college with what we were reading, discussing, and trying out in our class. Her response indicated that she viewed digital resources as a means for gathering information, but did not reveal anything about her understandings about how children should critically evaluate the information they found in the resources.

In her exit slip following the class where we explored immigration and critical literacy, Olivia described her role as a literacy teacher as "encourage students to engage in literacy that involves them learning outside of the classroom" (Exit Slip, February 6, 2107). To accomplish this, literacy teachers should use a variety texts and include newspapers and websites so that students could "become aware of the major events that are happening in the world we live in." Olivia was starting to recognize the importance of the classroom environment and how, as the teacher, she would need to create a space where students could be involved in literacy that involved critical thinking.

Like Olivia, Lauren also recognized the importance of using real-world texts. Lauren mentioned that she had used *NewsELA* (2018), an online teacher resource that offers a variety of news articles on world events, in some of her work with elementary students. She had used an article from this resource to discuss the recent presidential election. Lauren was already starting to find ways to incorporate world events into her literacy instruction. In her exit slip, Lauren also said she was coming to understand that her role as a literacy teacher was to "have literacy in everything that we do! Reading, writing, math, history, science, social learning, etc." She also

wrote that literacy as literacy teachers “We need to teach students that they can find meaning everywhere and that it’s their job to do so.”

Elizabeth’s take-away from this class was a little different. Like the others, she valued using everyday informational texts and that as a teacher she could use them to encourage to inquire about what is happening in the world. However, in her exit slip, she stated, “The teacher’s role in educating students to be literate citizen, is to teach students to understand their role in society as an educated individual” (Exit Slip, February 6, 2107) as she was the only one of the four who described literacy learning as affording opportunities for students to consider how they could use the literacy skills they learn in the classroom in meaningful ways. Elizabeth said that she would encourage this kind of learning through the way she structured her learning environment which would include selecting a variety of texts that could spark conversations and making sure that her students felt comfortable having those conversations.

All four of the teacher candidates who were the focal participants of this study, were able to articulate why they felt it was important to discuss current social issues and how we could learn to read while we were reading to learn about immigration. They also understood the importance of using a variety of texts, which included informational texts and real-world texts, such as newspapers and photographs and paring these texts with literature. But what I was not seeing in their responses was attention to who was creating the texts, why they were creating them, and how were the texts constructed to reflect the purpose (Vasquez, 2010). It left me wondering if it was because they had not developed this reading skill throughout their schooling or, if they had, they had not yet come to see it as something they should be teaching in their literacy instruction. As I reflected on the class and then prepared for the next week’s class, I wrote:

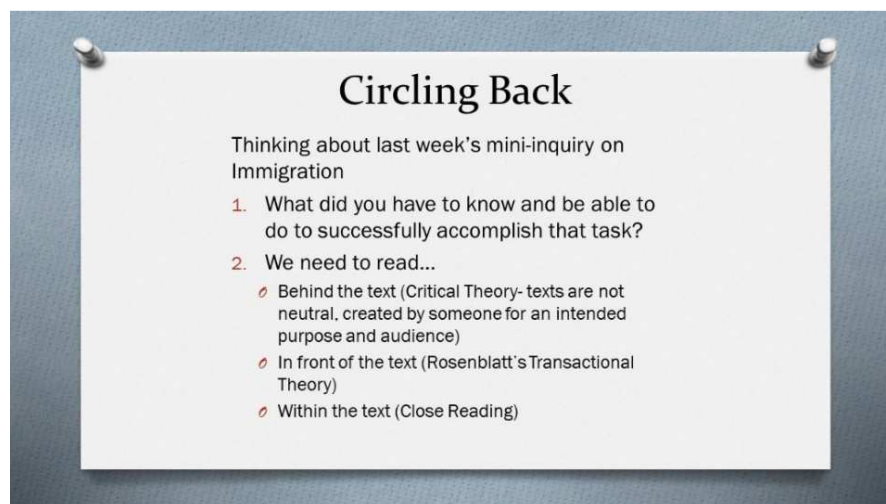
I also wanted to know how aware they were of the political nature of texts (I shared Vasquez’s 10 tenets of critical literacy with them, See ppt [sic]). Some comments I noticed as they were exploring- Huffington Post is a bit liberal. What’s *The Onion*? This group did go to other sources to find out what *The Onion* was about and discovered it was satire. I felt like I needed to explore the ideas of how texts are not neutral a bit more and will do that on February 6, 2017. I will frame it with what Ernest Morrell described as “Reading in front of the text, Behind the text, and Within the Text” (Teaching Journal, January 28, 2017).

A week later, as I was preparing for class, I came across a text that would be quite useful for teaching Morrell’s framework. It was a viral Super Bowl advertisement that drew both praise and criticism from people with a variety of perspectives on immigration and the proposed border wall between the United States and Mexico:

I hope they can identify how this was necessary with the texts they explored last week. Yesterday was Super Bowl Sunday and the ads were highly political. The commercial by Lumber84 sparked a lot of social media response and purportedly “shut down” the company’s website after it aired. The ad is causing some controversy. (Teaching Journal, February 6, 2017)

In class on February 6, we did a quick review of what we learned the previous week about multiple perspectives (Figure 3). I modeled a critical reading of commercial that had aired during the Super Bowl the Sunday before our class. The commercial showed a young girl and her mother travelling through Mexico to America and the difficulties they encountered along the way. When they arrived at the border, there was a giant wall preventing them from crossing the border and the commercial ended with a door in the wall that opened up the mother and daughter walked through. The phrase, “The will to succeed is always welcome here” (Lumber 84, 2017).

We talked about different perspectives and experiences that the viewers might bring to the text, some of the visual elements that were incorporated in the text that make us as readers feel and respond in particular ways, and who Lumber 84 was and why they created the commercial. We had a short discussion the importance of critically reading the texts and why there were so many interpretations and strong feelings expressed in social media. After reflecting on what I observed in the teacher candidates' interactions with text the previous class period, I felt I needed to explicitly teach critical reading skills with the hope that they would take up the strategies and try them out themselves.



*Figure 3. Review of immigration mini-inquiry*

### **Community Connections and Developing Civic Efficacy**

Watts and Flanagan's (2007) civic efficacy framework states that a person's individual or collective efficacy spurs her to move from the component of social analysis to that of social action. An individual's sense of agency, a belief that either individual or collective actions can bring about change, is a moderator for the component of taking action. Throughout the semester, we read about and saw examples of how teachers engaged their students in literacy learning that led to social actions. We also explored children's and young adult texts that had themes of civic

engagement and social action (Appendix G). This was the point in the semester where we explored the roles teachers have in a community and that how as teachers their role could be to develop citizens who can effectively participate in the democracy. In the reading responses they wrote at this time, they described their reactions and tensions as they imagined themselves teaching in the ways described in the readings. Their reactions also gave me insight into the teacher candidates' civic efficacy in that they articulated the ways that their actions as teachers had the potential for making a difference for their students and communities.

The readings for class this particular week included *Defining Community Teacher* (Murrell, 2005) and *Educating the "Good" Citizen: Political Choices and Pedagogical Goals* (Westheimer & Kahne, 2005). I also had them explore *Educating Illinois* and C3 Framework for Social Studies. To prepare for discussion, the teacher candidates completed an advance organizer (Figure 4), a tool used during reading that helps readers organize and summarize complex concepts (Barkley, 2009). My goal was to prompt them to think about their roles as teachers and how classroom practices teach children about citizenship. From their responses, I gained some insight into their developing civic efficacy as teachers, their response to the idea of teaching beyond a set of standards and skills, their thoughts on how literacy instruction can influence the types of citizens students become, and how they see their roles as teachers in the broader community.



### Defining Community Teacher

By Peter Murrell, Jr.

*Epistemology- A theory of knowledge. How do we know what we know? (The idea of Community Teacher is based on the idea- epistemology- that knowledge is socially constructed) Note the "Key Features" on pp. 3-4. Connect some of the ideas we are learning about literacy in class (along with the way we are learning) with these Key Features)*

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards-- These are standards that accomplished practitioners are expected to reach. What does a Community Teacher do in addition to what NBPTS require?

Pay attention to Skills and Dispositions expected of a Community Teacher. What do you need to do to develop these?

- build community in multiracial settings
- recognize the institutional racism that is prevalent in our society
- understanding human development which includes understanding of racial identity development
- put into practice Culturally Relevant Teaching practices

**What Kind of Citizen (Westheimer & Kahne)** After reading this article, what kind of citizenship education do you see in the schools you are in or did you experience yourself.

**Connections-** Think back to the TED Talk and *Black Ants and Buddhists* we discussed at the beginning of the semester. How do you see the ideas discussed in this week's readings playing out in those classrooms? What kinds of citizens are those students learning to be?

How do the readings change your thinking about what you believed you are expected to do as a teacher?

### Figure 4. Advance organizer

In class, we had a discussion on community teachers, citizenship, and civic engagement using the selected children's texts as a springboard for our discussion. Their responses on the advance organizer revealed how they were connecting ideas from the different readings. As I read their responses, I noted some of the ideas and thoughts that I found particularly interesting and brought those ideas into the class discussion. I also shared a list of *Core Civic Competencies* (Musil, 2009) with them and asked them to consider how these were or were not taught in schools. They worked in groups of three or four, exploring a stack of texts I had brought in. To guide their discussion, I had them describe the types of citizenship they saw in each text and to consider how they might use these texts to teach the *Core Civic Competencies*. I also encouraged them to think about whose story was being told in the texts and which ones were challenging the status quo. What follows is a description of what the teacher candidates learned from the readings and class discussion and how these were shaping their understandings of their roles as civic agents.

## **Elizabeth, Civic Efficacy through Coursework**

Elizabeth wrote about how the readings and class activities that week were expanding her view of what being a literacy teacher entailed. The types of citizenship teaching she had seen in her clinical experiences were mostly personally responsible and participatory citizenship. She shared an example from a recent classroom observation:

I saw some really great citizenship education in the fifth grade classroom that I was in this semester for my [Education Foundations] course. The teacher had begun a project with them in November and worked until February where the fifth graders began by doing a random act of kindness in the school. The teacher modeled this by bringing treats for the students to distribute to the other teachers in the building. They then decided what ways they wanted to raise money for the community, they brainstormed ways that were possible for a school of low socio-economic status (80% low income) to raise money and canned goods for the local food pantry.... This opportunity for citizenship education left the students with a great experience in which they can better understand how to be a personally responsible and participatory citizen. (Advance Organizer, March 19, 2017)

She was starting to see the difference between what was happening in the schools and the type of learning we were discussing in class. In her response to the readings, she connected what she had observed in her clinical setting with the reading and was able to accurately name the types of citizens the students in that classroom were being encouraged to be. The readings and her observations showed her a part of teaching that she had not considered as she entered her teacher education program.

Elizabeth thought that the type of literacy teaching we were discussing in class would require a different mindset about teaching. As a teacher candidate, she felt she was just

beginning to understand the importance of her role as a teacher, “It reminded me that there is so much more to learn about being a teacher and how we wear so many hats.” She recognized that she could impact change and was starting to see that a teacher’s role could be, “to be involved in the community to improve it, but especially how to bring about change by doing something.” And through this, Elizabeth was starting to see that she did have some agency as a teacher “to be involved in the community to improve it, but especially how to bring about change by doing something” (Advance Organizer, March 19, 2017).

### **Olivia, Classroom Conversations and Connecting with the Community**

Olivia focused on the importance of conversation in the process of teaching citizenship. Like Elizabeth, she shared an example from her clinical observations where students participated in civic learning:

...the elections were what everybody was talking about on the news and any place you could imagine. I observed a 1st grade classroom in [Local School] and during my CT’s [Cooperating Teacher] social studies lesson she decided to talk about the election with her students. As young as they are, they still actively participated in this civic discussion. My CT talked to her student about what they thought it meant to be a leader, and what are some qualities they think a leader would possess. It was a great way for these young students to express their views. She made it comprehensible to the level of their understanding which I really found to be quite admirable. (Advance Organizer, March 19, 2017)

Olivia was recognizing possibilities for incorporating civic engagement with young children and that they were capable of talking about concepts such as the qualities of a leader through world events. This understanding grew from reading some foundational materials for class, connecting

the reading with her observation of a mentor teacher structuring a conversation on democratic practices with young children, and then synthesizing the ideas in a written reflection:

Yes, teaching involves teaching the standards and according to CCSS, making sure students are ready for college, but I believe there is SO much more to that. This article in particular especially gave me a new outlook on the community responsibilities a teacher could have. (Advance Organizer, March 19, 2017)

She could imagine herself partnering with the community and teaching literacy by bringing issues into the classroom and recognized the value of doing so:

I really value the thinking behind how a community teacher does more than just the instructional aspect of teaching but how they are responsible to bring about unity within parents, colleagues, students, and other parts of the community. I also really admire the concept of bringing about social justice issues in the classroom. As a teacher, I feel that it is important to have discussions about our democratic society so students can grow as active citizens. (Advance Organizer, March 19, 2017).

Through the readings she was assigned at this point in the semester, Olivia started to consider a different way of teaching literacy. She saw the importance of discussing social justice issues, even with young children, however, this new awareness seemed to spark in her a heightened responsibility, and she felt it was her job to solve some of the problems the community faced.

### **Lauren, Modeling and Classroom Conversations**

Lauren related her own school experiences to the ideas she encountered in the readings and in class discussion:

I feel that I have come across teachers that are accomplished practitioners in their field, but not community teachers. They were all great teachers that knew their curriculum and

how to teach, but as far as going above and beyond and taking on topics that students care about head on, I never saw any of that. (Advance Organizer, March 19, 2017)

Lauren's understandings of literacy teaching were starting to change as she was seeing her role differently:

I've always known being a teacher is more, or should be more, than just teaching curriculum. It's about teaching students how to be little productive humans in society. Showing them kindness, empathy, and respect so they can learn to do the same to others. Teaching is so much more than just teaching content and that's why I wanted to be a teacher! You aren't just their teacher, role-model, and cheerleader in your classroom, but in all aspects of their life. That's what being a community teacher is all about. (Advance Organizer, March 19, 2017)

I intentionally incorporated these readings in the course in order to uncover assumptions that the teacher candidates had about their roles as teachers (Riley & Crawford-Garrett, 2015; Robertson & Hughes 2012), prompting them to consider literacy instruction beyond the limited purposes of some of the written curriculum. As teacher candidates start learning about teaching, their assumptions about what teaching entails is often based on their own experiences in school (Lowenstein, 2009). Because Lauren had never seen teachers teaching in the ways that were described in the readings, she had not considered that her job might require her to do more than just teach skills. Her response showed some excitement about the possibilities of teaching more than just content and that facilitating classroom learning through conversations around the topics of importance to students was something she was looking forward to and saw her job would be to encourage her students to use the skills they were learning through her modeling to make changes in their worlds. The piece she had yet to take on was that she could not just encourage

students to become involved, she was in a position to encourage them to use literacy to critically examine what was going on and use their literacies beyond just helping but to work against the unjust social conditions.

### **Eve, Developing Civic Efficacy in Students**

Eve's response to these readings varied in some ways from the other teacher candidates. Hatch (2002) describes this as a variation sample, one that is unique from the others. Eve differed from the other teacher candidates in that the ideas of a community teacher were not new to her. In another course, Social Foundations of Education, she had been reading and discussing how teachers play a significant role in teaching about racism and oppression. She wrote:

We have been talking a lot about the role of teachers and their abilities to celebrate and break through racial oppression in schools and in communities. We have been learning that teachers do have this ability to influence, but it becomes a problem when we believe only one type of teacher can accomplish this; the nice "white lady" who has the ability to shape and save their students. (Advance Organizer, March 19, 2017)

Eve was the only one who recognized and critiqued the idea of the teacher as a "white savior." In another course she had taken, she had the opportunity to read about, discuss and problematize the teachers' perceptions of their roles. Eve was starting to recognize that a teacher's role was not to "save" students but help them develop agency. She shared an example of how a classroom teacher she had observed was helping her students develop a sense of agency to take action that could bring about change:

In my [Local City] placement, my CT did something every morning that I thought was really inspiring and that encouraged community. She passed out little cards to each table of students, and they knew if the card was placed on their desk they needed to stand up

after the pledge. Before she would start the day, she would ask the students to read their cards aloud. The cards said things such as, ‘I have the ability to make a difference today,’ ‘I have a powerful voice and I will use it today,’ ‘I have amazing ideas that are worth exploring and so do my friends’’. I thought this was powerful. (Advance Organizer, March 19, 2017)

Through our discussion and in their responses to the reading, I was beginning to see how the teacher candidates were continuing to develop their ideas of how teachers teach citizenship skills. They described differences from the type of teaching they had experienced in their own schooling or in their clinical observations and the type of teaching described in the readings. Westheimer and Kahne’s work was useful to them in that it gave them a framework to describe the types of citizenship education they were seeing in schools or that they had experienced themselves. Consistent with prior research, they were seeing their responsibility to teach active citizenship and that they saw themselves as civic educators (Peterson, Durrant, & Bentley, 2015), mostly described as being helpful and fixing problems in their communities by teaching and encouraging their students to be participatory citizens but not yet articulating a need to challenge the unjust systems that are at the root of the problems they hoped to fix.

### **Civic Efficacy and Critical Literacy in Academic Conversations**

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire discussed the concept of dialogue and how people to learn from each other through their conversations (Freire, 2006). In this work, he described a “banking concept of education” (Freire, 2006, p. 72) where teachers simply deposit information into the student. The problem with this approach to teaching is that it does not allow the learners to contribute to their learning in a manner that represents their own view of the world. By incorporating dialogue into classroom learning, teachers create opportunities for students to talk

about their view of the world, connect their views with the views of others and the concepts being taught in the classroom.

Leading an academic conversation was the first opportunity the teacher candidates had during the semester to put into practice the beliefs they were developing about their roles as literacy teachers and apply critical literacy in their own teaching. One of our course readings was from *Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk that Fosters Critical Conversations and Content Understandings* by Zwiers and Crawford (2011). Zwiers and Crawford described academic conversations as opportunities for students to use their literacy skills in collaboration with others to understand a variety of issues or to explore questions about topics of interest and importance to them. They described the topics for discussion to be “school topics” (2011, p. 1) that could range from discussing themes in literature to debates about current events in science and the social studies. While I felt this was a start, I was also interested in how we could incorporate civic engagement and civic efficacy.

I had modeled several academic conversations in the beginning of the semester so the teacher candidates could experience the various ways teachers could facilitate a discussion. I used current world events and structured the academic conversations on immigration issues, President’s Day, The Flint Water Crisis, and Civil Rights. I also introduced the teacher candidates to Wiggins and McTighe’s *Understanding by Design* (2005) and the notions of Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions. I was very purposeful with my text selections so that the texts I chose would challenge them to interrogate the texts and notice the ways in which texts were constructed to position readers in particular ways (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Vasquez, 2010). We did some shared readings, in which I did a think-aloud that led to use reading together, practicing what Ernest Morrell described as “Reading *in front of* the text,



*behind* the text, and *within* the text” (Morrell, 2017). To read *in front of* the text is to recognize who you are as a reader and what you bring to the reading event; what is your experience with the topic and how has it shaped your stance? To read *behind* the text is to understand what the author’s position and purpose is in writing the piece; what are they trying to accomplish? To read *within* the text requires the reader to closely read to notice word choice and rhetorical moves made by the author that help her accomplish her purpose; how does the way the piece is written position the reader and how does the language use accomplish the author’s purpose? When we read texts as a part of our conversations in class, I continually reminded them to think about this as they were reading and to bring those understandings into the conversation.

As we began the second half of the semester, the teacher candidates worked in pairs to plan and facilitate an academic conversation. We started the planning process with a list of topics that they would be interested in exploring or topics that were typically taught in school. They compiled a list that included science-related topics such as natural disasters, habitats and biomes, the solar system, and renewable energy. They also named historical eras such as the Roaring 20s, 1960’s Civil Rights, and World War II. They each signed up for a topic in which they were interested and then began the planning process. I posted the guidelines on our class wiki and shared ideas for different discussion strategies. They also had read Zwiers and Crawford’s chapter, *Getting Started with Academic Conversations* (2011), which described other ideas for how to plan for and prepare students to participate. I created a template for them to use so they would include their Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions, a rationale for why they wanted to have this academic conversation, which discussion strategy they would use and why, and the materials they would use to engage the participants (Appendix H). What follows are descriptions and an analyses of the academic conversations that the teacher candidates planned

and implemented and how these conversations revealed the teacher candidates' understandings of critical literacy and their civic efficacy.

### **The Roaring 20s**

Olivia and Lauren were interested in the 1920s era chose that topic for their academic conversation. In the beginning of the planning process, we spent some time in class talking about why the 1920s would be an important era to discuss. As they worked together in their groups, I moved from group to group to check in and see what they were thinking. With all of the groups, I continually asked them to consider *so what?* as they were planning. In my conversation with Lauren and Olivia, they brought up the Flappers and how the 1920s changed the way women dressed. I encouraged them to explore why women's clothing had changed as they continued planning their academic conversation. I nudged them to consider the Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions the class would explore and to frame the discussion that would focus on the significance of the era. After they had a chance to start planning in class with my guidance, they were then responsible for planning outside of class time.

The week before their scheduled academic conversation, I received an email from Lauren:

My group and I worked on the academic conversation this evening. We are feeling really good about everything except for finding books to use to go along with our topic and plan. We were wondering if we could meet with you to get some help [sic]? (Personal correspondence, April 4, 2017)

I invited them to my office so we could discuss the roadblock they had encountered in their planning.

In our meeting, I asked them again, “What was significant about the Roaring 20s?” They told me the focus of their discussion was going to be on change for women. They wanted to look at the 20s and compare it to now. They decided to focus on three areas: women’s rights and protest, education, and culture. They still were wondering if I knew of any books that would be appropriate for launching this discussion. I responded, “Do you have to use books?” Lauren mentioned a sign that had been making its way around social media: a woman holding a sign that said, “Why do I have to keep protesting this shit?” and they wondered if they could use it. I told her if she wanted to use it with this audience, their fellow teacher candidates, it would be fine (Teaching Journal, April 7, 2017). They decided that the texts they would use would include photos and advertisements. I suggested that they try to find some photographs of women at our university during the 1920s. They made an appointment to meet with education librarian at the university library to see if they what primary sources collections were available.

Lauren and Olivia’s academic conversation focused on comparing women’s lives in 1920s to the lives of present day. In the rationale for the conversation, they wrote:

It is important to see how things have or haven’t changed, especially in this politically heated time for women. A guiding quote for thought for our academic conversation is, ‘Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.’ –anonymous. (Academic Conversation Plan, April 10, 2017)

To start the conversation, they shared a photo from a 1920s protest and one from a recent Woman’s March (Figure 5). They provided a wide array of photographs, advertisements, and websites depicting women’s clothing, women at our university, make-up and hair, and women protesting (Table 2). In their plan, they did not articulate Enduring Understandings in the same way I had modeled for them in the academic conversations I had planned and led at the

beginning of the semester. Their Enduring Understanding was implied when they wrote that their *Big Idea* for the lesson was to compare the past with the present to determine how women had progressed. Their Essential Questions were more specific to the lesson, rather than broad questions that could be explored through any historical era (Figure 6).

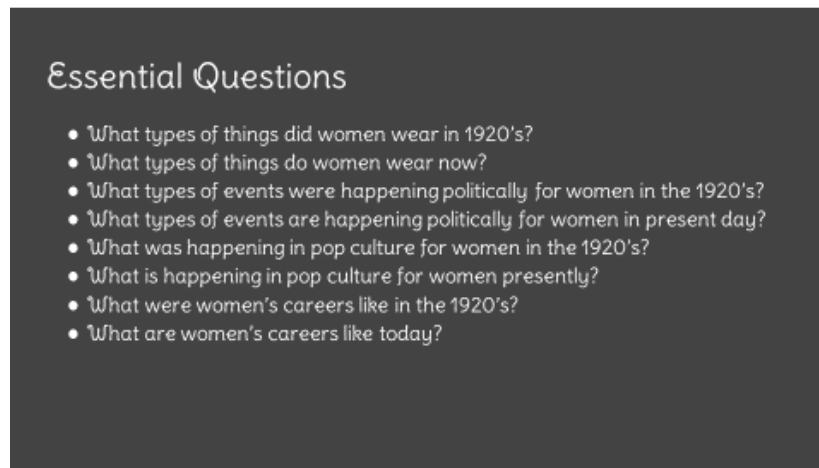
Table 2

*Olivia and Lauren's 1920s Academic Conversation Texts*

Text	Creator	Format
Maybelline – For Your Eyes	Maybelline Co.	Advertisement
Everybody Needs Soup	Campbell Soup Co	Advertisement
Doctors Smoking	American Tobacco Co.	Advertisement
Fat Men Messaging Belt	The Weil Co.	Advertisement
Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription- The Sparkle of Perfect Health	Dr. V.M. Pierce	Advertisement
Frank Westhoff teaching music, Illinois State Normal University, 1920.	Dr. Jo Ann Rayfield Archives	Photograph
Student Council, Illinois State Normal University, 1924-1925.	Dr. Jo Ann Rayfield Archives	Photograph
Student room, Illinois State Normal University, early 20 <sup>th</sup> century.	Dr. Jo Ann Rayfield Archives	Photograph
The first picket line - College day in the picket line	Library of Congress	Photograph
League of Women Voters' Democratic Convention 1920	League of Women Voters Media Library	Photograph
Suffrage Speech Society 1915	Paul Thompson/Getty Images	Photograph



*Figure 5.* Lauren and Olivia’s academic conversation introduction PowerPoint slide (Photo Credits: Library of Congress, 1920; Hartem, 2012)



*Figure 6.* Lauren and Olivia’s essential questions

Following the implementation of their academic conversation, they reflected on what they learned. In their reflections, both Lauren and Olivia were pleased with how their peers engaged in the academic conversation. They credited the success to their selection of texts.

Lauren wrote:

I was very excited going into leading the discussion because I felt we had some great points and resources for everyone to delve into and explore. We had worked really hard

finding the perfect primary sources so I was excited to see them in use. (Academic Conversation Reflection, April 17, 2017)

Lauren also attributed the success of this conversation to their decision to use a “then vs. now theme” and capturing the comparison in a Venn diagram: “I feel this helped the positive outcome we had during our conversation because people were interested in our topic, as it is a hot button issue currently, and the primary sources were very engaging.”

This assignment gave me the opportunity to see how the teacher candidates would take ideas of critical literacy and integrate them into a lesson. Lauren and Olivia, with some guidance from me, integrated primary sources into their conversation plan, which showed their willingness to seek out and think about how to pair a variety of texts. While the class discussed the ways women’s lives were the same and how they had changed over the past 90 years, there was no critical discussion about why women had to work against some of the issues we learned about in the texts and why women were still protesting these issues. This conversation also didn’t include discussion about what action we could take to change these situations. Both of these are vital components of critical literacy that afford students the opportunity to use literacy in transformative ways.

### **The Civil Rights Movement**

Jennifer also chose to lead an academic conversation on a historical time-period and chose the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Her intention with the conversation she planned was to “make it known that people are still fighting for Civil Rights today.” The Enduring Understandings that framed her discussion focused on change. They were broad and could be applied to any era. Her essential questions that she wanted the class to explore were specific to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s (Figure 7).

To get the class thinking about civil rights, Jennifer asked them to brainstorm a list of words that came to mind when thinking about “civil rights.” After discussing the words that the class generated, they watched a video from a web resource called *Crash Course* (Green, 2013) and she led a short discussion about what the group knew about the Civil Rights Movement. The heart of the academic conversation was to use photographs that Jennifer had selected to discuss the time-period; describe what they saw taking place in the photo and to determine what the image told them “about what was taking place at the time the picture was taken.”

**Essential Questions**

- What was the overall impact of the Civil Rights Movement?
- What were the goals of the Civil Rights Movement?
- How did the Civil Rights Movement affect the United States?
- What were some strategies that were used in the movement?
- Has the Civil Rights Movement ended?

**Enduring Understandings**

- Everyone reacts differently to change
- We are still affected by the struggle for equality today
- People can bring change through actions
- Denying human rights leads to oppression
- Changing the law does not always change people's attitudes
- The Civil Rights Movement furthered the promises of equality for all citizens

Figure 7. Jennifer’s academic conversation enduring understandings and essential questions

In her reflection of the academic conversation, Jennifer explained how she determined which photos she wanted to use in the lesson, “I think pictures can tell a story and these pictures were pictures that normally people don't see when they research the Civil Rights Movement” (Academic Conversation Reflection, April 26, 2017; Interview, June 7, 2017). In the many times

she had learned about civil rights, she felt she had seen the same photos repeatedly. Of the five photos used in this conversation, one depicted a march led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the other four showed white reactions to civil rights protests. The photographs came from Scholastic online teacher resources and *Share America* (Hutchins, 2008), a web document published by the U.S. Department of State (Table 3). The academic conversation centered mostly on the photographs and what was happening during that era. The concluding activity involved a discussion on how the vocabulary words they generated in the beginning of the lesson related to what they learned from analyzing the photographs and to draw conclusions about the goals and strategies the activists used during the Civil Rights Movement.

Table 3

*Jennifer's Civil Rights Academic Conversation Texts*

Text Title	Author	Text Format
<i>The Civil Rights Movement</i>	Michael Hutchison	Online Pdf, Photographs
<i>The Civil Rights Movement</i>	Henry Drewry	Scholastic News Article
<i>Civil Rights and the 1950s: Crash Course US History #39</i>	John Green	Crash Course Video
<i>Children in the Civil Rights Movement: Facing racism, finding courage</i>	Children's Museum of Indianapolis	Photographs

**Biomes and Habitats**

Elizabeth worked with another teacher candidate, Eve, to plan and lead an academic conversation on biomes. They stated that the goal for the conversation was for the participants to



“make connections between biomes and habitats and the importance of understanding the world around them and how it is related to them” and “be able to hold a discussion regarding the qualities and characteristics of different biomes within the world” (Academic Conversation Plan, April 2, 3017). As with the academic conversations previously described, Eve and Elizabeth’s Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions were specific to their topic and were not the broad and overarching ones that could be explored in a variety of contexts (Figure 8). In addition to the children’s fiction and non-fiction texts, Elizabeth and Eve created dioramas of each of the biomes they would explore, aquatic, forest, desert, grassland, and arctic tundra.

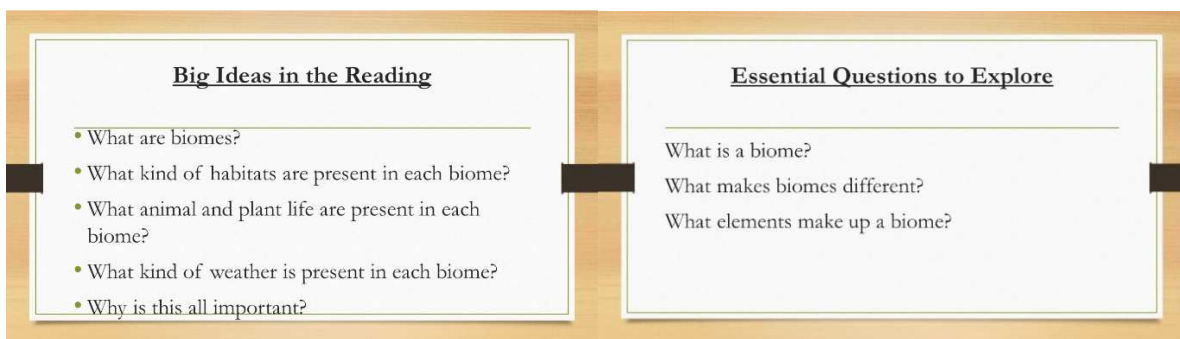


Figure 8. Elizabeth and Eve’s essential questions and enduring understandings

They set the conversation up as an inquiry lesson. They started with a discussion about what the participants already knew about biomes and then generated questions about what they wanted to know about the biome each small group would be discussing. The groups were each to become “experts” on their biomes by researching the various questions they had generated and then were to report what they had learned to the whole group. Elizabeth and Eve provided a variety of texts to use for research (Table 4). The discussion concluded with each group sharing

what they had learned and referring to their lists from the introductory activity to confirm what they already knew and articulate the new learning that resulted from their inquiry.

Table 4

*Elizabeth and Eve's Biomes and Habitats Academic Conversation Texts*

Text Title	Author	Format
<i>Grassland</i>	Leon Gray	Nonfiction Photographs
<i>Mama, do you love me?</i>	Barbara Joosse	Fiction, Picture book
<i>Cactus soup</i>	Eric Kimmel	Folktale, Picture book
<i>Eyewitness: Ocean</i>	M. MacQuitty	Nonfiction, Photographs
<i>Fire in the forest: a cycle of growth and renewal.</i>	Laurence Pringle	Nonfiction, Landscape Paintings
<i>El Oceano</i>	Susan Ring	Nonfiction, Bilingual, photographs
<i>Desert habitats.</i>	Arnold Ringstad	Nonfiction, Photographs
<i>Oceans</i>	Sandra Rivera	Nonfiction, Photographs
<i>Earth matters: An Encyclopedia of Ecology</i>	Rothschild, D	Nonfiction, Photographs
<i>24 hours on the tundra: A day in an ecosystem</i>	Virginia Schomp	Nonfiction, Photographs
<i>Looking closely across the desert</i>	Serafini, F	Nonfiction, Photographs
<i>Grasslands.</i>	Stille, D. R.	Nonfiction, Photographs
<i>Hiding in grasslands: Creature Camouflage</i>	Underwood, D.	Nonfiction, Photographs

In the written plan, they wrote that they hoped that this academic conversation would lead to an understanding of the importance of knowing about the world around them, which did not happen during the actual implementation. In her reflection, Eve discussed the importance of inquiry: “it is important to always encourage the ongoing journey of learning and how even though we may know a lot about a topic, there is always something new to inquire about” (Eve’s Academic Conversation Plan Reflection, April 3, 2017). Then later in her reflection, she also came to the realization that what they had left out of this conversation was an opportunity to discuss why learning about biomes was important. “We also would have a good path to go down

to cover endangered species, and what the role humans have in protecting these habitats and the animals or plants within them” (Academic Conversation Reflection, April 3, 2017). Both Eve and Elizabeth described their use of multimodal texts as contributing to the participants successfully discussing biomes and that they had achieved part of their expected outcomes of the participants using the texts to answer their questions about biomes and sharing their knowledge with others.

Aspects of critical literacy and civic engagement that Eve and Elizabeth incorporated in their plan included non-fiction and children’s literature (Vasquez, 2010) that they provided for the class to use and setting the conversation up as an inquiry-type lesson (Serriere, 2014). As with the other conversations, Eve and Elizabeth did not incorporate discussion on why we should be inquiring about habitats and biomes and missed the opportunity to consider how we could use the information we learned through the conversation to create change. They did, however, recognize that they had missed that opportunity when they reflected on the lesson, so they did realize that was something that would have made the conversation more transformative for the learners.

## **World War II**

Maria and Sarah chose World War II for their academic conversation. Such a broad topic could take a number of directions. This academic conversation was different from the other three described in that Maria and Sarah framed their discussion around Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions that followed the criteria developed by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). Their plan for their conversation was to use the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II to launch a conversation about racial profiling. In their rationale, they wrote:

The discussion of racial profiling has been widespread recently. From cops and African Americans to Mexicans and the wall. Talking about different races and cultures is always prevalent in society. Since the beginning of time racial profiling has been an issue and it is clear that it most likely always will be. We think it is important for students to understand that just because an event happens we cannot judge a whole culture upon that. Americans do things every day that we do not agree with, as well as those from other cultures. Events like 9-11 and Pearl Harbor were acts done by groups of certain cultures but not done by the whole culture. By teaching this to children we can help to change the minds of the future. (Academic Conversation Plan, April 10, 2017)

They started their conversation with a poem titled *My Plea* by Mary Matsuzawa and asked participants to discuss the feelings and hope expressed by the poet. They followed the poem with a read-aloud of *Baseball Saved Us* by Ken Mochizuki. Maria and Sarah used a discussion strategy called *conver-stations* (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011), where participants talk in a small group and then some of the members rotate out of the group and join another group and share what they discussed previously and then build on that. Sarah and Maria encouraged the participants to think about the story, the poem, and what they knew of current events and to answer the Essential Questions that they posed at the beginning of the lesson (Figure 9). After the groups had time to discuss, everyone came back together to wrap up the conversation as a whole group. Maria and Sarah had each group share what they had learned and then led a discussion about how events shape judgements about race.

## Essential Questions

1. How do the beliefs and values of a diverse culture affect individuals and society?
2. How do events affect the way we judge other cultures?
3. How are these individuals identified as a certain race?
4. Think of different times in history where races have been discriminated against. Are any of them recent?

*Figure 9.* Maria and Sarah’s essential questions

In their reflections after the academic conversation, both Maria and Sarah commented that they felt they should have reviewed the topic of the Japanese Internment with the participants because it was a topic they felt their peers seemed unfamiliar with. However, they noticed that after exploring the texts, the conversation really focused on exploring the essential question of, “How do events affect the way we judge other cultures?” The participants were making connections to the present-day events and trying to understand how and why people respond to those events in particular ways and the consequences of such responses. In here reflection, Maria wrote, “It was easy for the students to see the connection after looking at the poem, picture, and finally reading the book. They were able to recall recent things that have happened that went along with the discussion” (Academic Conversation Reflection, April 11, 2107).

What was noticeably different in this academic conversation was how Sarah and Maria used the discussion of the Japanese Internment to shine light on a problem that was occurring today and then encouraged the class to make decisions about what they should do with the information. They were the only ones of the conversations I described to do this. Their selection

of critical texts, ones that offered a counter narrative to a historical event (Comber, 2001), helped frame the conversation from the perspective of an underrepresented group (Vasquez, 2017).

These four academic conversations are a sampling of the various conversations that the teacher candidates planned and implemented throughout the semester. Through this assignment, the teacher candidates had the opportunity make decisions about why it was important to have such conversations around the topics they chose and how the texts could be a launching point for the conversations. I supported their efforts through modeling various academic conversations, providing examples of enduring understandings and essential questions, and when asked, offering consultation during their planning. Analysis of their final products revealed how they were starting to incorporate aspects of critical literacy and their civic efficacy. They were starting to understand the importance of connecting classroom learning to the social and political issues that were affecting them. They also took time to select multimodal texts that, in some case, offered multiple perspectives on the issues they were exploring. They were starting to explore big ideas, Enduring Understandings, through inquiry and conversation and that, as teachers, they

### **Reading the World: Taking the University Classroom to the Outside World**

Although teacher candidates are more likely to develop civic efficacy from outside of school experiences rather than academic training (Torney-Purta, et al., 2005), providing opportunities for them to interact with others in the community would be a promising practice toward better preparing teacher candidates be successful civic educators. As such, I purposefully designed this content area literacy course to have a community connection component.

### **Community as Text**

“Reading the world always precedes reading the word and reading the word implies continually reading the world” (Freire, 1983, p. 10). Freire’s notion of “reading the world”

described the act of reading as not only decoding words but an act where the reader continually connects the written word with what she knows about the world. In her work on service learning, Barbara Jacoby discussed how teachers can use community as a “text” (Jacoby, 2015, p, 81). As such, students can go into the community and use an experience to gather information, in a sense “read” that community then take what they have learned and “analyze and integrate” (Jacoby, 2015, p. 82) and apply it to the content of the course. For our final project, the teacher candidates learned about the community through working in a community garden and thinking about how what they read in this particular text would inform their decision-making about the type of learning that could happen in a garden. Going into the community and working in the garden would acquaint them with the practice of gardening, the people involved, and the culture of the neighborhood which the garden served.

The Community Garden grew out of a project undertaken by a local high school student who wanted to create community garden and food forest. I first learned about the Community Garden the previous fall when volunteering at a local pop-up food stand that distributed gleaned, unsold produce from the local farmers’ market to the people living in a part of the city which had been designated a U.S. Department of Agriculture food desert (USDA, 2017). A volunteer had brought some produce from the Community Garden to distribute at the stand. Through our conversation, she told me about the garden and their interest in joining the growing local movement that was working for access to fresh fruits and vegetables to the residents of this part of the city. They also expressed interest in partnering with students and faculty for service learning projects. I told them I would keep them in mind for the courses I was teaching, and she contacted me the following semester to explore possibilities.

When I learned I would be teaching a Content Area Literacy, I thought it the course and be appropriate for the civic engagement component I wanted to incorporate. A community garden would be a wonderful text for the teacher candidates to explore and consider the possibilities for disciplinary literacy learning. To introduce the class to the Community Garden, two community members came to class to talk about the garden, how it came to be, and who it served. They told us how they secured some unused city-owned land located next to a low-income housing and the local Boys and Girls Club and turned it a community garden and food forest. Students and faculty from two area universities along with the local Master Gardeners group worked together to develop this permaculture system and planted a variety of low-maintenance, food producing plants that work together to grow.

We learned how this would be the second year for the garden and that children in after school programs at the YWCA and the Boys and Girls Club had been coming to the garden once a week for outdoor learning activities led by volunteers. This would continue with the summer programs at the Boys and Girls Club, and the volunteers expressed some concern about not really knowing what to do with the children during the summer program, as they did not have much experience in planning learning for children. There we were, a group of teacher candidates who were learning how to develop disciplinary learning activities and would be able to provide a collection of learning plans for the Community Garden program. And, thus, a partnership was formed.

The Community Garden was having a “Garden Party” to help prepare the garden for the planting/growing season. They posted the event on their Facebook page and asked people to volunteer. There were three work days scheduled the last weekend in March and Lauren, Elizabeth, Olivia, and Jennifer joined a large group of community volunteers and members of



several university student organizations to prepare the garden for spring growing. It was one of the first warm, sunny spring days we had seen in a while, 70°F with a light wind blowing. When I got to the garden, a group was laying cardboard and mulch on around the berry bushes on the east edge of the garden. The bed was spanned about 30 feet and there were about six members of another university student organization working with four community volunteers to lay the cardboard and mulch. I also joined them to help with this project. The teacher candidate volunteers were across the field working on 15-foot long, raised mound beds. The job entailed laying cardboard, covering it with straw, and then raking the compost dirt that a small end loader dumped on the top. Different groups or individuals used these raised mound beds for their own planting. The Boys and Girls Club would have some of the beds so the children could help grow food used in the meals provided by the club and shared with the people in the surrounding neighborhood. A home for women transitioning from the Department of Corrections back into the community would get some of the beds and the rest were available for community members at no charge.

As we worked, we talked about the wonder and icky-ness of earthworms, pollinators and pollinator plant beds. We wondered about the weeds we were pulling, which led to a conversation about Katniss and Primrose Everdeen in the *Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) and how much those two characters knew about plants and could use them as food and medicine. We learned about *hugelkulturs*, raised beds made with old tree branches and covered with dirt and compost that provided natural fertilizers and irrigation in the garden. And the teacher candidates shared their experiences, or lack of experiences, with gardens and growing food.

## Learning in the Garden

Following the experience in the garden, the teacher candidates researched and developed disciplinary literacy activities that would be a part of the local Boys and Girls Club's summer garden curriculum. I designed this course assignment to give them the opportunity to apply what they were learning in course. The assignment required them to design learning activities that reflected the interests and needs of the children in the community. In addition to developing the learning activities, they assembled a kit of texts and materials that we gave to Community Garden Volunteers to use with the children visiting the garden. We received funds for the kit through a Next Generation Science Standards grant from the Regional Office of Education. The kit included a multigenre text set, clipboards, rulers, magnifying glasses, and other tools for exploring and learning in the garden (Figure 10). In a written reflection, the teacher candidates articulated what they had learned through interacting with the community and how that shaped their understandings of critical literacy and civic engagement.



Figure 10. Materials in the kit for Community Garden's summer program

The guidelines for the final reflection prompted the teacher candidates to think about their decision-making as they began the task of exploring outdoor learning, gardening, garden ecosystems, nutrition, and plant and animal science. They articulated what they had done, as educators to learn about the community and why they believed the type of learning they were designing important.

In the final reflections, the teacher candidates' civic efficacies showed in the way they imagined their future actions in the classroom that would spark civic habits (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). I asked them to think beyond this course and discuss what they had learned about the communities in which they might teach and how they were starting to view their roles as a teachers. I was interested in knowing how their beliefs and understandings had changed and what key ideas and moments played a part in the way they were understanding their roles as a literacy teacher.

### **Lauren's Final Reflection**

Lauren believed that one aspect of her teacher role was "making a difference." In describing her participation in the final project she wrote, "I felt a sense of pride in knowing that I was helping make a difference in the community." This project introduced her to the existence of food deserts which made her more aware of the problem of food insecurity. She also said that the learning in this class helped shape the way she viewed her role as a teacher:

As we witnessed in *Black Ant and Buddhism*, taking what students each bring into the classroom and teaching them how to learn about each other and be respectful of each other despite differences, is such a large aspect of what we should be teaching in the classroom. It won't just be content that we teach our students, just like in *Back Ant and*

*Buddhist*, the teacher teaches her children about different people's cultures and religions and how to be respectful of their differences. (Cowhey, 2008)

Later in the reflection, she added:

As teachers, we will see lots of problems that will be brought into the classroom that will be affecting our students directly. From participating in this project, I realize that it will be our job to try and help fix those problems, and that anything is possible if you put your mind to it and find a supportive group to back you in doing so. (Lauren's Final Reflection, May 6, 2017)

In addition to seeing herself as one responsible for "fixing" problems that arise in the community, she imagined that she would do the work with the support of community partners. She also learned this semester that, as a teacher, she can connect with community partners which will enrich and support the work she does in her classroom.

Lauren's developing civic efficacy was also evident in her final reflection paper. She believed that she could make a difference through her work and that she was responsible for taking action when the opportunity presented itself:

It is our responsibility to teach life lessons such as civic engagement to our students and how that helps themselves and others around them. As teachers, we will see lots of problems that will be brought into the classroom that will be affecting our students directly.

One way she thought she could accomplish this would be to:

...share your passions for making the community a better place, it will build a stronger relationship and bond with your students, and also teach them to be helpful, active, and caring citizens. Showing interest in the things that may be affecting your students'

personally, shows them you truly care about their whole well being [sic]. (Lauren's Final Reflection, May 6, 2017)

In this statement, Lauren continued to use language that indicated the importance of fixing problems and the idea that through modeling this for her students they, in turn, would work to improve the world around them. Similar to Olivia, in the first part of Lauren's statement she states that she sees her job as helping students address the issues that are affecting them, in what she refers to as "life lessons." The "life lessons" she mentioned as being important would help her students become "helpful, active, and caring," could be described as personally responsible or participatory (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) and not justice-oriented. In her statements, you can also read some shades of deficit thinking about communities and what children experience in their communities are considered to be "problems" therefore part of her job as a teacher would entail making the world a better place.

People develop civic efficacy through observing others and through personal experiences (Bandura, 1982; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Lauren described how her experiences in her university courses, combined with opportunities to engage in community projects through the groups she had joined in high school and college had offered her opportunities to develop ideas about her teacher role:

In high school, I was very, very involved in Key Club which is a like the high school version of Kiwanis. I was on the board since I was a freshman. I was just obsessed with helping the community and being in charge of things. (Lauren's Final Reflection, May 6, 2017)

This statement was another example how Lauren sees herself as participatory and personally responsible and, as a teacher, she still sees her role as helping and one way to do that is to be “in charge.”

Lauren cited class readings and the TED Talk that showed examples of how teachers incorporated civic learning in their classes with elementary students as factors that contributed to her civic efficacy. These texts helped her see that classroom learning could happen in a way that was different from what she had experienced herself or had observed in the clinical placements she had had up to this point. Later, in her interview when she described the factors that contributed to her civic efficacy, she expanded on the ideas she had written in her final reflection when she said:

And things of course helped [having experiences like we did in class] but I feel like when I got to school [college], I got doing more with like boys and girls club and I just started doing that with Educators Rising. Yeah. So she kind of like got me out of my bubble and out of my comfort zone. Because that wasn't something I ever had really been exposed to. (Interview, June 19, 2017)

As a teacher educator, I have learned that for some teacher candidates, the readings and class activities, in addition to the clinical and volunteering experiences they participate in can still reinforce notions of personally responsible and participatory citizenship. I need to reflect on what I have learned from Lauren and consider ways to challenge those notions and rethink their roles as teachers and see possibilities for a more justice-oriented approach. I also need to be more aware of their deficit-thinking about students and communities when the teacher candidates reveal it in their writing and discussions. Recognizing those moments and prompting them to think more deeply and critically about their perceptions of those different from themselves could

help them think differently about how they interact with their students, families, and communities and that valuing their funds of knowledge also has the potential for developing the civic efficacy of the students in their classrooms.

### **Elizabeth's Final Reflection**

Elizabeth said that the outcome of this class for her was that she realized the potential as a teacher to “accomplish something great in the community while also accomplishing something great in the classroom” (Final Reflection, May 6, 2017). Her experience of going into the community and working in the Community Garden helped her better understand the neighborhood and the need for a community garden which led her understand the importance of using a community garden as space for learning. Elizabeth shared that some teacher candidates were “fearful” of going to the part of town where the garden was located but she felt it was important to really know where students lived and, as a teacher, it was her job to know, “who they [her students] are and where they come from and how together we can make this world a better place.”

Elizabeth believed that the combined experiences of all of her literacy courses helped her to develop her understandings of her role as a literacy teacher. This content area literacy course built on what she had learned previously by emphasizing the importance of an interdisciplinary approach. In summarizing her biggest take-away from this course she said that this course “changed my understanding and appreciation for the need for teaching literacy not only as reading and writing, but within science, math, social studies, etc....” (Final Reflection, May 6, 2017), particularly that she now saw that there were so many ways to teach literacy. She saw the importance of incorporating community resources as she taught her students “...to engage with

literacy as thinking like historians, scientists, mathematicians, etc... and understand how literacy changes across the disciplines.” She also added:

I have seen the importance of incorporating our communities into our teaching. The community we live in will forever be a part of our lives, even if we leave our communities we take a piece of them with us, this is why the importance of being a community has resonated with me. I hope to be able to incorporate this into my future classroom and community. (Elizabeth Final Reflection, May 6, 2017)

Elizabeth was starting to develop a critical perspective in that she saw the value of literacy instruction in all of the content areas and that engaging students in the real work of the discipline was a valuable way for them to learn. The other critical literacy piece she was starting to understand was the importance of connecting classroom literacy learning with the community where she was teaching. In addition to this, Elizabeth stated in her final reflection that she also was learning to reflect on the reasons why she would teach in a particular or enact her responsibilities as a teacher:

I had to consider am I doing this because I believe this will actually change something? Having completed this project, what I consider the most important aspect is that we are teaching the children of Bloomington how to provide their own food, how to provide food for others, how to love one another, and in general how to be good citizens. My drive throughout this project was to build students that have an appreciation of what the garden is doing and how it affects people. (Final Reflection, May 6, 2017).

This statement showed Elizabeth’s awareness that, through her teaching, she could also develop her students’ civic efficacy.



### **Jennifer's Final Reflection**

Jennifer revealed in her final paper that her first year at this institution had started with a tragedy. Her older sister had been killed in a car accident just before she was to transfer from her community college and start at the university as an elementary education major. She described her close relationship with her sister and that had chosen to come attend this university because her sister worked in the same town and she wanted to be close to her. Because of her relationship with her sister, honoring her memory was her driving influence for the type of teacher she was hoping to become:

While it still is and was a very difficult time, I continue to remember her and do things that she would do. One of the greatest things that my sister did passionately was serve our community. Although she was already a nurse, she spent countless hours volunteering in organizations all over the community. When I found out that we were making this book to give back to our community I was really excited- I got to mix not only my passion for teaching but also give back to the community just as my sister had. (Final Reflection, May 6, 2017)

Jennifer mentioned that her parents had instilled in her, from an early age, the importance of giving back to the community. She had come to recognize in her teacher education courses that community involvement could also be a source to help her understand her students. In her beginning of the semester survey, she specifically used the term *funds of knowledge* when she discussed her beliefs in the importance of teachers getting to know their students so that they can incorporate what they know about them into the curriculum:

I loved the teacher in the black ants story because she took that extra time to learn more about her students. I think it is important to get to know your students funds of

knowledge and use that information to connect with them and your curriculum.

(Beginning of the Course Survey, January 29, 2017)

While she was able to use the term *funds of knowledge* at the beginning of the semester, in her final reflection, she admitted that she didn't fully understand why a teacher needed to get to know about the knowledge and literacies of the community or how she could use them in her classroom. She said she gained a better understanding of *funds of knowledge* through this course. Jennifer discussed how actually getting to know the community through the work she did with the Community Garden helped her see how connecting with the community would be a valuable resource to her as a teacher:

In previous classes we had talked a lot about what it means to go out into your community and "understand it." While, it did make some sense then, it makes even more sense now. As teachers, it is important to go into the community to see what is really happening, because what is happening is likely affecting your students both in and out of the classroom too. When you offered to let us come help in the garden, I thought it was a great idea. It allowed me to [put] myself in the shoes of the students that actually use the products of that garden. (Jennifer Final Reflection, May 6, 2017)

Jennifer frequently used the term *funds of knowledge*. It was interesting that she admitted that at the beginning of the semester she really didn't know what it meant and that she was starting to understand it more. In her final reflection, she said her growing understanding came from her work in the garden. By being in the garden, she got to talk with people in the community and learn what was important to them but she also viewed the work as "giving back" to the community or helping them out in some way. At the end of the semester, her understandings of the importance of teachers connecting to the community had shifted from not really knowing

why this was important to a growing understanding that she could learn about the community by engaging outside of the school walls with the people who live there. What she has yet to understand is that when she is in the community, she can notice and name the community literacies and ways of knowing and interacting that she observes and value the community knowledge. Jennifer is the one participant for whom this was the first elementary education course she had taken at this institution. While we discussed what it meant to be literate in this course, she had not taken the Literacy I course where she would further explore the idea of multiliteracies, multiple ways of knowing, and funds of knowledge.

Another of Jennifer's greatest take-aways from this course was the importance of student directed inquiry. In several of her written reflections throughout the semester and again in the final one, she discussed the importance of teachers listening to their students to find out what they were interested in so that they could incorporate those interests into the curriculum. She referred to this in several of her written reflections:

I have learned a lot about myself and a lot of great ideas I can use in my future classroom.

I think probably the biggest thing I learned about is stepping back and allowing students to take on their own interest and inquiries. (Final Reflection, May 6, 2017)

And in her interview, Jennifer described the work she was doing in her summer job as a tutor and how she was mindfully incorporating her tutee's interests into the teaching:

There's this kid, this kid that we teach. He just loves farming. He just loves it and he needs help with math so we pulled some stuff and he was really interested in the area and stuff. So like soil data, so like adding we're using it for. How do you add like two kinds of this kind of soil? That stuff. We talked about, like temperature and like rain fall, and how you can use that. He's been working with like measurement and they can do stuff

like that. And they sent us little books just about the area and the soil we have here and so he not only did he get the math he got like what he was interested in. (Interview, June 17, 2017)

After experiencing inquiry herself, she saw the value of student choice. She revealed, on several occasions, that the open-endedness of inquiry was a struggle for her because she felt she needed more structure and guidance from me, the instructor. In her final reflection, she stated that although it was struggle, the inquiry learning experience she had helped her develop as a learner and a teacher. She wrote in her final reflection, “From the beginning of the semester until now, I truly feel that I have grown my confidence in my work and that I don't underestimate myself as much.” Because of this, she wanted to be able to offer the same experiences to her future students through inquiry.

### **Olivia’s Final Reflection**

Olivia believed that the discussions and class activities that stemmed from the readings helped transform her understandings of what her role as a teacher would be. Olivia stated that these readings had changed her view of what it meant to be a teacher. She knew that part of her job would be to teach a set of standards that were designed to prepare her students for college but she was now coming to understand that, “there is SO much more to that.” She described what the ‘so much more’ would be when she wrote:

I really value the thinking behind how a community teacher does more than just the instructional aspect of teaching but how they are responsible to bring about unity within parents, colleagues, students, and other parts of the community. I also really admire the concept of bringing about social justice issues in the classroom. As a teacher, I feel that it

is important to have discussions about our democratic society so students can grow as active citizens. (Olivia Advance Organizer, March 15, 2017)

Olivia's comment about unity within parts of the community could be interpreted in a couple of ways. Through member checking, I asked her to clarify what she meant by the statement. Her response was that she saw her responsibility as uniting a community, which implied an underlying belief that the community needed her to help them come together. This is another example of teacher candidates' beliefs that part of a teacher's job is to fix problems in the community, or a participatory view of citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Building off of this idea from mid-semester in her final reflection, Olivia wrote that the significant piece she had taken from the class was the importance of connecting to the community. She saw the value of these connections as being able use what was important to the people in the community in her classroom. She also felt that it was important to teach the discussion skills needed to engage with social issues but does not delve into what she imagines those discussions might entail.

When she created her final project for the course, she and her partner, Lauren, both felt their experience working with Community Garden contributed to their decision-making about their learning activity. She felt more connected with the children she was responsible for teaching because of working in their community. In their lesson, they positioned the learners as entomologists and set them on an inquiry in learning about the bugs in the garden. The lesson started with students discussing what they already knew about insects and moved to generating questions they would investigate. She wrote about the importance of using the vocabulary of entomologist and they incorporated that into the learning activity. Lauren and Olivia were starting to understand the importance of positioning children as active participants and giving

them the opportunity to use their literacies authentically as scientists and mathematicians (Vasquez, 2010; Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002; Comber & Simpson, 2001).

### **Becoming Literacy Teachers**

After the semester ended, I was able to meet with Olivia, Lauren, Jennifer, and Elizabeth to reflect on their semester and get feedback from them about what they had learned about teaching. In this study, I also explored my decisions as a teacher educator and how the teacher candidates described the ways I that supported their understandings of critical literacy and civic engagement, I know that I cannot attribute learning to a single event and that it is actually a culmination of variety of factors. I was interested in knowing what aspects of the content area literacy course, their teacher education program, and the experiences in their lives helped to shape their dispositions about teaching and grow their knowledge and skills. Teacher candidates developed their civic efficacy as they begin to understand and acknowledge that they can teach for a public purpose. Teacher education programs can offer learning opportunities that help future teachers develop civic efficacy which includes the ability to work collaboratively with a variety of people, and the ability to integrate a wide range of resources (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Cochran-Smith, et al., 2009; Zeichner, 2013). But we also know that civic efficacy develops more from outside of school experiences rather than academic training (Torney-Purta, Richardson, & Barber, 2005). These four teacher candidates shared their thoughts on how they were becoming the teachers they wanted to be:

It's different. It's very much different. It's great to see all of these authentic and meaningful ways to teach my students. (Olivia, Interview, May 31, 2017).

In the interviews, all the teacher candidates discussed how much of what they believed about teaching and learning stemmed from their own experiences with school. The

demonstrations in class really helped them consider new strategies and approaches to teaching that were different from what they had known. As Oliva said:

To see your teaching and the way you got us excited about learning. So even, just seeing, like, what your examples were. I would love to take my kids to a museum or to, you know, a garden, and actually get to work hands-on with these resources and meeting people in the community to help us learn. (Interview, May 31, 2017)

Jennifer pointed to the academic conversations as a class learning opportunity that helped her see the role of teachers differently, both the one that they planned and led and the ones they participated in that the other teacher candidates led, “I think that it opened my eyes to more ways of doing certain things” (Interview, June 7, 2017). She also described the ways we incorporated critical texts (Comber & Simpson, 2001) throughout the semester as something that helped her become more familiar with and stated that she would be more likely to use such texts in her future teaching:

I actually really like that, just taking a book and being able to turn it into so many things. I had found my resource online but I tweaked it so much to make it work. I just thought it was really fun. That’s what I have always found... How you can make learning fun, and how you can make it interesting for people. (Interview, June 17, 2017)

Working with peers also helped them grow as teachers. This happened not only in our content area literacy course but in the other teaching methods courses they were taking. Olivia shared that in her other reading methods course, she would get feedback from the instructor but also “Working with peers and discussing what they were doing. How to change and make it better for next time.” Jennifer shared similar thoughts, “Just to talk to other classmates about the

conversations she had with her peers, “You were always so open with the class. Just to get everybody to talk and express their opinions.”

Elizabeth said that working in the Community Garden, going to the horticulture center, and visiting the history museum and actually being able to participate in the different kinds of learning that could happen in those spaces were significant learning opportunities for her during the semester. All of these field trips helped her to see how she could integrate all of the content areas:

I thought it was very fascinating how literacy, science, mathematics can all be integrated into civic engagement. I feel like it just combines a lot of values in life. It combines the value of other people, the value of your community, the value of learning, and how you can help others. Because sometimes I feel like we forget like, to combine all of that together. Yeah, it’s like math can be taught with English. So, I think interconnectedness is really a positive thing. (Interview, June 12, 2017)

When I asked her how she saw these experiences helped her see role as a literacy teacher she answered:

“I think having students inquire to the world around them teaches them so much. And that’s something, now as a teacher, I want to apply to a lot of what I’m doing. Because I feel like sometimes does get so curriculum based. And if I could apply the curriculum plus their natural... They’re all naturally explorative. They’re children. (Interview, June 12, 2017)

For Lauren, civic engagement was equal to service learning and volunteering. When we sat down to discuss what she had learned throughout the semester, she spoke about finding a need and helping to fill that need:



Well, I would say with like civic engagement which is finding ways to help the community wherever you are. So, like for me, when I was in high school, and that was doing recycling days and doing, you know, like we went around and picked up the recycling out of classrooms because they didn't have a recycling program but we wanted to do it. That's what we did. Like having community recycling days or going out and doing fund raisers and things like that for our school. That's what it was in my community, because that's what we needed. (Interview, June 17, 2017)

Of the four participants, she was the one who mainly spoke about seeing a need in the community and being willing to help. She said the value of connecting with the community would be "investing time in your students community is going to let them know you care. And let them know that you aren't just a teacher in the classroom and that you can be there for them outside of the classroom."

The candidates were starting to see their roles as teaching for public purposes, and each one had a slightly different understanding of what that would be and how they imagined taking the ideas with them into the next phase of their teaching journey. All of them realized that teaching was not an easy job, particularly when teaching in ways that might be seen as different, such as teaching concepts through social issues or thinking about ways to integrate community practices into classroom learning. They did show some understanding of the importance of connecting with communities and trying to understand them would be helpful. The idea of being a community professional, that teaching was a very public type of job was an idea that was new to them this semester and they recognized the responsibilities that came with that. They still saw community work in terms of personally responsible and participatory citizenship. Lauren in particular continually mentioned the importance of doing good in the community and that as a

teacher she would encourage her students to do the same. They all felt that fostering classroom conversations about the issues that were important to the community. Elizabeth was starting to see the value of inquiry and integrating literacy and the content areas.

They were also able to describe aspects of the course that they believed facilitated their learning. They appreciated being able to actually engage in learning activities instead of just reading or listening to a lecture. Jennifer mentioned this again in her email to me after I sent her story to her to member check, “I often think of our semester and how much I learned through actually doing versus reading article after article! I hope to use that in my own classroom someday” (Personal Correspondence, February 18, 2018).

### **Summary**

I crafted these narratives of our semester spent learning about what it means to be a teacher in a democratic society from a variety of sources; the happenings in the world around us, the decisions I made as a teacher educator, and the coursework, reflections, and insights of the teacher candidates. These stories came together to illustrate the ways in which these teacher candidates were developing as teachers and how the course readings, discussion, and activities facilitated their understandings of what it meant to be literate, how people can use their literacies to enact change, and how they as teachers could structure the learning in a classroom to teach citizenship. They had the opportunity to try out their newly learned ideas when they planned and led an academic conversation and developed learning with community partners. In their final reflection of the class and in their interviews they shared the ways in which they imagined they might use what they would learn when given the opportunity to teach in a classroom. I felt it was my responsibility to take what I was learning from them about teacher development and to make

decisions about how I could facilitate their learning about civic engagement and critical literacy to inform my practice.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how teacher candidates were understanding their roles as teachers and how their understandings of civic engagement and critical literacy developed over the course of the semester. I was also interested in learning how my teaching practices in a content area literacy course could facilitate their civic efficacy as they grew to see themselves as change agents as they considered ways to a critical literacy approach.

In this chapter, I discuss the findings I described in Chapter Four and what these findings suggest for teacher education and preparing teacher candidates to teach citizenship and literacy. After I analyzed the data collected throughout the semester, I was able to identify the ways in which the teacher candidates were starting to understand their roles as teachers and how those views influenced the decisions they made about incorporating civic engagement and critical literacy to design meaningful and empowering learning experiences for students they would one day teach. They did so in varying ways; and I witnessed some components of critical literacy more than others. As is the nature of action research, I learned about my own teaching practices through my reflections and the feedback the teacher candidates gave me about their learning and how all of this informed my teaching. I also discuss the decisions I made as a teacher educator and the ways they influenced teacher candidates' learning. I end with my thoughts on what I learned from the semester about promising practices for a content area literacy course and teacher education and suggest directions for further research.

## Uncovering the Civic Efficacy of the Teacher Candidates

“If I can be half as good as a teacher (and person) as them I will consider myself successful in my career in education.” (Lauren, Beginning of the Course Survey, January 29, 2017)

Prompting the teacher candidates to articulate their initial beliefs about civic education helped me to understand their beliefs about civic engagement, citizenship, and their roles as teachers in helping students develop as citizens. Villegas’s (2007) work stressed the importance developing teacher candidates’ dispositions about the roles of schools which first required an unveiling the assumptions that they carry with them as they begin their teacher preparation coursework. Bandura’s (1982) modeling influence explained the development of efficacy through examples of others successfully engaging in a task. Pulling these two notions together, I introduced the teacher candidates to classroom teachers who took a critical teaching stance in their classrooms through a TED Talk and a reading. The teachers in these texts described how they took what they learned about their students and then facilitated learning in ways that promoted exploring their worlds, engaging in problem-solving, and providing opportunities to use their learning in meaningful ways.

In the beginning of the course survey, I teacher candidates to discussed their personal experiences with civic learning as they observed teachers who empowered their students to learn and apply literacy skills to explore the issues relevant to their communities and make decisions about how they could to work for social change. Having the opportunity to examine and discuss a variety of teaching approaches and to learn from the model teachers in the texts, the teacher candidates became more aware of their underlying assumptions about school as they were introduced to practices that differed from their personal experiences as elementary students or in

the classrooms they had observed in their teacher education programs (Agarwal-Rangnath, Dover, & Henning, 2017).

Other opportunities for modeling influences came as I modeled ways to incorporate civic engagement and critical literacy through the various topics I brought into the classroom and the text we used to explore the topics. Intentional, overt instruction on a various pedagogical approaches has the potential for developing teacher candidates' knowledge and understanding of critical literacy (McDonald, 2005; Riley & Crawford-Garrett, 2016). When teacher candidates participated in learning activities that moved beyond the narrowed, skill-based curricula that was so prevalent in the high-stakes standardized testing era and experienced the possibilities of more transformative, inquiry-based learning, they had a better understanding of a justice-oriented teaching approaches. These approaches included opportunities to work with critical texts, which included a mix of children's literature and non-fiction, realia and artifacts, digital texts, visuals, and music. I modeled how these texts could be used together to facilitate inquiry-based learning. Through these texts, we inquired about local and global real-world issues (Vasquez, 2017). After each of these learning experiences, I asked the teacher candidates to reflect on their learning and how they were starting to see their roles as literacy teachers.

Throughout the semester, in addition to describing their beliefs about teaching and learning I also asked them to articulate what they saw as the affordances and drawbacks of particular teaching approaches. Villegas's (2007) work points to the potential this practice has for increased the likelihood that the pedagogical practices learned in the teacher education program will be carried with teacher candidates as they move into the profession. One thing that is evident in the teacher candidates' discussions and work is that I did not offer enough opportunities for them to consider the negative impact of deficit thinking (Matsko &

Hammerness, 2014; Rogers, Marshall & Tyson, 2006) nor did I engage them in discussions about privilege and oppression and the practices in schools that maintain these systems (Swartz, 2003; McDonald, 2005). A content area literacy methods course can certainly be the space for these important conversations.

The teacher candidates had an appreciation for the approaches to teaching they observed and those they experienced in my teaching demonstrations. They were able to see different ways that teachers could help students learn to use literacy in empowering, meaningful ways. The teacher candidates' interests were piqued through these examples and they expressed interest in exploring ways they would incorporate similar teaching in their future classrooms. While they were intrigued, they also recognized that teaching like this had its challenges. They were aware that many of their beliefs about teaching stemmed from their own education experiences and since they had not participated in the type learning they observed in the video and readings, they imagined some difficulty in trying out this different approach. Another challenge they saw was navigating the varying expectations about what children should be learning and what teachers should be teaching. They identified possible roadblocks as beliefs that the elementary classroom was not the place to discuss social or controversial issues, differing belief systems about social topics.

### **Critical Literacy**

Vasquez (2010, 2014) discussed the types of curricula that are a part of each classroom, mandated, paper, and real. The *mandated* curriculum is that which is written by policy-makers and adopted by governing bodies and is often tested with high-stakes tests. The *paper* curriculum is written in the adopted textbooks and teaching materials and the *real* is what is actually being taught in the classroom. One of Vasquez's tenets for creating spaces for a critical literacy

approach to teaching is that teachers have “a critical perspective” (Vasquez, 2010, p. 2). This means that their teaching practices afford students opportunities to “get things done, in the world” (Vasquez, 2010, p. 8) and while centered in literacy, it extends to all parts of the school curriculum. In other words, teachers find ways to teach the *mandated* and *paper* curricula in ways that their *real* curricula will empower their students to use the skills they learn to work toward social change. As we learned together through the semester, the teacher candidates discussed and applied critical literacy approaches and started to imagine how they might infuse these practices into the school curricula.

In the initial survey responses, the teacher candidates indicated that they were coming into this course having some experience with the components of critical literacy approaches. Since they were all in their early 20s, most of their education took place *NCLB* era (Darling-Hammond, 2007) and their personal experiences with literacy instruction during their elementary and high school years focused on developing skills needed to perform well on high-stakes standardized tests. Even though they had not personally experienced critical literacy approaches, all but one of them had already taken the first literacy course of their program the previous semester and those who had transferred to the university from a community college had taken education foundations courses and children’s literature courses. In their beginning of the course survey, all of the participants made connections between the ideas introduced the first week of class to ideas they had learned in previous courses. One concept they brought with them to this course was *Funds of Knowledge* (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1992). They were able to name the concept, define it, and share classroom examples. They articulated the importance of teachers knowing their students and the communities where they were teaching, and valuing their students’ literacy practices. They also were starting to understand how they could take what they



learned about their students and develop classroom learning around these outside literacies, but really could not name the literacy practices they noticed in the community or how, exactly, they might bring them into the classroom. The teacher candidates mainly focused on student interest and how they could use that interest to “develop a deeper understanding of school and life” (Elizabeth’s survey response, January 29, 2017).

The teacher candidates who participated in this study also saw that teachers were responsible for teaching students the skills needed to accomplish real-world tasks, which included speaking and listening in addition to reading and writing. They recognized that elementary classrooms could be spaces for children to discuss and understand real-world issues (Vasquez, 2017) and that they could teach speaking and listening skills through those discussions. They believed that, as teachers, they should teach the knowledge and skills needed for productive conversations, and they mainly emphasized the importance of respecting others’ thoughts and opinions and being open to other ways of thinking. The teacher candidates also recognized that facilitating these conversations about real-world issues with elementary students would pose some challenges. One challenge they mentioned was that others, co-workers, administrators, and parents, may not feel the elementary classroom was the place for this kind of discussion. The other challenge they expressed was that they really did not have much experience, either in their own schooling or in observing classrooms, with structuring conversations on topics that might seem controversial to some. While none of the participants indicated that they would be unwilling to do engage their students in difficult conversations, they anticipated that learning to do so might “take some work,” (Beginning of the Course Survey, January 29, 2017) as Elizabeth said, or “be like looking around in a dark room for a lightswitch

[sic] (Beginning of the Course Survey, January 29, 2017),” according to Lauren, to figure out how to bring the real-world issues into the classroom and use them as a springboard for learning.

One way to better support their efforts to engage critical literacy practices, is to incorporate more reading from foundational critical literacy theory (Klehr, 2015, Tinkler & Tinkler, 2013, Villegas & Lucas, 2002). While we, as a class, were participating in critical literacy learning, we did not explicitly connect the practices with the theory. Incorporating a discussion and an assignment that would prompt them to consider how they might incorporate critical approaches when faced with the demands of mandated standards. This would allow the teacher candidates to consider how they could negotiate, or even resist and challenge, those demands in order to implement a justice-oriented curriculum (Agarwal-Rangnath, Dover, & Henning, 2017). This is one change I could make that would support teacher candidates as they learn to incorporate critical literacy approaches.

### **Modeling the Critical Approach**

Civic efficacy develops through opportunities to observe others or through actively participating in an experience (Bandura, 1982; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; NCSS, 2016). The second week of the course, “a real-world issue” presented itself and I made the decision to use it in class. The newly inaugurated president signed the executive order that would deny visas to people from a select group of countries, which some media outlets called “the Muslim ban.” As I planned the discussion on immigration, I had to be sure that the lesson I was modeling was truly an inquiry-based lesson and that I was incorporating components of a critical literacy approach. I was mindful of the Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions, making sure that we were exploring these bigger ideas and questions through the current event of immigration. I also was mindful of selecting texts that would offer a variety of viewpoints and perspectives so that we

could “interrogate the texts” (Vasquez, 2010, p. 3) and discuss issues of reader positionality and social construction of texts. While I think the text selection was appropriate for the learning outcomes, there were some things I could have done to help the teacher candidates grasp my intended outcomes.

After the teaching demonstration, we debriefed the various aspects of the learning activity where they would name teaching decisions I made and how such decisions impacted the learning. They recognized the multimodality of the texts that they engaged with, picture books, a poem, news articles from a variety of news outlets, and photographs and could explain how each text helped them view the issue from a different perspective and to explain an enduring understanding or answer particular essential questions. They discussed these ideas in the exit slips they wrote after the immigration mini-inquiry and articulated what it meant to be literate and what they thought the teacher’s role was in facilitating that type of literacy learning.

The teacher candidates said their role as a literacy teacher was to teach children to interact with multimodal texts for a variety of purposes. They also saw the value of pairing children’s literature with real-world text such as newspapers (Vasquez, 2010). Lauren shared a resource she had learned about through her tutoring at a local school. She had learned about *NewsELA* (2018), a classroom teacher resource for leveled new articles on current events, lesson ideas using the articles, and text sets of primary sources and articles built on central themes. They discussed the importance of incorporating technology in their definitions of what it means to be literate. However, the examples they shared of how to use technology were mainly to find information and to understand what is going on in the world. The reason for this, as Olivia articulated, was that teachers should help their students understand that they use literacies in all

that they do and that teachers should give attention to literacy instruction in all of the content areas.

As I analyzed the responses to the various readings and in-class learning activities that took place in the first part of the semester, the teacher candidates believed that they should connect school learning with the world events that were important to their students. They also had a good understanding of the importance of combining literature and real-world texts to understand multiple perspectives of an issue.

What I was not seeing in their reflective writing was an understanding about how readers interact with texts. While they would sometimes use the term “critical reading,” they were not identifying or implementing critical reading practices in their learning activities. Considering the reading instruction they experienced in their K-12 schooling, I wondered about the opportunities they had to participate in critical reading (Crawford-Garrett & Riley, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2007). These teacher candidates all started school in the age of high-stakes testing with the prevalence of scripted reading curriculum that claimed to be aligned to standardized tests or computer-based programs that defined the act of reading as picking out main ideas and supporting details from texts or describe the author’s purpose and gave them little opportunity to engage with critical reading skills. It would have been useful to spend some time in the semester engaging in a conversation with them about how they learned to read and what they believed the purpose of reading should be.

### **Civic Efficacy Shown through Literacy Instruction**

Bandura’s (1982) self-efficacy theory tells us that people’s beliefs about their ability to accomplish something is developed through trying out new tasks, risking failure and then seeing that they can accomplish the task at hand. Building on Paulo Freire’s action-reflection cycle,

Watts and Flanagan (2007) tell us that civic efficacy is fostered through challenging, meaningful opportunities. The academic conversation that the teacher candidates planned and led the second half of the semester gave them the opportunity to try out what they had learned about civic engagement and critical literacy.

### **Academic Conversations**

The teacher candidates had their first opportunity to try the ideas we had been discussing and engaging with in the beginning of the semester as they planned and led an academic conversation. We started the process by brainstorming many of the themes or units that they knew of that were often taught in elementary schools. The list included topics such as biomes and habitats, The Civil War, World Wars I and II, The Environment, The Roaring 20s, Civil Rights, health and nutrition, just to name a few. They signed up for a topic that interested in them and worked with a partner on the task.

I offered a number of supports to the teams as they planned this assignment. The process started with reading Zwiers and Crawford (2011) *Getting Started with Academic Conversations* which explained their importance and gave suggestions for conversation strategies. To supplement this reading, I also shared several website that described additional conversation strategies. I had modeled several conversation strategies around various topics and shared a list of additional ones. Ones they had participated in included *Conversation Lines*, *Jigsaw*, *Gallery Walks*, and *Conver-stations* (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011; Curwin, 2013). We had used a variety of graphic organizers to record thoughts as they co-constructed knowledge. Along with the planning template (Appendix H), I gave them the example of the written plan for our immigration conversation. I also shared some resources, which included the *Next Generation Science Standards* and The *C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards* to help them determine

the essential questions and enduring understandings they would explore through their topic and continually reminded them as they were planning to think of the “so what?” and “what can we learn about our world now through this topic?”

### **Reading the World**

When reading the world, readers know that reading helps people understand the world and that they can use literacy skills to change their worlds (Freire, 1987; Vasquez, 2010, 2014). The academic conversations incorporated aspects of reading the world; particularly the way the teacher candidates connected their discussions with world events and the variety of texts they selected to explore the issues. This assignment gave me insight into their civic efficacy in that the decisions they made revealed the pedagogical approaches they wanted to implement. The literacy skills they incorporated in these academic conversations came from the reading standards; compare and contrast, identifying main ideas and supporting details in texts, and summarizing key ideas and therefore represented the *paper* curriculum. My analysis of their work revealed the *real* curriculum; the underlying messages the teacher candidates were teaching through these academic conversations, also revealed their civic efficacy in the decisions they made about texts and how they chose to approach their topics. Their civic efficacy could also be seen in the ways in which the teacher candidates fostered students’ civic efficacy through their discussion by building the learning from life, promoting inquiry, bringing issues of diversity into the conversation, and practicing the skills of activism (Serriere, 2014).

### **Bringing the Outside In**

In their academic conversations on historical eras, the teacher candidates connected their chosen eras to the current, real-world issues that were affecting many of us in the classroom that semester; racial profiling and racial tensions heightened by police killings of African Americans

and the growing anti-immigrant sentiment. It was also a time of many Women's Marches across the country which were women-led movements to advocate for the rights for women and other oppressed groups (Women's March, n.d). The purposes of these marches paralleled many of the protests and marches that groups were organizing around in the 1920s and during the 1960s civil rights movement. The teacher candidates showed a willingness to bring these real-world issues into the classroom.

Olivia and Lauren started their academic conversation with the juxtaposing two images of women protesting, one from the 1920s and the other from a present-day women's march. A sign in the first photograph stated, "Mr. President, How long must women wait for liberty [sic]" and the latter, "Respect our rights as human beings." They structured the conversation around similarities and differences and the array of visual text they made available, photos, advertisements, enabled the people in the class to have a conversation around these similarities and differences as they recorded their responses in a Venn diagram. Like Lauren and Olivia, Jennifer also emphasized that her civil rights issues were also "a relevant topic still in today's society as we are continuing to fight for rights in many different forms and about many different things." Sarah and Maria used the Japanese Internment Camps of World War II to launch a discussion about racial profiling. In addition to taking on timely, highly charged issues of racial profiling, they prompted the other participants to consider what steps they should take to counter the practices of racial profiling.

During the time of the academic conversations, there were efforts by the new presidential administration to end the former administration's environmental protections to curb the effects of climate change. There were moves to reduce the resources of the National Parks Services and limit their climate change reducing efforts. Elizabeth and Eve wrote in their academic

conversation plan that they designed this conversation to promote the “importance of understanding the world around them and how it is related to them.” However, they did not explore any connections to the environmental issues that the country was dealing with at the time. Instead, the conversation was very skill-based in identifying, describing, and summarizing information.

### **Critical Texts**

One way that teachers help students develop critical literacies is through selections of critical texts, those that “challenge commonplace thinking” (Vasquez, Tate, & Harste 2013, p. 103). The teacher candidates incorporated critical texts in their academic conversations in several ways. In the conversations about historical eras, the teacher candidates selected primary sources in addition to literature to prompt the exploration of the topics. The primary sources were mostly photographs but one group found advertisements from the Roaring 20s era which showed their ability to pair literature with a variety of other text formats. Eve and Elizabeth provided multimodal texts for their academic conversation on biomes and habitats in the form of websites, children’s nonfiction books, and even made dioramas of aquatic, forest, desert, grassland, and tundra biomes. Sarah and Maria took the time to find a poem written by a Japanese American interred in one of the camps which showed their willingness to select texts that forefront underrepresented, diverse voices. They also used the children’s book *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1992) to discuss an alternative experience of World War II, one not often taught in textbooks.

### **Skill-based Strategies**

Teachers who have a critical perspective offer learning opportunities that move beyond the narrowed curriculum brought about in the era of accountability and high-stakes, standardized



testing and incorporate more transformative, inquiry-based learning (Vasquez, 2014; Crawford-Garrett & Riley, 2016). Transformative learning offers opportunities for the learners to do something meaningful with what they have learned (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002).

All of the academic conversations were exploratory in nature, as the teacher candidates planned mini-inquiries on their chosen topic. Eve and Elizabeth used a Jigsaw strategy where the participants were to “become experts” on a biome and share it with the others. The conversation was a rich vocabulary learning experience but did not include discussions about the importance of learning about biomes. *The Next Generation Science Standards* (NGSS) refers to Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCI), which are ideas that have “have broad importance within or across science or engineering disciplines, provide a key tool for understanding or investigating complex ideas and solving problems, relate to societal or personal concerns, and can be taught over multiple grade levels at progressive levels of depth and complexity” (NGSS, 2013). Framing this conversation using the DCIs for relationships among earth’s systems could have added elements of critical literacy.

The academic conversation that Lauren and Olivia planned was an initial step into exploring our current world through the lens of a historical era. While the learning opportunity fostered discussion about inequality, women’s struggles, and how women had progressed in terms of opportunities and independence, there was no discussion on what the participants might actually do with this information. Part of this could be attributed to the essential questions they chose to explore. They all were about comparing and contrasting and helped the learners understand what was significant about the era but did not prompt us to think about how we could change the inequities that still exist. The lack of discussions on what to do with the information

could be attributed to Olivia and Lauren's experiences with reading instruction and that they have yet to see how literacy can be used in transformative ways or to consider ways to use literacy to take social action (Crawford-Garrett & Riley, 2016).

Jennifer was starting to take on a critical perspective in her text selection was in her selection of photographs. She stated in her reflection and again in our interview that she was deliberate in her text choice in that she wanted to make sure that she had texts that represented a variety of perspectives, showing the protesters marching to end segregation and photos of those still wanting segregation. Her essential questions and enduring understandings prompted them to think about the goals of the movement and the strategies that people used to bring about change and to consider actions they could take to bring about change. Sarah and Maria, on the other hand, were more willing to take a critical approach in their academic conversation in that the end goal was for the participants to create an argument, support that argument with evidence, and then make some decisions about what actions they could take regarding racial profiling.

Perhaps the biggest gap in the teacher candidates' understandings of critical literacy had to do with critical analysis of text; the understanding that texts are not neutral and are designed to influence the reader in particular ways (Luke & Freebody, 1999). Of Luke and Freebody's *Four Resources Model*, the teacher candidates did discuss practices related to code-breaking, connecting text participation with reader's experiences, and offering opportunities for students to interact with text in meaningful ways. I went back through data for examples of Vasquez's (2010) tenets and other ways they were considering the social construction of texts and the responsibility for readers to interrogate texts. I also combed through the data looking for their understandings of how language use can position readers in particular ways. Even though they had selected critical texts that would lend themselves to this type of reading, there was still an

emphasis on comprehension skills such as identifying main ideas, comparing and contrasting, and drawing conclusions, or inferencing. This showed me that I need to find ways to develop their understandings of text analysis and offer opportunities for them think about how they might teach it.

Through the academic conversation assignment, I could see how the teacher candidates were starting to take up the ideas of civic engagement and critical literacy and try them out. They were starting to take a critical perspective. All the groups incorporated multimodal texts and paired everyday texts with children's literature (Vasquez, 2010). The conversations that were involved in this study that were centered on historical eras did connect with events happening in the world and fostered a conversation on inequities while only one prompted discussion on taking action.

### **Community as a Text and Developing Civic Efficacy**

The first part of the semester was spent learning about teaching, civic engagement, and critical literacy through readings, discussion, and teaching demonstrations where teacher candidates engaged in critical literacy learning. Following that, we started using the community as a text and I sought opportunities for the teacher candidates to interact with several local organizations. Our final project, a partnership with the Community Garden, provided an opportunity for the teacher candidates to authentically plan disciplinary literacy learning for elementary-aged children. The teacher candidates who worked in the community garden said that being in the community and interacting with the people who lived there opened their eyes to what mattered to the people in the community and some of the issues they faced. The teacher candidates also said that being able to connect with the community helped them become more comfortable with going into unfamiliar spaces.

Following this experience, the teacher candidates wrote about what they had learned about literacy teaching throughout the semester. They were starting to understand their roles as teachers as they planned the outdoor learning activities and the kind of learning they imagined they would incorporate as they moved toward their student teaching year and in their future classrooms. They also described the experiences they had in their teacher education program, this course, and experiences outside of their university courses that they believed helped them develop their understandings.

The rationales they gave about their teaching decisions and the descriptions of what they were learning reflected the ways in which they were willing and able to enact civic behaviors (Serriere, 2014; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Much of what the teacher candidates wrote revealed dispositions and behaviors related to participatory and personally responsible citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Peterson, Durrant, & Bentley, 2015). They were also beginning to believe that teachers were responsible for educating citizens; something they said was a new idea to them. In their writings, they described this learning as “productive” or used language that conveyed citizenship as related to success in jobs and life, but they did not elaborate on what this might entail. There were many examples in their reflections where they talked about “making the world a better place,” both through their personal involvement in the community and through their work as teachers.

Even though most of their comments related to types of citizenship that were personally responsible or participatory, there were a few incidences where they were starting to consider ways to take action to change the status quo. They all had been in classes where they observed communities and learned about *funds of knowledge* (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1992), but this class was the first time they had the opportunity to do something with what they learned

through their observations. They valued being at the Community Garden and taking part in the work that the children would also be involved in over the summer. Having the opportunity to work with community partners also made them aware of how they could use community resources in their teaching.

### **Implications for Teacher Education**

The curricular and experiential components that teacher educators incorporate in a teacher preparation courses have the potential for shaping teacher candidates' civic efficacy. Therefore, I was challenged to examine my own pedagogical beliefs and practices to understand how the decisions I made about course design helped the teacher candidates see themselves as change agents. As is the nature of action research, I took an in-depth look into issues important me as a teacher educator. Throughout the process, I reflected on what I was discovering and used that information to adjust and change my teaching and to grow professionally. In reality, this project is ongoing as I consider what I learned this semester that I carry with me into each new semester as I plan both the methods courses I teach and the professional development work I do with faculty. The semester with this group of teacher candidates taught me a lot about relationships, teaching as a public profession, the materials we used, and the learning experiences that are all a part of a methods course.

### **Critical Literacy**

Through the examples of texts I incorporated into the class learning activities throughout the semester and opportunities to engage with multimodal texts, these teacher candidates said they valued the importance of selecting a variety of texts that represented multiple perspectives. They also were able to incorporate them into their teaching when it was their turn to plan

learning activities. They also understood the importance of pairing texts so that student could compare and examine multiple viewpoints.

The absence of discussion or application of the importance of critical analysis of texts in the teacher candidates' work caused me to reflect on why this may have happened. I had to consider what opportunities the teacher candidates had throughout the semester to engage in the critical reading of texts. I did have some learning activities where we discussed and practiced close reading. We read news articles about the Flint Water Crisis. We also spent one class period exploring critical texts (Comber & Simpson, 2001; Vasquez, 2014) but did not really discuss specific strategies on how to use these texts with children. While we engaged in a few critical reading activities in class, none of the course assignments required them to apply critical analysis of texts to a learning context. It could have happened in the academic conversations, but it was not an explicit expectation of that particular assignment. This realization leads me to believe that I need to incorporate more opportunities and create assignments where they can practice critical analysis of texts and explore learning activities for elementary students that incorporate it.

### **Community Connections and Civic Efficacy**

Two of the components for developing civic efficacy are opportunity structures, the systems that are in place that give people the opportunity to engage in civic endeavors, and societal involvement (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Incorporating learning activities in the course that engaged the teacher candidates in authentic work with community partners was a worthwhile learning opportunity for teacher candidates. Civic efficacy through community learning can be through modeling influences (Bandura, 1982) so, as the course instructor, I was in the field with the teacher candidates and community partners. Working in the Community Garden alongside them, I was able to introduce them to community partners, give them history

and background information about the community, and direct their attention to things going on in the community that may have gone unnoticed. Our conversations gave me insights into how they were understanding the community experience and allowed me to help them make connections to course content. Being an active participant in the field with them provided the opportunity structures and modeling influences that can help develop teacher candidates' civic efficacy.

Connecting with the community was an idea from the course that all the teacher candidates said they would take with them into their future teaching. The assignments in this course and their other methods' courses where they went into the community to work with children in spaces outside of school or just to observe and participate in what the community had to offer helped them get a better understanding of what their students' lives were like and what mattered to the community. They appreciated learning about the resources the community offered that they could bring into their classrooms and all of them could foresee seeking out these resources in the communities where they would eventually teach. Developing these community partnerships and offering teacher candidates opportunities to engage with the community in authentic, meaningful ways helped them to see themselves as community professionals who work alongside a variety of partners to educate children.

Consistent with prior research, these teacher candidates viewed citizenship in ways that could be described as participatory and personally responsible (Peterson, Durrant, & Bentley, 2015; Tupper, 2006; Martin, 2004). A theme that came through in analyzing the teacher candidates' comments about community resources was that they had a strong sense that they needed to help and fix the problems they assumed were present in the community. This showed in Olivia's belief that as a community teacher she could be responsible for uniting the community, revealing a deficit view of the community, as she believed that they were not

already united. Lauren also had similar statements about her responsibility as a teacher was to right wrongs when she said that throughout her life and experiences with volunteering that she was “obsessed with helping the community and being in charge of things” (Final Reflection, May 6, 2017). They also revealed that they enacted their citizenship through volunteering in many capacities. They also mentioned that the opportunities to do this kind of work came through some coursework but mostly through student groups they belonged to, religious organizations, or in Jennifer’s case, a practice that was important to her family. From these statements, I feel the need to revisit how I am approaching the community connections ideas in the courses I teach and find ways to consider how their beliefs might represent their deficit thinking about community, why it may be harmful to the learning environment, and truly recognize and value the vast funds of knowledge their students bring to the school environment.

Having the opportunity to critically examine the course and thinking about how these teacher candidates were responding to the learning experiences compelled me to not only examine this deep-seated belief and desire to help and fix but also to think about how I might be perpetuating this disposition and then decide how we, as a community of learners, might examine them and think differently about our roles as educators and our relationships with students and communities. Not only did these teacher candidates repeatedly make comments about the importance of being personally responsible and participatory as teachers in their reflections and interviews, they felt that they should be teaching their students to be these types of citizens. The unarticulated beliefs that lie beneath this need to help or to fix problems points to a tacit belief that there is something wrong with the community or people they are working with. While Westheimer and Kahne (2004) described types of citizens, their framework does not address the deficit perspectives that might motivate one to be a personally responsible or



participatory citizen. Picower (2009) used the term *Tools of Whiteness* (p. 204) to operationalize how White teachers do their jobs in ways that maintain dominant ideologies. Two of these tools 1) *ideological*, those based on beliefs (p. 206), and 2) *performative*, the ways they act on their feelings and beliefs (p. 207) are useful in describing the civic efficacy of the teacher candidates in this study and the ways they enacted their personally responsible and participatory citizenship. The ideological tool of “just be nice” (Picower, 2009, p. 208) came through in their statements about learning to listen and respect others’ viewpoints and that as teachers they should teach their students how to get along. Another prevalent belief in their responses that there were problems in the community to fix, and it was their job to do it, is illustrative of the performative tool “I just want to help them” (Picower, 2009, p. 209) that allows them to position themselves as someone with power to help those less fortunate. They saw that their jobs as teachers would be to work closely with community partners to take actions that would fix these perceived problems. And in doing so, they would be fulfilling their roles as teachers and making the world a better place and, in turn, developing the civic efficacy in their students to become the citizens who enacted citizenship in much the same way.

Implications from this study point to the need for teacher education programs to continually try to understand the ways that teacher candidates view their roles as teachers and that, as teachers, they have enormous potential for bringing about social change, but they also have the potential for marginalizing and silencing. The desire to help and fix can be marginalizing when teachers tacitly view their students and the communities in which they live as incapable or lacking and view themselves as the ones who can fix these communities. As these teacher candidates prepare to work in schools in a sociopolitical climate that continually oppresses certain groups, they will have make decisions about how their roles as teachers can

position their students as capable citizens. Teacher educators need to find ways to foster teacher candidate's "questioning mind, a critical consciousness, and a greater understanding of systemic factors" (Michie, 2012, p. 46) that continually deny some students, particularly low-income and students of color an education that will empower them to be justice-oriented citizens. (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; McMurrer & Kober, 2007; Tupper, Cappello, & Sevigny, 2010)

This growth process requires teacher candidates to consider how their own dispositions and behaviors, while well-intentioned, might be contributing to marginalization and silencing of their students and how they might reimagine their roles as teachers so that they help develop their students' knowledge and skills that will enable them to transform their worlds. To accomplish this, they must be reflective of how their decisions and the policies of the school are nurturing or stifling their students' civic efficacy. Teacher education programs must also consider how they are complicit in maintaining this deficit ideology (Cross, 2005; Haddix, 2015). One idea is to carefully consider the structure of field experiences and view them not as a vehicle for our teacher candidates to go out and learn about others but as a mutually beneficial community engagement experience where the mission and the goals of the community partner are the focus of the engagement (Jacoby, 2015; Cross, 2005; Tinkler, Tinkler, Hausman, & Strauss, 2014). As Cross (2005) articulated, "Learn to be with groups outside of the White norm, rather than watching them and taking from them" (p. 273).

In addition to mindful and collaborative planning with community partners, reflection on the process is also important in developing a civic efficacy that moves beyond a deficit ideology. This is important not only for the teacher candidates but for the teacher educators as well. To start, I must reimagine my role as a teacher educator and how

## Limitations

While I learned a great deal from this research, there are some limitations to this type of study. It is important to note that the stories I have told are a snapshot of the learning that occurred in the semester. Eight people consented to participate and of those eight, seven had complete sets of data from which I could construct the story. I also acknowledge that the findings reported in this dissertation were not reflective of all of the teacher candidates that semester. This account is reflective of the experiences of the participants whose stories I've told. However, it is important to note that we can learn from these stories and take what we've learned into other situations.

Action research is a valuable research method in that it empowers the people who are deeply invested in the object of study to do the research work and tell their own stories (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). As the researcher and an integral part of the phenomenon being studied, I have to continually be cognizant of how I may be influencing the study and make that clear in my reporting of the findings. One piece that I had to continually monitor was the power dynamic in the class. I was the instructor, the participants were students, and in the end, I was responsible for determining their grade in the class. Because of that, one might question if what the teacher candidates expressed in their writings, in their assignments, and in the interviews I conducted after the course was over were truly their thoughts and beliefs or if they were responding in the ways that they think I wanted them to respond. This is often a concern with this type of research. While I feel like I the way structured the assignments and reflection prompts allowed the teacher candidates to respond honestly and there was no real benefit to responding in any other way, I must acknowledge that there is a possibility they were paying lip-service to ideas of critical literacy and civic engagement. Triangulating the data helped to

counter this concern as I looked for patterns and consistencies within the data sources for each individual participants (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Maxwell, 2013). I was also able to member check the findings with the participants and they verified that my descriptions of their learning accurately portrayed their experience.

The interviews were structured and used as a way to triangulate and check for the trustworthiness of the findings. The questions I asked allowed the participants to elaborate on their learning throughout the semester. Also, the interviews took place in spaces chosen for convenience by the participants which all happened to be coffee shops which reduced the power dynamic (Glesne, 2011). I conducted the interviews after the semester was completed and I had reported grades which also reduced the power dynamic, as I was no longer their teacher evaluating their performance and knowledge.

In its truest form, action research is a method where researcher and participants work closely together to develop the research questions, gather and analyze data, and interpret the results. This is difficult to do at our institution because of Institutional Review Board protocols that require me, as the instructor of record, to manage risks. To reduce the possibility that participation in this project would impact a grade, I did not know who consented to participate until the semester was over which also meant that I could not analyze data until that time. This prevented me from actively involving the teacher candidates in the research project as the semester was in process. However, I did structure my course to be inquiry-based and as a community of learners, we spent the semester exploring, ideas of what it means to be a literate and our roles and responsibilities as literacy teachers. I also was able to include the participants in the interpretation of the results through member checking.

This study was an exploration of my own practices and the teacher candidates I was working with. While results cannot be generalizable to other contexts, I believe that there are some important ideas revealed through this study that would be valuable to other teacher educators. I incorporated strategies into the research process that would reduce the biases but since this was action research and I was participant, it was difficult at times. Therefore was necessary to be aware of the biases and make them known through discussion of my researcher positionality, by being transparent about my processes and acknowledging the limitations.

### **Further Research**

I think about the teacher candidates I spent this semester with as they become teachers. I wonder what they have taken with them from this course. This study focused on their understandings about civic engagement and critical literacy and how they incorporated components of civic learning and critical literacy in their teaching. I was also able to discover how they imagined their roles as teachers and they told me how they might take what they learned as they started working with children in their student teaching experiences and moved into classrooms of their own. Following them as they embark on their teaching careers, I would be able to see how they enact their roles as teachers and the ways they take up the roles as a community teacher. I would also be able to explore the ways in which they incorporate critical literacy. Knowing that current school policies and accountability practices may not always encourage critical pedagogical practices, I would be interested in knowing how they negotiate the ways in which they imagined themselves teaching and the expectations and demands of the environments in which they find themselves working.

As I continue to learn and grow as teacher educator, I have made changes to the ways I teach my courses. Also changing, is the world around us. The U.S. is starting to see a rise in

activism and an increased number of women and people from underrepresented groups rising up and taking action to advocate for themselves and the issues that are relevant to them. Teachers are involved in this movement as well. This study is just a starting point as I continue to explore the civic efficacy of the teacher candidates who are in the courses I teach. I made changes to my courses as a result of what I have learned through this inquiry and anecdotally have noticed differences in the ways the teacher candidates have taken up the ideas of critical literacy and civic engagement. It would be useful to more systematically study this.

The heart of action research is its iterative nature, gathering data, analyzing, reflecting, and acting. I redesigned this content area literacy course through my participation in a course design cohort. As a faculty developer at my institution, each summer I plan and lead a cohort of faculty from various disciplines, learning about civic engagement and integrating it into a course that we teach. The Communities of Practice model of professional development brings together those who share a common interest to work on developing instructional skills with a stable cohort of colleagues during an extended set of experiences (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2011). This model of professional development holds promise for sustainable implementation of effective teaching practices (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). I would like to extend this research beyond my own course and partner with faculty from other disciplines and inquire about the civic engagement and civic efficacy of the students in the courses that they developed through participation in this cohort.

### **Conclusion**

The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we

collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (hooks, 1994, p. 12)

I have had privilege of teaching this course two other times since the semester of this study. The teacher candidates who were with me the first semester that I taught it will be finishing up their teacher education program at this university or starting their student teaching year. As of the writing of this work, our world has been through a number of events that find their way into our classrooms and I think quite a bit about these teacher candidates now becoming teachers.

World events continue to make their way into our classrooms which have the potential for sparking some powerful learning. The semester following the one that is center of this story, started with a rare solar eclipse that sparked awe and wonder in children and adults. There were also three devastating hurricanes, Harvey and Irma hitting Texas and Florida, and Maria, hitting Puerto Rico. These hurricanes had an intensity beyond what the world had known in the past and sparked debate on the effects of climate change and how the government and citizens should help the affected communities recover. We saw extreme inequities on how people received help during these natural disasters and we saw how communities came together to recover from disaster. On the heels of that disaster, the country witnessed a march of *Unite the Right*, a right-winged group who was protesting the dismantling of statues commemorating Confederate war heroes which garnered support from the president. And in January 2018, another horrific mass shooting in a Florida prompted high school students to use their literacies in very meaningful and powerful ways. The students of Stoneman Douglas High School have been lobbying legislators, speaking publicly and writing op-eds demanding action that would prevent future mass shootings. I brought all of these events into our content area literacy class and we used them to

discuss critical literacy and civic engagement. I wondered about the teacher candidates who were with children in classrooms as these events arose.

The teacher candidates in this study are now navigating school curricula and its relationships to world events with their own students. I wonder about their civic efficacy. Do they notice and challenge the taken-for-granted narratives that are often taught and to create spaces for their students to use their literacy in transformative ways? I wonder how they are creating spaces for civic engagement and critical literacy in schools where federal and local policies position them as technicians who follow the *mandated* and *paper* curricula. Do they see themselves as agents of change and would they question those “habitual pedagogical practices” (Smyth, 2011, p. 19) that are so prevalent in schools? What did they take with them from our semester together? Do they know about and appreciate the communities in which their students live? How does this understanding motivate them to teach in ways that afford their students opportunities to enact their citizenship in meaningful and empowering ways? I wonder if they have developed the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to be justice-oriented teachers who would help their students understand the complexities of social inequity and make sense of the events around them. If schools are the place where people learn to be citizens in a democratic society, teachers must be the agents of change. I know that I, as a teacher educator, would continue to do all I can to help prepare them for this important work.



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APPENDIX A: DATA ACCOUNTING LOG

Event	Date/Time	Location	Notes
Teaching Notes	January 22, 2017	Coffeehound	Notes on my thoughts as I wrote the syllabus and planned for the semester
Teaching Notes	January 23, 2017	University Classroom	Notes on the first day of class
Course Survey	January 23-30, 2017	Google Forms- Students completed this as homework and submitted the Google Form	This will tell me what they believed their role is as a literacy teacher and some of their ideas about literacy and citizenship/civic engagement
Teaching Notes	January 27, 2017	University classroom	Immigration Class taught in response to Trumps immigration ban
Exit Slips	Various Times during the semester	University Classroom	They were asked to write about what they were learning as a quick summary of class. This will show how they were thinking about various ideas of literacy teaching throughout the semester.
Midterm Reflection	March 20, 2017	Form submitted to their individual Google Folders	They told what they had learned in class so far
Academic Conversation Project	Various times in the second half of the semester	University Classroom	Each participant planned and led a 20 minute discussion on a topic of their choice. (see assignment guidelines)
Teaching Notes	March 20, 2017	University Classroom	Visit from Community Garden and Introducing Civic Engagement

*Table Continued*



Event	Date/Time	Location	Notes
Reading and Guided Notes on <i>The Community Teacher</i>	March 20, 2017	Submitted in Google Folders or turned in during class	Homework to be completed before class discussion. Handwritten ones need to be transcribed
Teaching Notes	March 27, 2017	University Classroom	Class session on Civic Engagement Describe their understandings and applications of the competencies and types of citizens
Teaching Notes	March 23, 24, 25, 2017	Work in the community garden	
Teaching Notes	April 7, 2017	University Classroom	Introduction of the Final Project
Final Project	May 5, 2017	Submitted to collaborative Google Folder	Activity and texts for the garden summer program
Final Reflection Paper	May 10, 2017	Submitted to individual Google Folders	
Interview- Olivia	May 31, 2017	Panera, Peoria, IL	
Interview-Jennifer	June 7, 2017	Coffehound, Normal IL	
Interview- Elizabeth	June 12, 2017	Starbucks, Normal, IL	
Interview- Lauren	June 19, 2017	Wm Van's Coffeeshop, Springfield, IL	

## APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This research project will help me discover how preservice teachers develop their understanding of civic engagement and critical literacy through participating in service learning and how they incorporate this kind of learning in their lesson plans and their final projects, which is an integrated unit. My Research Questions are:

1. How do teacher candidates view and understand civic education and critical literacy as they participate civic engagement in a teacher education literacy methods course?
2. How do teacher candidates attempt to implement critical literacy and civic engagement into their course assignments?
3. How do teacher candidates describe the ways in which the curricular and experiential learning I incorporated in a literacy methods course shape their civic efficacy and the ways in which they view their roles as literacy teachers?

The interview process will take place after the student participants who have consented to participate in the study and volunteer to participate in the interview process have completed the work for the course where the study is to be conducted and course grades have been submitted. I will know who has consented and volunteered for the interview after the semester is over and will contact volunteers to be interviewed after May 16, 2017.

Interviews will be semi-structured and audio recorded, lasting about 60 minutes. Interviews will be held location agreed upon by the investigator and participant. Audio recordings will be in an mp3 format, stored on Dana Karraker's password protected computer. Participants will be provided with information about the storage, confidentiality, and future use of the resulting tape in the consent letter. The procedures for maintaining confidentiality and managing risks are outlined in Appendix I of the IRB Protocol form.

Interview questions would include:

1. Can you tell me about your teaching background?
2. Describe the ways as a student or as a teacher that you have had opportunities to be civically engaged.
3. Could you please describe your knowledge of critical pedagogy and civic engagement that you learned in the Content Area Literacy Course or in other capacities?
4. How might you use critical pedagogy in your own teaching?
5. What are some tensions you might (or have encountered) when incorporating civic engagement and how might you navigate those tensions?
6. What do they see as the biggest benefits of incorporating civic engagement? What do they see as the most promising practices and outcomes?

Audio recordings will be transcribed and pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions. These data, with identifiers removed, will be used for analysis and used in research reports, conference presentations, or for professional development purposes.

## APPENDIX C: DATA TABLE

Data Source	Data Analysis	Connections to Research Questions
<p><i>Teaching Journal-</i> Collection of my notes and reflections of each class session. Observation fieldnotes during our time in the Community Garden, Notes during planning sessions. Also has PowerPoints and text sets used in each class session</p>	<p>Descriptive coding Analytic Memos</p>	<p>#3- This is an account of the semester. Memos helped me write descriptive accounts that were woven into the narrative research text to show what happened during the semester and the relationships among the events.</p>
<p><i>Week #1 Survey and Response to Videos and Reading.</i> This was their first exposure in this course to the idea of civic engagement, critical literacy and critical pedagogy. After watching a TED Talk and reading the prologue to <i>Black Ants and Buddhists</i> they wrote their reactions to what the teachers observed believed about the purpose of education and how students could use their literacies to create change</p>	<p>In Vivo Coding- Since this is narrative, attention to the story that the PSTs are telling is important. In Vivo coding will help determine some themes Descriptive Coding Civic Efficacy Matrix Analytic Memos</p> <p>Questions to ask- What are their understandings of the purpose of schools? Critical literacy? Roles as Teachers?</p>	<p>#1- Will show their preliminary understandings of literacy. Also looks into their personal experiences that helped them develop these understandings.</p>

*Table Continued*

Data Source	Data Analysis	Connections to Research Questions
<p><i>3,2,1 Responses on Standards and Engaging Students with Disciplinary Literacy</i> will reveal thoughts about their use and understanding of standards (3 Ideas). This will also help me to see what they have learned in other classes or in their own schooling that is related to standards (2 connections)</p>	<p>In Vivo Coding Descriptive Critical Literacy Matrix Questions to ask- how do they view literacy instruction, what do they believe the standards empower children to do with their reading and writing?</p>	<p>#1- Will show their understandings about literacy as they interpret CCSS. I will also see what prior knowledge they are bringing with them to class</p>
<p><i>Midterm Self-Evaluation</i> gave them the opportunity to describe what they had learned in the first half of the semester and what they were starting to understand about how literacy skills could be used in meaningful ways.</p>	<p>Descriptive Coding Questions to ask- What are their understandings of the purpose of schools? Critical literacy? Roles as Teachers?</p>	<p>#1- Mid-way through the semester, will help me to see how their ideas are changing</p>
<p><i>Advanced Organizer about Community Teacher and Civic Engagement.</i> They read Peter Murrell Jr.'s <i>Community Teacher</i> and described how the ideas in the articles</p>	<p>Invivo Descriptive Civic Efficacy Matrix Critical Literacy Matrix How do the ideas expressed in the readings compare to what they believe about teaching? Do they see themselves as change agents?</p>	<p>#1- After reading about an alternative view of the roles of teachers, how have their understandings changed?</p>

*Table Continued*

Data Source	Data Analysis	Connections to Research Questions
<i>Academic Conversation Plan.</i> This is the first opportunity they had to incorporate critical literacy in their own teaching.	Descriptive Coding Critical Literacy Matrix Civic Efficacy Matrix  How are they trying out critical literacy? How are they using critical texts	#2- They are actually trying out some of the ideas they have learned about in class
<i>Academic Conversation Reflection</i> described their thought processes and decisions about the importance of the topic they chose for the discussion and how and why they felt the topic of their choice was important.	Invivo Coding Descriptive Coding Critical Literacy Matrix Civic Efficacy Matrix  Why did they make the decisions they made? What does this reveal about their civic efficacy?	#3- Why did they make some of the decisions they made about content, materials, and the focus of the discussion?
<i>Final Project for Community Garden.</i> The lesson they developed for the Boys and Girls Club summer program. The materials they	Descriptive coding	#2- How are they using critical literacy and thinking about civic engagement?

*Table Continued*

Data Source	Data Analysis	Connections to Research Questions
<p><i>Final Reflection Paper</i> describing their decision-making processes as they created their learning activities and selected materials for the Boys and Girls Club program. They discussed their growth as an educator and how community connections might inform the decisions they make.</p>	<p>Descriptive Coding Critical Literacy Matrix Civic Efficacy Matrix Analytic Memos</p> <p>Questions to ask- What are their understandings of the purpose of schools? Critical literacy? Roles as Teachers? Do they see themselves as change agents?</p>	<p>#1 and #2- What do they see as their roles as teachers now? How did it change? How do they see themselves using critical literacy? What is the importance of</p>
<p>Transcribed audio recordings of semi-structured interviews of participants. These were done in the 2 months following the end of the semester. Questions further probed their understandings of their roles as teachers and how they could teach critical literacy. They also were asked about their teacher journey and what events helped develop their understandings about teaching and critical literacy</p>	<p>In Vivo Coding Descriptive Coding Critical Literacy Matrix Civic Efficacy Matrix Analytic Memos</p> <p>Questions to ask: How do they see themselves using the ideas discussed in class How do they understand their roles as teachers What were some key moments in their learning?</p>	<p>#3- What helped them learn? What were some significant learning experiences and why</p>

## APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

### ***SCRIPT—Study description for students***

***Dana Karraker, School of Teaching and Learning, Illinois State University***

Since students will be asked to consent to participate in the study while they are enrolled in the Co-Investigator's section of *TCH 223: Content Area Language and Literacy in the Elementary Classroom*, a member of the dissertation committee will need to be the person who describes the study to the student, ask for consent to participate, collect and then store the forms until after the semester ends. This needs to be done in order to eliminate the possibility that not participating in the study could negatively affect the relationship between the student and the course instructor (Co-Investigator) and possibly affecting the students' grade in the course. Consent forms will be held by Dr. Elizabeth White until after grades are submitted for the semester on May 16, 2017. The Co-Investigator will not know who has consented for the study until after the grades are submitted.

### **The person describing the study will follow this script:**

*Dana Karraker is inviting your voluntary participation in a research project that she is conducting as a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Brian Horn in the School of Teaching and Learning. The purpose of the research is to discover how preservice teachers in TCH 223: Content Area Language and Literacy in Elementary Classrooms develop their understanding of civic engagement and critical literacy through participating in service learning and how they incorporate this kind of learning in their teaching. The research will take place during the spring 2017 semester in the TCH 223: Content Area Language and Literacy in Elementary Classrooms course. As described in the course syllabus, all students in the class, regardless of whether they participate in the study, are engaging in classroom discussion board posts, class activities, civic engagement field activities, and writing assignments such as reflections, and lesson plans. If you agree to*

*participate, you would be providing consent for Dana to use these materials as data. No additional work will be expected of those who consent to participate.*

*Since she will not know who has consented to participate until after grades are submitted, your grade will not be affected if you choose not to participate. Upon completion of the semester, after grades are submitted, Dana will ask some participants to participate in individual interviews so that she can explore thoughts on how you incorporate critical pedagogy and civic engagement in your teaching. If you consent to participate in the interviews, please complete the relevant portion of the form. Dana will use pseudonyms for all participants and locations in research reports to ensure confidentiality.*

*In the unlikely event of a breach in confidentiality, there is a minimal possibility of social or psychological risk if any information that you write or share in the interview about a school you are working in or have worked in is negative. In the highly unlikely event that school personnel read or hear such comments, there might be the risk of damaging the working relationship between you and the teachers and/or administrators in that school or school district. In order to protect your confidentiality, data will be secured on a password protected computer or in her locked office. When information about this project is shared, all identifiers of participants will be removed, which would include using pseudonyms of individuals and locations.*

*If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form that indicates you have read the consent letter and agree. Consent forms will be in Dr. White's possession and not shared with Dana until after grades are submitted for the semester. She will not know who has consented to participate until after May 16, 2017. Declining to participate involves no penalty. You may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting Dr. White until May 16, 2017, or by contacting Dana after grades are submitted.*

*If you have questions, Dr. White can be contacted at [xxxxx@xxxxx.edu](mailto:xxxxx@xxxxx.edu) or (XXX)XXX-XXXX. Or you may feel free to contact Dana with questions at [xxxxx@xxxxx.edu](mailto:xxxxx@xxxxx.edu) or (XXX)XXX-XXXX, **after May 16, 2017.** If you have any questions about your rights in relationship to this project, you may contact*



*the Office of Research Ethics and Compliance, (XXX)XXX-XXXX, or via email at [xxxxx@xxxx.edu](mailto:xxxxx@xxxx.edu). All of this information is listed on the Consent Form.*

## APPENDIX E: BEGINNING OF THE COURSE SURVEY

### Beginning of the Course Survey and Response to Reading

#### Content Area Literacy Survey

Please share your experiences with literacy instruction and your beliefs about the roles and responsibilities of schools and literacy teachers. This information will be useful in a couple of ways, mainly for me to gauge where you are as teacher candidates and to help you articulate your understandings of literacy instruction and where you are in your teaching journey.

1. Tell me your name and your major
2. What are your experiences with teaching literacy? (i.e. tutoring, clinical settings, volunteering, literacy and children's literature courses you have taken and are currently taking)
3. What are you really looking forward to learning about in this course? (See the learning outcomes, course intro PowerPoint, and assignments on the syllabus)
4. What questions or concerns do you have about this course?
5. What content looks confusing, difficult, or intimidating? (See the learning outcomes, course intro PowerPoint, and assignments on the syllabus)
6. What are some social issues that are important to you that you would bring to the classroom?
7. What do you see as your strengths as a literacy teacher?
8. What is something you think you need to develop to be a successful literacy teacher?

#### Self-Assessment of Literacy Practices

Please let me know what knowledge and skills you have developed as a literacy instructor. The last item will allow you to share additional information about what you have learned about literacy instruction.

1. Workshop Approach to Teaching Reading and Writing
  - Never heard of it.
  - I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately
  - I'm familiar with it but could use a review
  - I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview
2. Comprehension Strategies
  - Never heard of it.
  - I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately

- I'm familiar with it but could use a review
  - I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview
3. Vocabulary Strategies
- Never heard of it.
  - I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately
  - I'm familiar with it but could use a review
  - I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview
4. Phonics and Phonemic Awareness Strategies
- Never heard of it.
  - I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately
  - I'm familiar with it but could use a review
  - I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview
5. Emergent Literacy/Concepts about Print
- Never heard of it.
  - I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately
  - I'm familiar with it but could use a review
  - I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview
6. Using Multimodal Texts/Multiliteracies
- Never heard of it.
  - I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately
  - I'm familiar with it but could use a review
  - I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview
7. Content Area Reading/Writing
- Never heard of it.
  - I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately
  - I'm familiar with it but could use a review
  - I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview
8. The Writing Process
- Never heard of it.
  - I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately
  - I'm familiar with it but could use a review
  - I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview
9. 6 + 1 Writing Traits
- Never heard of it.
  - I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately
  - I'm familiar with it but could use a review
  - I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview
10. Using Mentor Texts
- Never heard of it.
  - I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately

- I'm familiar with it but could use a review
- I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview

#### 11. Critical Literacy

- Never heard of it.
- I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately
- I'm familiar with it but could use a review
- I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview

#### 12. Teaching Social Justice Issues

- Never heard of it.
- I'm familiar with it but couldn't discuss it articulately
- I'm familiar with it but could use a review
- I could wow a principal with my knowledge of this in an interview

Share a literacy learning experience you have had as a teacher or student that you feel was particularly successful (engaging, meaningful, fun)

Describe the ways that you enact your rights and responsibilities as a citizen? Do you volunteer? Have you ever worked for a cause that is important to you? What motivates or inspires you to do this?

Comments on any of your above responses

#### Response to Classroom Practices

After reading "Black Ants and Buddhists" and viewing the TED Talk, "Jennifer Magiera: Power to the Pupil," (Posted on the Additional Reading page of our Wiki) share your thoughts about what you notice about the type of classroom experiences these teachers are describing.

How do these classrooms compare with your experiences- either as student going through elementary and middle school or what you have observed in clinical settings?

How do you think the teachers in the classrooms described in the readings and video define the purpose of school? How does it compare to the ideas we discussed in class?

What literacy skills are students in these classrooms developing (be specific, you might even consider if the skills fit with Common Core)?

What do you see as the value of approaching teaching and learning the way described in the reading and the video?

What do you see as some of the challenges of teaching the way that is described in the reading and the video?

Share other thoughts you had about what these teachers are doing with their students.

APPENDIX F: IMMIGRATION TEXTS

Children's Literature		
Title	Author	Summary
<i>Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story</i>	Ken Mochizuki	A Japanese diplomat defies orders from his country and writes visas for Jews fleeing Nazis
<i>Baseball Saved Us</i>	Ken Mochizuki	The story of a Japanese-American WW II internment camp
<i>Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation</i>	Edwidge Danticat	A little girl visits her mother who is in an immigration detention center
<i>One Green Apple</i>	Eve Bunting	The story of a Muslim girl's experience in a new school where she doesn't know the language
<i>Friends from the Other Side: Amigos del otro Lado</i>	Gloria Anzaldua	A girl befriends a boy who has crossed into the US from Mexico and helps protect him from border guards and bullies
<i>Sitti's Secrets</i>	Naomi Shihab Nye	A little girl talks about what it is like to live on the other side of the world from her grandmother
<i>How Many Days to America: A Thanksgiving Story</i>	Eve Bunting	A family flees their home in a Caribbean island and sails to America in a fishing boat
<i>Immigrants</i>	Martin Sandler	A story of early 1900 immigration told through photographs from the Library of Congress
<i>Ellis Island</i>	Melissa McDaniel	The story of immigrants who came to America seeking freedom

*Table Continued*

Online News Texts Title	Author/Publication Author	Description Summary
<i>GW Law Prof Turley: 'The Odds' Are In Trump's Favor On Immigration Order Legal Challenges, 'This Is Not a Muslim Ban'</i>	Ian Hanchett, <i>Brietbart</i>	A news article saying the President's immigration executive order is within his legal authority
<i>Malevolence Tempered by Incompetence: Trump's Horrifying Executive Order on Refugees and Visas</i>	Benjamin Wittes, <i>Lawfare</i>	A news story describing the Presidents executive order on immigration as horribly written and evil
<i>How Will Immigration Change Under Trump</i>	<i>The Onion</i>	An infographic listing satirical actions the US will take when dealing with immigrants.
<i>Syrian Boy in the Ambulance</i>	<i>Time</i> , Photographer unknown	Photo of a child from Syria covered in soot and blood that went viral in social media

APPENDIX G: CITIZENSHIP TEXTS

Picture Books		
Title	Author(s)	Summary
<i>The Great Kapok Tree</i>	Lynne Cherry	A man walks into the rainforest to cut down a tree. He falls asleep and the animals come tell him why the rainforest is important and convince him to not cut down the Kapok tree.
<i>A River Ran Wild</i>	Lynne Cherry	The story of how a the Nashua River in Massachusetts became polluted and how the community worked to clean it up
<i>My brother, Charlie</i>	Holly Robinson Peete and Ryan Elizabeth Peete	A girl describes her relationship with her twin brother, Charlie, who is autistic.
<i>The day the crayons quit</i>	Drew Drywalt	A box of crayons writes letters to their owner, Duncan, expressing their discontent with how they are treated and used.
<i>Nelson Mandela</i>	Kadir Nelson	The biography of Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Nelson Mandela. Tells of his life as a young boy as he grew, working for equality for all people in South Africa
<i>My princess boy</i>	Cheryl Kilodavis	A mother describes her unconditional love for and acceptance of her son who likes “girly” things, dresses in dresses and wears a tiara. She addresses bullying and calls for acceptance of unique individuals
<i>’Twas the night before Thanksgiving</i>	Dav Pilkey	Children go on a fieldtrip to a turkey farm on the day before Thanksgiving. When they realize the turkeys at the farm are meant to be killed, the children hide them and take them home to be Thanksgiving guest and enjoy peanut butter and jell instead of turkey.
<i>Not Every Princess</i>	Jeffery Bone and Lisa Bone	A simple book that shows a young children challenging stereotypes with a “Not every ___” message.

*Table Continued*

Picture Books		
Title	Author(s)	Summary
<i>Jacob's New Dress</i>	Sarah and Ian Hoffman	Parents describe their young gender non-conforming son who likes to dress up. He sometimes likes to wear dresses and wants to wear them to school. Describes how the adults deal with bullying behavior by other children
<i>In our mothers' house</i>	Patricia Polacco	Describes the life of a loving family of two mothers and their three adopted children.
<i>Click, Clack Moo, Cows that Type</i>	Doreen Cronin	The animals in the barnyard are unhappy with their living condition. They use a typewriter to write letters to the farmer demanding better living conditions and threaten to not give milk or eggs until their demands are met.
<i>Be good to Eddie Lee</i>	Virginia Fleming	A little girl discovers the talents and gifts of her neighbor, Eddie Lee, who has Downs Syndrome.
<i>David Gets in Trouble</i>	David Shannon	David always seems to be doing things that get him into trouble. In the beginning he claims that he is not at fault but learns that life is better when he apologizes.

Young Adult Novels		
Title	Author	Summary
<i>Harry Potter</i>	J.K Rowling	Harry Potter attends Hogwarts, a school for wizards. He finds that he has to fight the evil being, Voldemort and to do so often has to break some rules.
<i>Charlotte's Web</i>	E.B. White	The spider Charlotte works to save her friend, Wilber the Pig, from slaughter by writing mysterious messages in her web.

*Table Continued*



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Young Adult Novels

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Title	Author	Summary
<i>Number the Stars</i>	Lois Lowery	A young girl's family hides her Jewish friend when Nazi's come to Denmark and start deporting the Jews to concentration camps. Also tells of how the Danish people helped the Jews escape to Sweden during this time.
<i>The Hunger Games</i>	Suzanne Collins	In a dystopian society where children are sent to participate in games where they fight each other to survive, Katniss Everdeen continually fights against the "Capitol" and President Snow for the survival of the people in her district
<i>The Giver</i>	Lois Lowery	In a world of conformity where discomfort has been eliminated, Jonas has been selected to be "Receiver of Memories." As he gains access to knowledge and truths that have been denied to the rest of the people around him, Jonas defies the rules of his society to save the life of a "newchild."
<i>Flush</i>	Carl Hiaasen	Noah attempts to stop a floating casino from illegally dumping waste into the Florida Keys.

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## APPENDIX H: ACADEMIC CONVERSATION PLANNING TEMPLATE

### Academic Conversation Plan

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal/Outcome/Objective** What do you hope the participants get out of the reading and discussion?

### **Enduring Understandings**

### **Essential Questions to Explore**

**Rationale:** *Why is this important to know? What is happening in the world that makes this topic particularly relevant?*

**Grouping** (Describe how you will group the participants)

**Materials** (What will you need to have available for the discussion?)

**Discussion Strategy** (What are you using and why?)

**Procedure** (List the steps of your discussion activities. You will also want to consider how you will give the directions)

**Assessment** (How will you know you accomplished your outcomes? What will you look/listen for? Be specific)

### **Reflection**

- Briefly describe how the discussion went. What worked and what didn't?
- What do you think you did that contributed to the outcome?
- Discuss the texts you chose and why and how you think they did or did not support your learning outcomes
- What would you change and why?
- How well did you group work together to plan this discussion?