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Exploring Secondary Teachers' Embodiments and Practices of Critical Media Literacy During the COVID-19 Pandemic in California

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Exploring Secondary Teachers' Embodiments and Practices of Critical Media Literacy During

the COVID-19 Pandemic in California

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Andrea Lorraine Gambino

2023

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Exploring Secondary Teachers' Embodiments and Practices of Critical Media Literacy During

the COVID-19 Pandemic in California

by

Andrea Lorraine Gambino

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Edith S. Omwami, Chair

The COVID-19 pandemic caused many educational stakeholders to rethink the purpose and function of public education. The COVID-19 mediasphere and politically divided climate has ushered legislative stakeholders and the public's attention to the need for media literacy education. Critical media literacy addresses the goals of media literacy education but also offers an explicit focus on addressing the relationships between audiences and media, information, and power. Because critical media literacy emphasizes challenging how power maps onto information and reproduces injustice, it requires an embodied stance that dissents against hierarchical forms of education and hegemonic systems, structures, and ideologies. Critical media literacy necessitates an embodied critical engagement (ways of being) with the world and critical pedagogical practices (ways of doing) at the classroom-level (Vasquez et al., 2019, p. 300). While there has been growing interest in the field of critical media literacy in the United

States during the pandemic, more research is needed with practitioners to understand what shapes their critical embodiments and practices of critical media literacy.

This critical qualitative collective case study examined four secondary teachers' embodiments and practices of critical media literacy during the COVID-19 pandemic in California. Two questions informed this study: 1) How do teachers describe their embodiments (ways of being) in relation to critical media literacy?, and 2) How do teachers' practice (ways of doing) critical media literacy in their classrooms?. Building from Kellner and Share's (2019) multiperspectival approach, this research was guided by several critical social theories, including: cultural studies, democratic inquiry-based pedagogy, critical pedagogy, and intersectionality. Data collection included: qualitative semi-structured interviews and artifacts (e.g., teachers' lesson plans, student work samples, etc.). Data was analyzed through two rounds of coding: in vivo and axial. Findings indicated that teachers' embodiments of critical media literacy were influenced by their journeys to criticality and rooted in transformative worldviews. Teachers' practices of critical media literacy relied on co-constructing safe and critical communities and scaffolding critical media analysis and production. This research study establishes a starting point for subsequent critical media literacy education research, theory, practice, and policy by providing examples of teachers' embodied perspectives and practices.

The dissertation of Andrea Lorraine Gambino is approved.

Ananda Maria Marin

Daniel G. Solorzano

Hiller Spires

Edith S. Omwami, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2023

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to teachers and students who co-create beloved communities in

critical solidarity with each other in the pursuit of self, social, and environmental justice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASUCLA: Associates Students of the University of California, Los Angeles

CCSS: Common Core State Standards

CQR: Critical Qualitative Research

ELD: English Language Development

ICTS: Information communication technologies

NAMLE: National Association for Media Literacy Education

NCTE: National Council of Teachers of English

UCLA: University of California, Los Angeles

U.S.: United States

PREFACE: TRACING UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

Across my ten-year career as a secondary educator and in the past four-years as a teaching assistant at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), being in community with students full of vision, heart, and action has always grounded me. In January of 2020, I was in my second year of the Social Sciences and Comparative Education Ph.D. program at UCLA. I was far away from my hometown, the border of Tuscarora and Siouan territory, what is now known as Raleigh, North Carolina. At this time, I was a teaching assistant for a Scandinavian literature and composition course with a wonderful group of forty undergraduate students. After the holidays, I returned to our campus classroom. I noticed right away that students were asking me questions about recent public health news they saw emerge on social media. As we often do in the classroom, we strived to make-meaning together, discussed our concerns, corroborated information, and problem-solved. I began relying on many of the tools I used as a secondary teacher to help students think critically *with* and *about* media, rather than consuming all information as objective facts. We did not know it at the time, but we were beginning to trace the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. An era that has been distinguished by many scholars, journalists, and everyday citizens as an unprecedented destabilization in our world's history (Eubanks, 2020, para. 1).

Before I knew it, while I was sitting in the Evelyn and Mo Ostín Music Café holding extended office hours before our class on March 10th, 2020, the student I was meeting with turned to me with a glowing cell phone and an email stating that UCLA would be closing in-person operations for the time being. My student's voice shuddered when she asked me whether what was happening was real and if things would be alright. I looked her in the eyes, and I told her that while I did not know what was going on, that we would figure it out together. I rapidly

contacted my guiding instructor and my colleagues to gather more information. With an immediate response, our supervising professor advised us to prepare to close-out everything we could with our students and to tell them not to worry about their final papers until we received more updates from the university about how to proceed. He encouraged us to listen to students, hold space with them, and to do our best to celebrate all we had accomplished together that quarter.

My student and I jogged to our beloved classroom (Rolfe 3121). We prepared to discuss the unknown. This group of young stars gathered. We sat, we discussed, we made-meaning together. We vowed to stay connected and quickly orchestrated a communication plan through a class email thread and Google Meets. As we often did in this evening class, when the sun hit the horizon at just the right time, we all paused and turned to gaze out of our classroom window one last time. Soaking in the pink, purple, orange, and blue Los Angeles sunset together. Just like that--our last in-person class bittersweetly ended. The very next day, limitations on air travel, the beginning of business and school closures, and the mounting global spread of 118,000 COVID-19 cases occurred by March 11th, 2020, in 114 countries, leading to the World Health Organization's official determination of the public health crisis as a pandemic (Center for Disease Control, 2022, para. 40).

Quickly after this determination, teachers and students all over the world transitioned from physical classrooms to fully remote teaching on Zoom among other technology-mediated platforms. In the Winter of 2021, while teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic, my trajectory as a scholar majorly shifted. Originally, I began studying in-depth how critical pedagogies were used in an array of disciplines and grade-levels. Next, I narrowed my research to critical literacy, truly borne from my earlier work as a secondary teacher when I pursued my

master's degree. During the Winter of 2021, I served as a teaching assistant in a course about Critical Digital Media Literacies, which further affirmed my dedication to this school of thought.

When meeting with my guiding instructor, we built a lesson together over Zoom on January 6th, 2021. While we were working, we started receiving text messages from friends and family that discussed the Insurrection on the Capitol. We rapidly shifted gears and started collecting media examples occurring in real time from Twitter, Associated Press, and multiple other news outlets in the United States and around the globe. We realized it was likely our students were doing the very same thing. We decided to develop a collaborative Google Slide-deck to integrate in the following day's lesson to create a space where students could share media they saw on social networks or other news sources. At this point in the quarter, students were previously introduced to the Critical Media Literacy Framework: Conceptual Understandings and Guiding Questions (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 8). We had laid formidable groundwork as a community by engaging in extensive discussions about our individual and collective goals for advancing social and environmental justice. After we discussed painstaking racist imagery, compared media representations from diverging politically affiliated news outlets, unpacked our discomfort and fears, and held space discussing these severely troubling times, a student raised their digital hand on Zoom. One student passionately and earnestly asked, "How can we bring critical media literacy to our families, friends, and communities?" This question has remained central in my motivation to pursue the research presented in this study.

I plan to keep exploring and contributing to critical media literacy policies and practices as I continue my journey as a teacher-scholar-activist. This dissertation is a beginning point to help respond to this student's question: "How can we bring critical media literacy to our families, friends, and communities?" It's about extraordinary and impactful people whose critical

embodiments and practices of critical media literacy have been the compass that guides their

courageous teach-for-truth-and-justice ethic. This dissertation helps tell their stories.

SELECTED EDUCATION

North Carolina State University

2011	M.Ed., Curriculum and Instruction: New Literacies and Global Learning.
2008	B.S., Curriculum and Instruction: Middle Grades Education, English Language Arts and Social Studies.

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University of California, Los Angeles

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2018-2022	Education and Information Studies: Critical Digital Media Literacies**, Introduction to Media Literacy, The Teaching Profession Graduate Professional Development: Implementing Teaching as Research Comparative Literature and Scandinavian Literature, Writing II: Enlightenment-20th Century****, Antiquity-Middle Ages, Scandinavian Literature and Cultures***

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2014-2018	Wake STEM Early College High School: Honors Civics (10); English (11)
2008-2014	Centennial Campus Magnet Middle School: Social Studies and English (7)

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Beach, R., Gambino, A., & Share, J. (2023). Annotated bibliography: Media Literacy. *Research in the Teaching of English, 57*(3), AB17-AB21.

Gambino, A., & Share, J. (2023). Critical media literacy and second language acquisition. In R. J. Tierney, F. Rizvi, & K. Ercikan (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education* (4th ed., pp. 76-85)*. Elsevier.

Spires, H. A., Gambino, A., Himes, M., Wang, L. (2023). Project-based Inquiry (PBI) Global: Border-Crossing Discourse within a collaboration of students from China and the United States. In S. N. Kerkhoff & H. A. Spires (Eds.), *Critical perspectives on global literacies: Bridging research and practice* (262-279)*. Routledge.

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[1] Taught on the quarter system; asterisks used to denote teaching the same course multiple times.

Share, J., & Gambino, A. (2022). A framework, disposition, and pedagogy for teaching critical media literacy. In W. Kist & M. T. Christel (Eds.), *NCTE Special Issues: Critical Media Literacy, Volume 2*: *Bringing Critical Media Literacy into ELA Classrooms*, 11-17.

Omwami, E. M., Gambino, A., Wright, J. (2022). Pedagogical practices in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic: Implications for inclusive quality education for all. In A.W. Wiseman, (Ed.), *Annual review of comparative and international education 2021* (Vol. 42b, pp. 163-180). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Spires, H. A., Himes, M., Lee, C. C., & Gambino, A. (2021). "We are the future": Embracing the potential for critical literacy and social action. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *53*(2), 219-241.

SELECTED CONFERENCE PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Gambino, A., & Ensweiler, M. (2023, April). Disrupting neoliberal paradigms: Ecopedagogies and critical media literacy for environmental justice in higher education. American Educational Research Association Annual Convention, Chicago, Illinois.

Olguín, A., & Gambino, A. (2022, October). *En Comunidad: Critical Media Literacy and Care for Life.* Critical Media Literacy Conference of the Americas, Oakland, California.

Medina, A., Share, J., Gambino, A., Mead, J., Melgoza, M., Moss, S. (2022, November). *Critical Media Literacy Brings Social and Environmental Justice into K-16 Classrooms*. National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention, Anaheim, California.

Richmond, S., & Gambino, A. (2022, November). *Ecowriting Our World: Critical Media Literacy and Environmental Justice in English Classrooms.* National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention, Anaheim, California.

Share, J., Gambino, A., Melgoza, M., Medina, A., Mead, J. (2022, June). *Critical Media Literacy and Environmental Justice Education.* International Media Literacy Research Symposium, Madison, Wisconsin.

Gambino, A. (2021, July). *Constructing Counterstories through Digital Storytelling.* National Association for Media Literacy Education Conference, Online.

SELECTED SERVICE TO THE FIELD

2022-pres.	*UNESCO Democracy, Global Citizenship, Transformative Education* Organizing and Communications Committees
2022	*Environmental Justice Faculty Search Committee, Student Member*
2021-pres.	*Critical Media Literacy Conference of the Americas* Organizing, Executive, and Communications Committees
2019-2023	*Associated Students UCLA Communications Board,*[2] Member

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[2] Served as Chair (2021-2022); Vice-chair (2020-2021); Graduate Student Representative (2019-2020; 2022-2023)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic severely altered how people live, learn, work, and connect. In response to the pandemic, governments issued several public health and safety directives, including business and school closures, shelter in place orders, mask mandates, social distancing requirements, and extensive periods of quarantine and isolation (Omwami et al., 2022). In the United States (U.S.), the pandemic disruption caused significant shifts in public education. The transition from physical classrooms to online learning platforms under these emergency directives has also led to broader discussions about the purpose, function, and role of public education. Politically divided federal and state level legislation has prompted intense debates over critical education theories, curricula, and pedagogies. Amidst these on-going debates, teachers who embody critical worldviews have been caught in the crossfire for teaching truth-bearing histories and contemporary issues, especially when representing multiple perspectives.

Additionally, it is impossible to separate discussions of public education during the pandemic without considering the other coinciding sociopolitical conditions which affected teachers and students. The public health crisis has occurred at the nexus of parallel pandemics of racism, economic peril, and the climate crisis (Ladson-Billings, 2021b, pp. 166-167). We have witnessed ongoing police murders of Black lives, anti-Asian violence, as well as many other rampant forms of identity-based (i.e., class, race, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, nationality, religion, etc.) and environmental injustices.

So many of the struggles which have been exacerbated during the pandemic have become increasingly visible on televisions, handheld devices, and computer screens. People have scoured news outlets and social media to try to comprehend a world that at times, has become unrecognizable. It is now more commonplace to stream news via online platforms and to parse

together current events as they unfold, via Tweets or through sound bites of information from Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or Snapchat. Popular hashtags, such as: #WearAMask, #NoMasks (Lang et al., 2021); #BlackLivesMatter, #BlueLivesMatter (Powell et al., 2022); #Insurrection, #StoptheSteal (Britt & Sierra-Rivera, 2021) among other juxtaposing trending topics reveal that information circulating digitally-networked environments, like its creators, are never neutral. Indeed, media cultures are "a terrain of struggle" (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 8) that reflect the same kind of ideological and political divisions present in society.

People have relied on information communication technologies (ICTs) and technology-mediated environments to try to make-meaning out of an onslaught of information amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the complexities of the mediasphere[3] (Hartley, 2002) and how audiences interact and respond to information has never required more critical education or pedagogical intervention. With violent attacks from alt-right politicians and conservative extremists promoting false narratives, the mediasphere is riddled with misinformation[4], disinformation[5], a public health infodemic[6], and a rise in hate speech[7] leading to detrimental effects on everyday citizens when not approached critically. This research study investigates

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[3] Mediasphere refers to the collection of mediums and media messages that are created, delivered, and accessed by individuals or groups (Hartley, 2002). This term is considered a sub-component of Jurij and Yuri Lotman's (1990) concept of a "semiosphere" which is a collection of cultural speech, communication, and textual systems representative of a respective culture.

[4] Misinformation occurs when an individual or group shares incorrect and misleading information without knowledge of the source material being non-credible (Garrett, 2020; Pennycook et al., 2020).

[5] Disinformation differs from misinformation; a user or group consciously creates and falsifies information with ill-intent to negatively impact others (French & Monahan, 2020; McCloskey & Heymann, 2020).

[6] An infodemic is an excess of quickly circulating deceptive or false information (e.g., news, photographs, videos, etc.) that complicates the mediasphere among a public health crisis (World Health Organization, 2020, para. 1).

[7] Hate speech refers to any type of communication (i.e., oral, written, visual, multimodal) that slanders, attacks, or utilizes discriminatory rhetoric against an individual or group based on someone's identity (e.g., class, race, ethnicity, religion, dis/ability, gender, sexuality, etc.) (United Nations Working Group on Hate Speech, 2020, p. 8).

teachers' accounts of critical media literacy, both as an embodied philosophy and as a pedagogical practice to help students navigate this terrain of struggle.

Statement of Research: Towards Critical Media Literacy Education

The growing field of critical media literacy responds to the ongoing sociopolitical and mediasphere challenges occurring before, during, and emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. Critical media literacy is an embodied theory and practical set of pedagogies that emboldens teachers' and students' critical inquiry-based questions about the relationships between audiences and media, information, systems, and ideologies of power (Kellner & Share, 2019; Share & Beach, 2022). It propels a critical disposition to print and non-print texts as well as the historical, contemporary, social, economic, and political contexts that surround media messages. In this view, material conditions and digitally mediated worlds are interdependent.

By questioning ideologies that are normalized in society by the creators and distributors that disseminate messages, one analyzes how media messages are either reproducing hegemony or counteracting problematic narratives, such as: false information, inaccurate histories, harmful identity-based and environmental representations. A critical media literacy paradigm espouses that just as identities, forms of government, and all systems and structures are socially constructed over time in society, they can simultaneously be deconstructed and reconstructed to become more democratic, socially, and environmentally just. Pedagogically, critical media analysis and alternative media production are two key processes that imbue a dialectic of social critique, foster empathy and critical solidarity, and aim to amplify teachers and students as co-agents for human and more-than-human rights. Critical media literacy is an urgent imperative for people of all ages because it disentangles social systems, structures, policies, and ideologies that reproduce ableism, classism, homophobia, racism, sexism, transphobia, xenophobia, and other

forms of identity-based and environmental injustice (Funk et al., 2016; Kellner & Share, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2019; Trope et al., 2021).

While there has been growing interest and uptake in the field of critical media literacy across disciplinary boundaries and grade-levels during the pandemic (Kist, 2022), more research is needed with practitioners to understand how this theoretical stance is conceptualized and applied into practice (Lyiscott et al., 2021; Morrell et al., 2013; National Council of Teachers of English, 2021, 2022). This is especially pertinent as critical media literacy pedagogies are still "in its infancy" and "just beginning to develop" (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 7). Moreover, literature that represents how teachers' critical embodiments or "ways of being" (Vasquez, 2010, 2014a, 2014b, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019) influences their craft as critical media literacy pedagogues is scant. By listening and learning with practitioners about what influences and orients their critical embodiments, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of what brings, informs, and sustains them as critical media literacy pedagogues. This is important for deepening critical media literacy as a transformative theory and social practice that is adaptive, personal, and associated with teachers' and students' lifeworlds.

Since the release and adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by nearly all states across the country, teachers in every content area and grade-level are expected to integrate literacy instruction into their curriculum (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). According to the CCSS, literacy is operationalized as reading, writing, speaking, listening, and having a strong command of language competencies applicable for multiple disciplinary and academic contexts to prepare for college readiness, the workforce, and maneuvering everyday life (p. 4). This definition of literacy is synonymous with traditional, basic, or functional literacy perspectives which promote

critical thinking skills, but do not raise a critical stance (Cadiero-Kaplan & Smith, 2002) to how "literacy can be used to do harm--to deny access, to sort, [or] to delegitimize" (Majors & Lewis, 2017, p. 303). Muhammad (2020b) asserts that traditional literacy methods demonstrated by the CCSS perpetuates harm for Students of Color because the standards do not reflect culturally sustaining, historically responsive, or equity-driven paradigms. She advances the need for the CCSS to incorporate "new learning standards that are embedded in identity, skill development, intellectualism, joy, and criticality" (para. 12).

One area where the CCSS differs from traditional literacy methods resides in how they define texts. The standards articulate the importance of exposure to "print and non-print format texts in media forms old and new" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 4). Their aim is to build students' "research and media skills" (p. 4) so that they can read, write, and collect information effectively online while also navigating and producing digital rich texts. These skills are interrelated with the goals of media literacy which the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) define as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication" (n.d., para 1). Correspondingly, many state-level legislators have turned their attention to expanding educational policies to more adequately focus on increasing students' media literacy competencies due to concerns about youth's capabilities to identify accurate online information, maneuver online cultures safely, and to prepare them to participate as global citizens in an interdependent 21st-century global economy (Media Literacy Now, 2020, 2022, 2023). Media Literacy Now (2023) reports that 18 states have developed various bills, laws, and emerging policy-language to integrate media literacy curriculum into K-12 classrooms (p. 3).

In a practitioner's guide about the CCSS published by NAMLE, Moore and Bonilla (2014) discuss that media literacy education "supports many of the most challenging goals of the Common Core State Standards" (p. 1). However, the bulk of educators gain barely any training in teacher education programs or at the district-level to know how to guide students' critical thinking about media, omnipresent online populations, and diversifying communication mediums (Butler, 2020; Kellner & Share, 2005, 2019; Share et al., 2019; Share & McBride, 2022). Additionally, there is a lack of consensus among the field of media literacy regarding best classroom practices (Frechette, 2019; Thevenin, 2022). This has yielded challenges at the policy level and has led to limited fiscal allocations for school-based resources, teacher professional development, and curriculum design implementation plans (Trope et al., 2021). Hence, if approaches to media literacy education are incorporated at the classroom-level at all, they vary (Kellner & Share, 2007c). Common techniques often guide students to verify credible sources whereas others focus on media arts education (Kellner & Share, 2019) or lean more towards digital citizenship and cybersecurity practices (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009). Some teachers elect to integrate media as a means to increase student engagement. Predating the 2016 election and pandemic context, scholars and practitioners in the media literacy movement have mostly obliged political neutrality in order to reach broad audiences across political stances (Hobbs 2008; Kellner & Share, 2007b, 2007c; Rogow, 2004). However, there are partial ideological shifts taking shape within this movement due to challenges occurring in the mediasphere, the ongoing need for racial justice, and concerns about the climate crisis. Some proponents of media literacy are striving to address political propaganda and issues of injustice more explicitly, but not all scholars and practitioners have adopted a critical focus to challenge institutions or manifestations of power in media and society (Thevenin, 2022).

With so much information readily available, it is essential that students are equipped with the competencies necessary to decode the written or spoken word, visuals and multimedia, and the emotion-laden propaganda utilized by media creators that vie for their attention, engagement, and reactions. Youth need to be able to discern the differences between credible journalism and advertising marketeers (Breakstone et al., 2021; Wineburg et al., 2016, 2022), inclusive or dehumanizing identity-based and environmental representations (Kellner & Share, 2019), and how ICTs function as a tool to reproduce problematic beliefs or magnify democratic progress (Share & Gambino, 2022). This also includes providing students with frequent practice using ICTs to produce their own more just messages as a process for civic participation. While approaches to media literacy education provide an important foundation for students to begin to maneuver or participate in digital environments, it does not fully address the ever-changing challenges occurring in the mediasphere. It also does not take advantage of the full range of possibilities to embolden students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to participate and contribute to a more democratic society.

Morrell et al. (2013) argues that teaching with technology alone will not usher transformative change. Alternatively, they proclaim: "That change will only come through teachers who draw on critical frameworks to create learning communities where the use of these tools becomes an empowering enterprise" (p. 14). It is a complex process to teach critically with and about media; but our fragile social systems, the challenges in the mediasphere, and the rising influence of ICTs on youth merit an educational response that begs the need for critical media literacy education. Resultantly, this research illustrates the stories and lived experiences of secondary teachers' embodiments and practices of critical media literacy with youth during the COVID-19 pandemic as they navigated an ongoing public health infodemic--racial, social, and

environmental injustice--and an attempted coup on the Capitol incited by former President Donald Trump.

Theoretical Framework and Guiding Concepts: Towards Exploring Teachers' Embodiments and Practices of Critical Media Literacy

Critical media literacy brings together an amalgamation of critical social theories to investigate how systems and institutions of oppression are normalized and reproduced in media, popular culture, and society at large. In this section, I will delineate each of these theories and its contribution to critical media literacy as a multiperspectival theoretical orientation. First, I trace the more formally accepted theoretical roots of critical media literacy that emerged from the multidisciplinary field of cultural studies during the 20th century in Europe (Durham & Kellner, 2002; Hammer & Kellner, 2009). Second, I expand Kellner and Share's (2019) recommendation that critical media literacy should be viewed theoretically and practically from a "multiperspectival approach" (p. 22). This pays homage to the pedagogical progenitors of critical media literacy; specifically, Dewey's inquiry-based democratic education techniques and Freire's more radical and politically-infused critical pedagogies (Darder et al., 2003; Kincheloe, 2007). Further, this includes a stronger epistemological focus to more fully address the politics of representation which Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) developments of intersectionality crucially provide. Lastly, I provide a summary that arranges these teachings in a way which informs this study's explorations of teachers' embodied stances and pedagogical practices of critical media literacy in secondary school contexts.

Cultural Studies

Scholars from The Frankfurt School for Social Research in Germany and The Centre for Cultural Studies at Birmingham in the United Kingdom expanded Marxist philosophies with several critical social theories. They directed their attention towards investigating the role of institutional power in the development and distribution of media and popular culture as tools to socialize the public to accept capitalist subjugation and identity-based marginalization. Below, I explain the different benefits and limitations from each of these scholarly traditions and how they inform understandings and future directions of critical media literacy.

The Frankfurt School. During the 1920s and 1960s, intellectuals associated with The Frankfurt School advanced Marxist philosophies and critical social theories through inquiry-based social research and dialectical critique (Durham & Kellner, 2002; Hammer & Kellner, 2009). Notable figures such as Max Horkheimer, T.W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Lowenthal, Erich Fromm, Walter Benjamin, and Jürgen Habermas went beyond purist Marxist economic perspectives and blended Freudian psychoanalysis to analyze how emerging communication technologies proliferated dominant ideologies of the ruling class to manipulate the public for capitalist interests (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944; Kellner, 1989). Marcuse (1941) proposed that the interdependence between industrial societies and new technologies would increase. He hypothesized that as cutting-edge innovations permeated the public sphere, they would also mediate independent thought, behavioral expressions, and social relationships, likely resulting in the reproduction of dynamics of power and control.

Due to Nazi infiltration in Germany during World War II, The Frankfurt School scholars fled to America for refuge (Morrell, 2008). Upon their arrival, they noticed the growth of media culture in the U.S., such as: film, music, radio, television, and other forms of news and

entertainment (Wiggershaus, 1994). Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) defined the term "culture industries" to operationalize how mechanisms of industrialization mass produce culture with capitalist goals. In other words, they argued that media artifacts must be analyzed as instruments that perpetuate dominant class, political, and cultural hierarchies in society. They asserted that because capitalist enterprises fund mass media productions, they also use marketeering techniques for social coercion that sells, normalizes, and preferences dominant ideologies, beliefs, values, and lifestyles. They argued that culture industries safeguarded capitalist systems by promoting consumerism, subduing critical thinking, and favoring homogenized cultures that suffocated diversity and resistance. Additionally, Habermas' (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* added a historical lens to Horkheimer and Adorno's distinction of the culture industries. In his archival work, he noticed the linkages between the 20th-century mass production of culture and 18th and 19th century bourgeois societies. Collectively, the understandings of the culture industries by Horkheimer, Adorno, and Habermas work in tandem, considering how systemic injustices from the past are reproduced through media and popular culture in the modern world. These early analyses of the culture industries provide a systems-level focus in the field of critical media literacy. For example, Kellner and Share (2019) adapt the term culture industries to signify the role of "Productions and Institutions" (p. 8). They argue that dominant media and popular culture are often created and distributed to benefit systems of power that connect with governmental or commercial motivations.

Walker Benjamin (1986) explored the possibilities of emerging technologies for cultural production and social change. As an ardent critic of modernity, capitalism, and its steering of mass culture, he claimed that technological innovations disavowed people's "aura" or meaning-making strategies, which they previously applied to analog art-forms. He envisioned that

oppositional media productions created without capitalist benefactors could help reconnect audiences with critical thought and progressive knowledge exchange. Alongside German artist Bertolt Brecht, they co-developed films and radio plays of their own. Their oppositional media piqued the public's interest in forming relational, dialectical, and interpretive connections with others during media consumption. Benjamin and Brecht's oppositional media projects offer early guideposts towards a key pedagogical element in critical media literacy education, which is now called 'alternative' or 'countermedia production.' From a critical media literacy perspective, alternative or countermedia is created by students to express their agency using print and/or digital technologies to garner awareness, critical thinking, dialogue, action, and solidarity to challenge systems, structures, and ideologies of oppression (Kellner & Share, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2019; Morrell et al., 2013; Share & Gambino, 2022). However, Benjamin and Brecht did not provide a schematic for how educators and students might approach oppositional media production; thus, leaving a practical gap that teachers using critical media literacy pedagogies must fill for themselves.

While the delineation of the culture industries and oppositional media provided catalysts to begin the examination of the mass production of culture, The Frankfurt School operated with the belief that audiences are passive consumers of media messages. Kellner (1995) offers a fair praise and critique; he asserts:

> The Frankfurt School, for instance, developed a powerful critique of the culture industries and the ways that they manipulate individuals into conforming to the beliefs, values and practices of the existing society, but the critical theorists lack theories of how one can resist media manipulation, how one can read against the grain to derive critical insights

into self and society through the media, and how one can produce alternative forms of

media and culture. (p. xiv)

The Frankfurt School's adaptations of Marxism with critical social theories in their criticisms of

capitalist systems and the culture industries still influence new media and popular culture

critiques in the field of critical media literacy. They legitimized the critical examination of mass

media, advancing democratic reason as an imperative for social progress to challenge capitalist

systems. Yet, their limitations reside in their lack of attention to multiple axes of identity-based

discrimination, as they predominantly focused on analyzing how the culture industries

reproduced capitalist ideologies through mass media. Additionally, their generalization about

audiences as passive consumers of media messages left important questions unasked about the

agentic potential of audiences in resisting social manipulation. However, their successors at the

Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies offer analytical tools which have proven useful for

critical media literacy application.

  The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Birmingham School). Carrying the

intellectual torch from The Frankfurt School, researchers affiliated with the Centre for

Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom

revitalized the field of cultural studies in response to social challenges and movements occurring

during the 1960s and 1970s (Durham & Kellner, 2002; Hammer & Kellner, 2009). Key scholars

like Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, Angela McRobbie, and Paul Gilroy

engaged with an array of perspectives, including "semiotics, feminism, multiculturalism,

postmodernism, a dialectical understanding of political economy, textual analysis and audience

theory" (Kellner & Share, 2007c, p. 64). The Birmingham School operationalized culture and

cultural studies as: "the actual grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages, and

customs of any specific historical society…the contradictory forms of 'common sense' which have taken root in and helped to shape popular life" (Hall, 1996, p. 439). They examined how media and popular culture were inscribed with "common sense" or ideological projections (Kellner, 2011). Expanding upon The Frankfurt School's single axis analysis of classist ideologies, the Birmingham School interrogated how media represented class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and nationality (Kellner, 1995). They also investigated how media and popular culture can offer audiences opportunities for enjoyment, learning, and resistance. Carefully weighing the possible effects of mediated communications, they surmised that audiences' positionalities and sociocultural contexts corresponded with their consumption practices. Hall (1988) and his colleagues asserted that people deduce meaning through their application of codes and languages which are intertwined with their identities and lived experiences. Hall, however, differed from his predecessors by creating an analytic model to encourage audiences to deconstruct media and popular culture which remains relevant to critical media literacy.

For example, Hall's (1980, 1988) Encoding and Decoding Model repurposed Gramsci's (1971) hegemony and counterhegemony paradigm. Hall contended that media and popular culture are encoded with subjective ideological positions and institutional motives by their creators. These subliminal ideologies are hidden within signs, symbols, and codes which are transmitted through mediums of communication. Counter to the beliefs of The Frankfurt School, Hall viewed decoding as an active process that audiences could use to either adopt mainstream views, negotiate meaning (i.e., accept and/or reject some views and not others), or respond with oppositional resistance. He suggested that a person's perception can also evolve through dialogic decoding with others who encompass different identities and worldviews. Hall's model ushered in an empowered and agentic role for audiences during media consumption.

Subsequently, Hall's Encoding and Decoding Model influences Kellner and Share's (2019) distinction of the role of "Audiences and Positionality" (p. 8) which guides audiences to consider how their own identities and lived experiences inform their critical media literacy analysis practices. Hall's critiques of the politics of representation in media and popular culture and his agentic Encoding and Decoding Model provided an alternative perspective to views that audiences are passive or helpless to social conditioning. Hall and the Birmingham scholars laid the groundwork for critical media literacy discourses that emphasize examinations of semiotics through active critical engagement with media (i.e., centering diverse representations and critiques). Like the teachings from The Frankfurt School, the offerings from the Birmingham School scholars are quite complex and require scaffolding to bring them into critical media literacy classroom application. For an adaptable scaffolding approach, we now turn to the democratic pedagogical contributions of John Dewey.

Deweyan Inquiry-Based Methods Towards Democratic Education

John Dewey (1916) envisioned education as crucial to prepare civically-minded actors for democratic society. In particular, he believed that education should equip citizens to elect legislative representatives who would govern in favor of the public interest and common good. He pontificates: "As a society becomes more enlightened, it realizes that it is responsible not to transmit and conserve the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as make for a better future society. The school is its chief agency" (p. 24). Dewey recognized that dominant education was not in alignment with preparing democratic citizens, declaring "This static, cold-storage ideal of knowledge is inimical to educational development" (p. 186). He observed that traditional schooling structures situated teachers as all-powerful rulers who governed passive learners and forced the memorization of discrete facts and studies deemed acceptable by the

14

instructor. Ultimately, Dewey resolved that if left unchecked, traditional schooling would be the downfall of democratic progress.

In response to this threat, Dewey developed democratic inquiry-based pedagogies that were exploratory, experiential, and connected with students' lives. He perceived that nourishing children's inherent curiosity, different viewpoints, and problem-solving skills could lead to transferable "self-renewing process[es]" (p. 2) fruitful for collaborative democratic participation. He reshaped traditional learning environments as active learning laboratories for youth. For instance, he emboldened students to learn like scientists by scaffolding exercises for developing inquiries, hypothesizing claims, gathering data, testing out solutions, and iteratively revisiting looming or unanswered questions from their investigations. To enact this process, he repositioned all classroom members as teachers and learners traveling on a continuum guided by their curiosity. Thus, the teacher serves as a facilitator, guiding and partnering with students in a process of discovery which is also applicable outside of the classroom and beneficial to participatory democracy.

Collectively, Dewey's philosophies re-evaluated the purpose, function, and boundaries of traditional schooling, offering a reminder that "the classroom" exists beyond the physical space. He provides critical media literacy scholars and practitioners early understandings about how teachers and students can engage as co-learners fueled by their critical thinking, curiosity, imagination, and creative problem-solving skills. Thus, the world is an active laboratory rife for learning which connects with students' lives and a shared commitment to each other and the common good. While Deweyan methods are beneficial to critical media literacy pedagogies, they lack an investigation of the role that power plays in restricting democratic progress. In order to

question dynamics of power and injustice, critical media literacy looks to the tools of critical pedagogy.

Freirean Critical Pedagogies and Literacy as a Social Practice Towards Political Education

The field of critical media literacy is further guided by the contributions of the father of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire. During the 20th century, Freire's radical envisionment for education was shaped by his lived experiences facing poverty and hunger among labor uprisings and sociopolitical turmoil occurring in Recife Pernambuco, Brazil (Furter, 1985). His lack of access to basic needs, such as: food, sustainable housing, and safety converged with his awareness that traditional education was disassociated from the challenges facing those oppressed by poverty and governmental institutions. Over time, he concluded that traditional schooling systems reproduced dominant ideologies of oppression through techniques of "massification" (Freire, 1970, p. 148). Similar to Dewey, Freire held traditional schooling systems accountable. He conceptualized that "banking models of education" (p. 72) positioned teachers as hierarchical proprietors of knowledge that subjugated students as passive consumers of information. Freire argued that the banking model squelched the conditions for education to be a tool for empowerment (Shor, 1992) by dehumanizing students "to feel that their thoughts and ideas are not important enough to warrant a two-way dialogue with the teacher" (Solórzano, 1989, p. 218). As a teacher and director of the Department of Cultural Extension at the University of Recife, he experimented with critical dialogic approaches to literacy acquisition with students afflicted by poverty and who were not yet literate. Through participatory approaches between himself and students, Freire envisioned "the possibility of transforming the students' powers of thought" (Shor, 1992, p. 22) through literacy practices for self and societal progress.

Freire and Macedo's (1987) *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* extended new directions to the purpose of learning and potential of literacy. They emphasize: "reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world" (p. 29). While partnering with adult learners, Freire designed a literacy program that incorporated students' experiences through the use of generative themes in literacy instruction. Freire described literacy acquisition as a "*word universe* of people who are learning, expressing their actual language, their anxieties, fears, demands, and dreams" (p. 35). Thus, he incorporated "codifications, pictures representing real situations" (p. 36) that reflected signs, symbols, and objects relevant to students' "word universe[s]" (p. 35). Rather than requiring students to sound out unrecognizable phonemes or learning vocabulary out-of-context, he developed "problem-posing" (Freire, 1970, p. 71) discourse through "praxis" (p. 51). This dialogic process situates literacy as a social practice that involves critical thinking, reflection, and action to explicitly name and challenge systems of oppression. In Freirean fashion, literacy promotes a "critical perception, interpretation, and *rewriting* of what is read" (p. 36). Further, teachers and students "make the road by walking" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 3) through a literacy praxis that cultivates "conscientizaçao" (Freire, 1970, p. 74) also known as critical consciousness. It is central to note that Freire did not view critical consciousness as a zero-sum game, but rather a lifelong iterative process fueled by praxis to "become more fully human" (p. 55).

Freire and his contemporaries' critical pedagogies redefined literacy as a radical social practice for self and social liberation. They reveal that to be a teacher and cultural worker offers a choice: to either remain complicit or rebel against oppressive banking models of education by co-building a radical political and social consciousness alongside students. Freire's (1970) words

exhort teachers to take "political action on the side of the oppressed [which] must be pedagogical action in the authentic sense of the word, and, therefore action *with* the oppressed" (p. 66). He leaves a message of altruism for teachers and students wrapped in critical hope, knowing that freedom struggles for liberation require courage and stamina. Freire (2007) proposes, "Without hope there is no way we can even start thinking about education" (p. 87). And, as Horton and Freire (1990) declare, this also includes making "education something which, in being serious, rigorous, methodical, and having a process, also creates happiness and joy" (p. 170). Critical pedagogies offer critical media literacy practitioners an embodied politics of refusal grounded in tangible and brave praxis that scaffolds dialogic critical questioning, reflection, action, and solidarity to challenge systems and ideologies of power. However, Freire's work was not without critiques, from scholars who valued his focus on class injustice, but noted his lack of attention to issues around race and gender in traditional educational institutions and other oppressive systems (hooks, 1994). To address this oversight, I turn to intersectionality.

Intersectionality

Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) introduced the term 'intersectionality' within the field of legal studies to hold the judicial system accountable regarding how Black women faced oppression based on coexisting identity markers like race and gender. Crenshaw's developments of intersectionality as a critical social theory were informed by her positionality, experiences and research as a lawyer, and the teachings of Women of Color over time. For example, the Combahee River Collective (1982) was comprised of activists such as: Cheryl Clarke, Demita Frazier, Gloria Akasha Hull, Audre Lorde, Chirlane McCray, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, and Helen L. Stewart who provided Black Feminist LGBTQIA+ perspectives integral to later developments of intersectionality. Their seminal "A Black Feminist

Statement," interrogated homophobia and vocalized how overlapping systems of oppression occur simultaneously across class, race, and sexual identities as well as hold historical genealogical roots (e.g., imperialism, capitalism, settler colonialism, patriarchy, etc.).

Hancock (2016) identifies a pivotal juncture in the evolution of intersectionality as a school of thought, specifically ascribing Crenshaw's (1989) "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique in Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics." Crenshaw's piece addresses three legal cases regarding shortcomings of the courts and the law related to issues of racist and sexist discrimination. Crenshaw asserts that each case demonstrates how the judicial system is limited by a single-axis analysis of racism and sexism rather than considering how these injustices overlap. She extended a metaphor about traffic in an intersection to generate critical awareness connected with the interrelated processes and impacts of prejudice. She asserts:

> Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions, and sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (p. 149)

This provocation evokes critical contemplations of how independent systems of power collide and wound individuals and groups across multiple axes of identity. Dr. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) adds onto understandings of intersectionality by outlining systems of domination. She considers how a person's multifaceted identities, such as their race, class, gender, and sexuality are entangled within systems of domination normalized in society (Crenshaw, 1991, 2011) and in turn converge at the nexus of a "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000). For example, Collins

(1990) disaggregates how a person occupies multiple social identities simultaneously; she asserts:

> Race, class, and gender constitute axes of oppression that characterize Black women's experiences within a more generalized matrix of domination. Other groups may encounter different dimensions of the matrix, such as sexual orientation, religion, and age, but the overarching relationship is one of domination and the types of activism it generates. (p. 544)

Drawing from The Combahee River Collective's, Collins', and Crenshaw's teachings, intersectionality takes new forms as an analytical heuristic tool in several other fields, including critical media literacy education. As Edwards and Esposito (2020) point out:

> An intersectional analysis of popular culture texts investigates the knowledge projects inherent to the preferences, styles, and signs an artifact transmits. The intention in such a project is to reveal how popular culture relates to sociological structures. We assert that this work is essential in the 21st century, when so much of how we understand the world is mediated by the transmission of culture. (p. 17)

Kelly and Currie (2020) suggest that when intersectionality is not a classroom paradigm embodied and magnified through critical media literacy pedagogies, implicit and explicit forms of oppression are reproduced or merely examined along an insufficient and surface-level single-axis of analysis. Similarly, O'Byrne et al. (2022) argue for teachers to adopt and incorporate perspectives of intersectionality within their critical media literacy pedagogies given the rampant forms of identity-based discrimination reproduced in media and popular culture. Collins (2000) identifies another challenge: "An increasingly important dimension of why hegemonic ideologies concerning race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality remain so deeply entrenched lies, in

part, in the growing sophistication of mass media in regulating intersecting oppressions" (p. 284). She further holds accountable the exclusionary politics, stereotypical misrepresentations, and objectification of Black women in dominant media, eliciting action to address the "ideology of domination" (p. 88) that is reproduced and takes new forms in society over time. Thus, a multiperspectival approach to critical media literacy calls on intersectionality as an embodied critical stance and urgent pedagogical imperative which asserts that critical media analyses and countermedia production must challenge and take action against systems and ideologies of oppression related to class, race, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, nationality, and other forms of identity.

Summary

Collectively, this research study is guided by a multiperspectival approach to critical media literacy that bridges perspectives from cultural studies, democratic inquiry-based pedagogies, critical pedagogies, and intersectionality. The Frankfurt School offers a systems-level analysis of the role of capitalism in controlling the culture industries as major corporations that embed ideological manipulation in media artifacts to subjugate the public. The Birmingham School adds a necessary analytic focus on how media and popular culture are encoded by the culture industries to sever identity-based freedoms and thus, reproduce hegemony. Dewey's democratic inquiry-based methods guide processes for holistic approaches to student-centered learning grounded in civic exercises. Freire's critical pedagogies towards a radical political education inform an understanding of literacy as a social practice with tangible processes of generative themes, problem-posing discourse, that are driven by praxis (i.e., critical thought, reflection, and action) towards critical consciousness. As Morrell et al. (2013) argues, Freire's teachings help critical media literacy pedagogues consider how critical media analysis and

production should be grounded in Freirean processes. Lastly, Crenshaw's intersectionality (1989, 1991) moves critical media literacy beyond single-axis analyses to understand and challenge systems and ideologies of oppression across multiple institutional and personal levels. The following offers a theoretical abstraction (see Figure 1) which illustrates each of the paradigms that informed explorations of secondary teachers' embodiments and practices of critical media literacy.

Figure 1

Theoretical Abstraction: A Multiperspectival Approach to Exploring Teachers' Embodiments and Practices of Critical Media Literacy
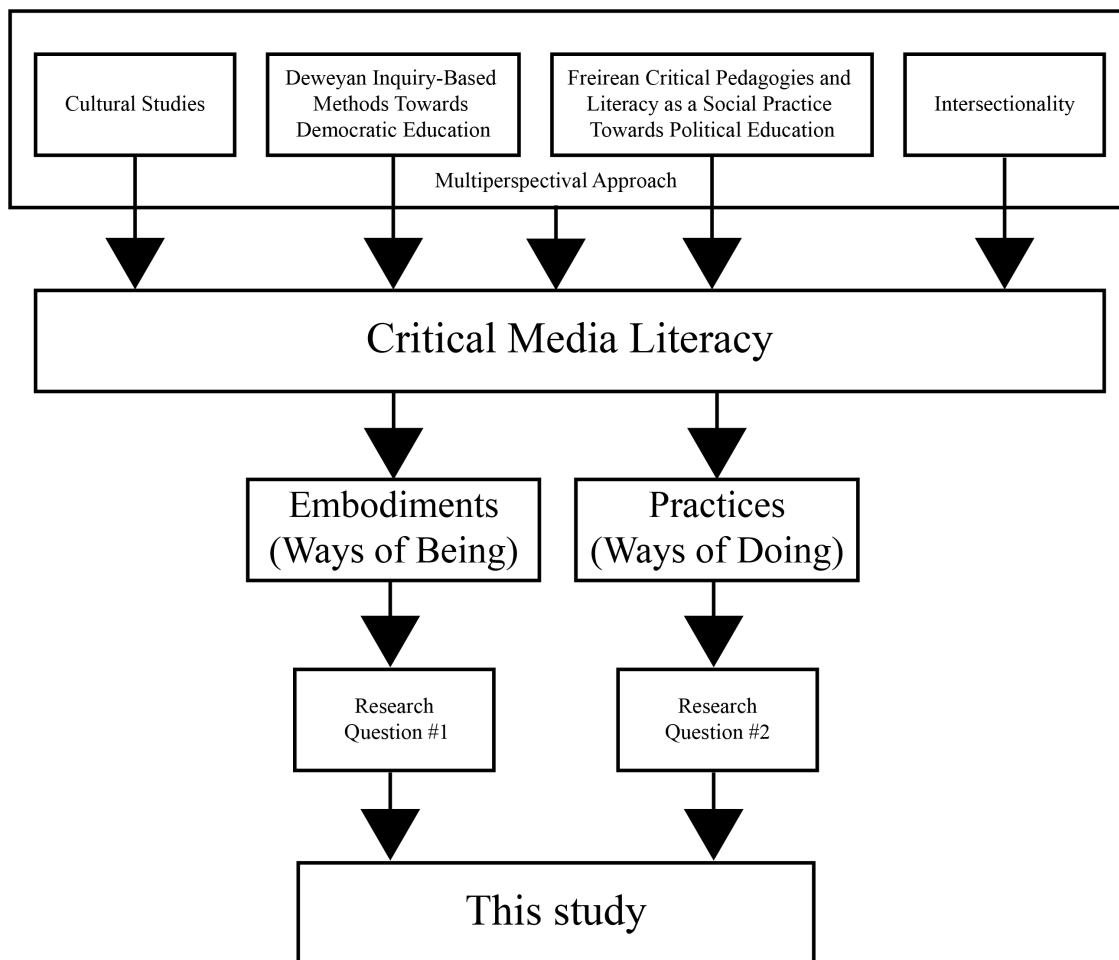
Research Purpose, Questions, and Analytic Techniques

The purpose of this research was to address tenable gaps between critical media literacy educational discourse and practitioner understandings and applications. Framed as a critical qualitative collective case study (Denzin, 2017; Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022), this research centered the lived experiences of four secondary teachers who self-identified as critical media literacy pedagogues and applied critical media literacy as a regular classroom practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goals of this research were to explore and understand the factors which influence teachers' embodiments of critical media literacy and how teachers apply critical media literacy theories into practice. Aligned with these goals, this study pursued two research questions:

1. How do teachers describe their embodiments (ways of being) in relation to critical media literacy?

2. How do teachers practice (ways of doing) critical media literacy in their classrooms?

A critical qualitative research collective case study methodology was chosen to align with the foundational theories and guiding corpus of literature which reflects critical media literacy as an adaptable pedagogical process rooted in the sociopolitical, sociocultural, and cultural relevance of learners. In this way, this methodological selection was intentional and specific to gain in-depth yet varied perspectives and samplings of pedagogical offerings from several teachers (i.e., secondary English and history). Additionally, this research was set during a discrete time period of the COVID-19 pandemic during remote instruction. While teachers' institutional affiliations varied, they remained bound by their modality of instruction (i.e., Zoom), critical media literacy

stances, state context (California), and their designation as secondary educators (i.e., grades 9-12).

Moreover, to correspond with the research questions and methodological design, data collection included: 1) semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 2013) with lesson demonstrations, 2) teachers' lesson plans, and 3) related artifacts (i.e., photographs, videos, student work samples). Guided by theories and concepts from four focal bodies of scholarship, namely: 1) cultural studies, 2) Deweyan inquiry-based methods, 3) Freirean critical pedagogies, and 4) intersectionality, data was coded iteratively. Through inductive (i.e., in vivo) and deductive (i.e., axial) coding techniques, data was analyzed and grouped by salient themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). The purpose of this study was to identify clear connections between teachers' critical embodiments and practices of critical media literacy, in order to contribute to developing school-based policies, professional development trainings, and to close the distance between academic reasoning and practitioner application. The purpose of this study was not to compare efficacy of strategies (i.e., student learning outcomes) or disciplinary fits (i.e., CCSS alignment).

Organization of Chapters

Given the research scope described above, the remaining chapters are structured as follows. Chapter two traces a review of literature that is foundational to critical media literacy education and pertinent to this study. Chapter three reviews the methodological design and methods which informed the data collection and analysis processes employed to answer the research questions. Chapters four and five extrapolate the findings grouped by emergent themes responsive to each research question. Lastly, chapter six offers a discussion regarding the findings and suggests implications for further critical media literacy research, theory, practice, and educational policies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the same way that the multiperspectival theoretical approach draws strength from several philosophical and pedagogical orientations, critical media literacy gains momentum from the evolution of media education. Thus, to understand what influences teachers' embodiments (ways of being) and practices (ways of doing) relating to critical media literacy, this literature review examines the development of acritical and critical approaches to media literacy education. First, I outline acritical perspectives to media literacy education, which Higdon et al. (2021) describes as expressing attitudes of objectivity and political neutrality. Alternatively, a critical approach to media education "challenges relativist and apolitical notions of most media education in order to guide teachers and students in their explorations of how power and information are always linked" (Kellner & Share, 2007a, p. 61). Next, I explore contemporary examples of teachers' practices of critical media literacy (RQ2) and place them in conversation with Kellner and Share's (2019) "Critical Media Literacy Framework: Conceptual Understandings and Guiding Questions" (p. 8) to better understand how critical media literacy is occurring in the field. While critical media literacy is still in its nascent phase, this literature review situates scholarship relevant to this research study.

Exploring Acritical and Critical Approaches to Media Literacy Education

While many geographic contexts around the world like Australia, Canada, Great Britain (Hobbs & Frost, 2003), and Latin America[8] (Mateus et al, 2022) have made media education a priority for students over the past several decades, there is still not a systematic approach in the U.S. (Higdon et al., 2021; Kellner & Share, 2007c). Despite awareness of the influential roles

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[8] In Latin America, media education is typically referred to as "educomunicación" and is shaped by the influence of Paulo Freire and critical pedagogies (Mateus et al., 2022, p. 10).

that media and popular culture play in representing and misrepresenting identities, histories, and current events, media education is not clearly defined, practiced, or implemented with fidelity in K-12 schools (Kellner & Share, 2019). However, it is clear that media literacy competencies are an essential 21st-century skill for students as reinforced by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers (2010) in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Additionally, there remains ample discussion regarding the "what" and "how" of media education; in particular, which pedagogical techniques are needed for classroom implementation (Martens, 2010; Potter, 2022; Share, 2015).

Several scholars have grouped media education into two compartments: either "protectionism" or "empowerment" methods (Buckingham, 1998; Friesem, 2018; Hobbs & Tuzel, 2017; Nelson et al., 2020; RobbGrieco & Hobbs, 2013). Kellner and Share (2007c) disaggregate these two categories. Instead, they parse out four primary types of media education which Higdon et al. (2021) denote as widely accepted distinctions by media education stakeholders. These distinctions are not without contrasting opinions regarding which method is considered best practice in schools. By examining various approaches to media education, we can begin to decipher how critical media literacy is situated differently or similarly dependent on the goals and practices represented. Kellner and Share (2007c) identify the following four approaches to media education, such as: 1) a protectionist approach, 2) a media arts approach, 3) the media literacy movement, and 4) critical media literacy (pp. 60-62).

Protectionist Approach

A protectionist approach to media education often imparts defensive and fearful stances towards media and popular culture (Share, 2015). Drawing on Hobbs and McGee's (2014) scholarship, Higdon et al. (2021) demarcates the origins of the protectionist approach as a

reactionary response to possible media influences on audiences following "the moral panics over propaganda during World War II" (p. 4). Tyner (1991) further suggests that this approach was also disseminated and funded in the latter part of the 1970s by the U.S. Department of Education through "a television critical viewing program" (p. 5) which eventually lost funding during an economic recession in the 1980s. A common perception among protectionists suggests media audiences, especially youth, are passive consumers of information who automatically internalize problematic ideas that are depicted in media (Hobbs, 1998; Kubey, 1998; Pasquier, 2001). For example, in Neil Postman's (1985) *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, he exhibits a protectionist mindset to an extent. He argues that the rise of popular culture (and especially television) serves as a dangerous form of socialization that undermines the goals of traditional education. He cautions:

> Our politics, religions, news, athletics, education, and commerce have been transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business, largely without protest or even much popular notice. The result is that we are a people on the verge of amusing ourselves to death. (pp. 3-4)

Postman's commentary bolsters assumptions that audiences are passive consumers of popular culture representations. In particular, he contends that media negatively impacts youth's development and causes harm, without considering the possibility that they are free-thinkers capable of media analysis, participation, and production. This dispossession undermines youth's agency as conscious beings who can engage in analytical, reflective, and dialectics of reason about media and popular culture if they so choose.

Moreover, Postman's stance towards media and popular culture has morphed into other rationales. As Turkle (2016) signals, protectionism remains intact today. When describing the

evolution of media education in the United Kingdom, Buckingham (1998) notes that many teachers "tended to espouse a form of protectionism, seeking to defend students against what were seen as the negative cultural, moral, or ideological influences of the media" (p. 33). Similarly, Share (2015) draws attention to commonplace approaches of protectionism which endeavor to "protect or inoculate people against the dangers of media manipulation and addiction" (p. 10). Like Share, others have also described protectionism as a form of "inoculation" because it traditionally imbues a distaste and rejection of media and popular culture to prevent possible negative influences on audiences (Buckingham, 1998; Friesem, 2018; Halloran & Jones, 1992; Masterman, 1980, 1985; Mendoza, 2009).

Resultantly, many protectionists value the study of print-based texts as worthy of deep analysis whereas media and popular culture are viewed as less relevant for school settings. Classist sentiments have suggested that literature and print-based texts are forms of "high culture" and in turn have situated popular culture as representations of "low culture" that should be avoided, such as television, music, video games, etc. (Postman, 1985; Potter, 2010, 2022). While popular culture is not completely skirted from classroom curriculum, what differs greatly in the protectionist approach to media education is the role of the teacher. The teacher is commonly positioned as a media connoisseur and curricular "gatekeeper" (Tyner, 1991, p. 5) who decides *for* students how a text is deconstructed and interpreted (Buckingham, 1998). This pedagogical method dissolves students' agency and opportunities for active meaning-making on their own (Freisem, 2018). Instead, the teacher is stationed as the "hero--who has all the right answers" (Hobbs, 2008, p. 9). This reproduces "banking models of education" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). It also severs students' potential to learn about media and their mediums through an inquiry-

based democratic approach (Dewey, 1916) that is necessary for civic engagement during the digital age.

It is important to note that some scholars have muddied the waters between binary perspectives of protectionist and empowerment approaches to media education. For example, Hobbs (1998) originally framed the differences between protectionism and empowerment approaches to media education as prominent "debates" across contemporaries in the field. Nearly one decade later, she again claimed: "there is a robust ongoing debate about the relative value and limitations of both protectionist and empowerment perspectives in media literacy education" (Hobbs, 2011, p. 422). She has since espoused a more moderate view. She suggests protectionists extend a passion "for students' voices to be valued through thoughtful interactions in the world, while even the staunchest empowerment advocate has considered the limits and boundaries of appropriateness, comfort, and taboo in children's media environments" (Hobbs & Moore, 2013, p. 31). This presents a different perspective to former conversations around protectionism that might build bridges across stakeholders with ideological differences regarding various approaches to media education.

However, O'Byrne et al. (2022) draw attention to the need for teachers to scaffold critical evaluation approaches to media education that do not shield students from the challenges or possibilities that digital ecosystems bear. They suggest that the contemporary mediasphere breeds challenges that students must be prone to address, with an emphasis on teachers' eliciting practices that cultivate youth's critical thinking and analytical engagement to tackle misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech. Tangentially, O'Byrne et al.'s assertions correspond with arguments that suggest a protectionist pedagogical approach prevents students from building essential skills to maneuver online environments with a nuanced awareness and

strategies to deconstruct inaccurate and problematic content inside and outside of the classroom. Because popular culture and media are often a part of students' everyday lives, Kelly and Currie (2020) suggest students are already coming in contact with inaccurate information and representations of social identities that demonstrate problematic representations. Given the pervasiveness of media culture and the possible influence on youth's conceptualizations of their identities, they urge teachers to discuss and challenge issues like racist and sexist media representations which can then provide transferrable skills useful for students' media consumption habits in their daily lives. O'Byrne et al.'s (2022) as well as Kelly and Currie's (2020) notion for teachers to bring critical investigations to the fore of students' preparation to interrogate ideological messages in media cultures coincide with Hall's (1996) distinction that when media representations are left unquestioned, audiences can perceive hegemonic language as "normal." With a focus on challenging racist media depictions, Yosso's (2020) developments of critical race media literacy outlines strategies teachers can take up with students to deconstruct imagery, language, and nuanced components of racial microaggressions[9]. Microaggressions are a mechanism for structural racism and white supremacy which perpetuates harm to People of Color (p. 7). In accordance with Yosso's teachings, it is an urgent imperative for teachers to guide students of all ages to deconstruct racist media representations, along with other forms of hegemony. Devoid of a protectionist approach, teachers can still consider the age-level appropriateness of texts by making intentional choices about the inclusion of graphic or violent imagery, while still addressing challenging topics in tandem with multiple critical pedagogies.

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[9] Yosso (2020) builds from her earlier conceptualizations of microaggressions within the context of her developments in critical race media literacy. In conversation with scholarship from Chester M. Pierce and Daniel Solórzano, she operationalizes that "Microaggressions are subtle (verbal, non-verbal, visual) insults of People of Color, often done automatically or unconsciously. Microaggressions are layered insults based on notions of race, gender, class sexuality, culture, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, and surname. Microaggressions are cumulative and cause unnecessary stress to People of Color while privileging Whites" (Yosso, 2002, p. 60).

This can build students' skills to critique problematic representations as well as create and celebrate just representations.

Correspondingly, Kellner and Share (2007c) argue that the protectionist approach proliferates an anti-media bias that "over-simplifies the complexity of our relationship with media and takes away the potential for empowerment that critical pedagogy and alternative media production offer" (p. 60). Instead of an anti-media bias stance, when teachers cull critical frameworks to contextualize students' media analyses and alternative productions, they can work together to "acknowledge the complexities and contradictions of how power actually works through media" (Buckingham, 2022, p. 84). Thevenin (2013) also discusses the limitations of protectionism. Instead, he advances:

> a re-politicized media literacy education [that] would not only recognize the role of the medium in the nature and content of communication, but would also confront how this then determines the nature and content of social relations, political perspectives and practices. (p. 62)

His suggestions urge that when youth are equipped with a full repertoire of skills that can disentangle mediums and the dynamic features of media and online cultures, they can be better poised to tackle challenges that arise in their daily lives as users and producers of media who can act for justice.

Media Arts Approach

A media arts approach encourages students' appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of art and media while also developing their competencies as expressive and creative producers (Kellner & Share, 2007c, 2019). As Thevenin (2022) notes, media arts education draws from several arts and humanities disciplines, especially "visual arts, music, literature, [and] theater"

31

while also exposing students to "digital, networked, and interactive technologies" (p. 17). While the primary focus of an "arts-based approach" (Tyner, 1991) promotes student-generated productions through experiential practice, some methods strive to acknowledge the potentially divisive characteristics of technology (Tyner, 2014).

Media arts approaches are mainly implemented in U.S. schools as isolated classes, after-school, or informal community-based programs (Share, 2015). Unfortunately, American K-12 public schools often sacrifice and silo arts-based approaches, comprehensive courses, and creative forms of expression to preference standardized tests (Redmond et al., 2022). Other geographic locations, such as Australia, prioritize extensive models of media arts education as a central focus for learners from preschool through early adulthood (Dezuanni, 2021). In the Australian schooling context, students engage with media arts by composing their own "representations of the world and telling stories through communications technologies such as television, film, video, newspapers, radio, video games, the Internet and mobile media" (ACARA, 2020, para. 1). Although this example operates outside of the U.S. education system, it offers a similar focus in the goals and purpose of media arts education. For instance, McCarthy and Ondaatje (2002) discuss that media arts approaches facilitate student production through practice with technological tools or by blending other media objects in creation techniques. They note that many teachers scaffold exercises for students that help them experiment with different genre-based productions, such as: narrative, documentary, and other types of abstract film creation as well as an array of multimedia or digital media. More recently, media arts approaches incorporate students' engagement and production of digital animations, sound design or original musical compositions, graphic design, as well as "scenic, costume, and make-up design for screens; performance involving media technologies; video games; interactive, web-based, and

networked media; virtual and augmented reality" (Thevenin, 2022, p. 17). Regardless of a genre-based focus, or the mode of student production, the primary goals of the media arts approach guides students towards creative expression, instead of analyzing or reflecting on how art communicates information or ideological stances. Despite a lack of consensus about what constitutes creative expression within media arts education, many pedagogical techniques concentrate on increasing students' creative capabilities, ideations of creative expression, technical competencies, field-related vocabulary and techniques, approaches to content and form, iterative revisions, audience appeal, and analyses of one's own work in relation to other artists.

While media arts approaches provide vital opportunities for youth to produce their own tangible forms of creative expression, these initiatives can benefit from incorporating criticality into their programmatic or course design (Kellner & Share, 2007c; Morrell et al., 2013). More specifically, Kellner and Share (2007c) argue that media arts education taught through cultural studies and critical pedagogies can help students deconstruct hegemonic ideologies and problematic identity-based representations. In this way, students can deepen their social consciousness and harness media and arts-based analyses and productions to contribute to social and environmental justice. Thevenin (2022) suggests moving beyond exercises to compose art; instead, he recommends that students consider "the political implications of one's creative practice" (p. 18). Redmond et al. (2022) poses similar claims. They recommend that embedding arts-based approaches with creative media literacies and equity-driven paradigms can support students' investigations and responses to "issues of representation, power, and dominance in messages and meanings by engaging in expressive action, remaking and reimagining stories in authentic and socially just ways" (p. 143). Ultimately, when critical social theories map onto media arts education, students can deconstruct identity-based erasures or misrepresentations,

cultural appropriation, or harmful portraits of more-than-human ecosystems and can provide potent creative art-forms as a conduit for self and social change.

Media Literacy Movement

Since Kellner and Share's (2007c) discussion of the third approach to media education, the media literacy movement has gained stronger attention in the U.S. These partial changes are largely connected with unwarranted claims of "fake news" against journalists and the free press asserted by former President Donald Trump during his presidential campaign (Schilder & Redmond, 2019; Trope et al., 2021). Shortly following the 2016 U.S. presidential election, elevated tensions regarding the media's role to sway the public's political decision-making and influence election results followed suit (Benkler et al., 2018). These concerns have escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic given the penetrating spread of misinformation, disinformation, an infodemic, and increased forms of identity-based hate speech and violence as well as misrepresentations about the severity of the climate crisis (Melki, 2022). This combination of issues provoked discussions around governmental oversight of social media, the development of private industries to help diffuse misinformation and verify journalism for users, and calls to censor individuals and groups responsible for spreading unreliable or hate infused content (Higdon, 2020). Resultantly, some state-level legislatures have responded at a policy-level to try to mitigate challenges occurring in the mediasphere by placing a focus on media literacy in K-12 schools (Media Literacy Now, 2020, 2022, 2023). Because educational policy legislation typically occurs at the state-level as opposed to federal-wide legislation, media literacy exposure is not a guarantee for all students nationwide (Higdon & Boyington, 2019). Upon the conclusion of 2022, 18 states have passed varied bills, laws, or are continuing to develop policies invested in developing curriculum for K-12 audiences thus far (Media Literacy Now, 2023, p. 3).

Unlike protectionism, the media literacy movement has expanded definitions of literacy with a focus on including popular culture and media as important texts for every discipline and grade-level (Share, 2015). Commonly referred to as media literacy education, researchers and practitioners in this tradition have adopted and broadened the New London Group's (1996) concept of "multiliteracies." This concept propels engagement with a range of texts through print-based and non-print formats (e.g., film, television, radio, podcasts, social media, images, videos, etc.). This has been a formidable expansion from solely incorporating alphabetical and numerical literacies to also include visual[10], aural[11], and multimodal literacies[12] as equally valuable for classroom study. Hobbs and Coiro (2018) ascertain that the inclusion of popular culture and media artifacts integrated at the classroom-level provide opportunities for teachers to raise engagement by tapping into students' interests while also increasing their creative and analytical competencies. Popular approaches of media literacy education are at times connected with discourse related to civic engagement, communications, digital citizenship, digital literacies, edtech, faith-based educational programs, information literacy, library sciences, literacy studies, media effects, media ecology, multimodal literacy, political economy, and technology literacy (Higdon et al., 2021; Share, 2015; Thevenin, 2022). This collection of discourse helps address print-based literacy skills while also incorporating other tools and forms of communication.

There are fluctuating definitions of media literacy. Clarification and consensus-building throughout the media literacy movement is still needed to pinpoint how media literacy is

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[10] The National Council for Teaching English (NCTE) Task Force for Critical Media Literacy (2021) defines visual literacy as "the ability to interpret, recognize, appreciate, understand, and create information presented through visual actions, objects and symbols" (p. 4).

[11] Aural literacies aim to guide students through analyses and productions of "sounds, music, dialogue, and narration" (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 52).

[12] Multimodal literacies bring together multiple forms of print-based, visual, and aural forms of communication to help convey meaning or tell a story (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 54).

operationalized (Butler, 2020; Thevenin 2022). Buckingham (2003) suggests that media literacy develops a person's abilities to read and write media, while also supporting comprehension and interpretation of mass media, popular culture, and digital mediums. Alternatively, many scholars, practitioners, and policymakers subscribe to the National Association for Media Literacy Education's (NAMLE) definition for media literacy as they are the leading media literacy education organization in the U.S. Drawing inspiration from the Aspen Media Literacy Leadership Institute's (Aufderheide, 1993) and the Center for Media Literacy's (2008) contributions to media literacy education, NAMLE (n.d.) defines media literacy as:

> the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication. In its simplest terms, media literacy builds upon the foundations of traditional literacy and offers new forms of reading and writing. Media literacy empowers people to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators and active citizens. (para. 2)

Practitioners and researchers invested in media literacy education develop pedagogical techniques for students of all ages and the public engaged in formal and informal learning contexts. Their main aims of media literacy education cultivate awareness, critical thinking, and creativity as consumers and producers of media artifacts for informed citizenship. Inquiry-based processes are broadly used for classroom instruction to guide students' exercises of media analysis and production. For example, the Center for Media Literacy (2008) extends "Five Key Questions of Media Literacy" that are situated among keywords, core concepts, and guiding questions for media deconstruction and construction that many researchers and practitioners have relied on and adapted over time (see Table 1).

Table 1

Center for Media Literacy's (2008) Five Key Questions of Media Literacy (pp. 23-24)

#	Keywords	Core Concepts	Guiding Questions: Deconstruction	Guiding Questions: Construction
1	Authorship	All media messages are constructed.	Who created this message?	What am I authoring?
2	Format	Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.	What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?	Does my message reflect understanding in format, creativity and technology?
3	Audience	Different people experience the same media message differently.	How might different people understand this message differently than me?	Is my message engaging and compelling for my target audience?
4	Content (or message)	Media have embedded values and points of view.	What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?	Have I clearly and consistently framed values, lifestyles, and points of view in my content?
5	Purpose (or motive)	Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.	Why is this message being sent?	Have I communicated my purpose effectively?

The above model provides a schematic that points students towards inquiries and reflections regarding authorship, format, audiences, content, and the possible purpose or motives that permeate media messages. Interestingly, members of the Center for Media Literacy draw on some global media education scholarship, such as: cultural studies, critical pedagogy, literary analysis, and media theory (Share, 2015; Thevenin, 2022), but they omit which theories specifically informed their model. This model can yield some benefits in terms of access as well as drawbacks in terms of moving beyond surface-level analyses. For example, core concept five states: "Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power" (Center for Media Literacy, 2008, p. 24). This statement seems to prompt a more critical analysis of capitalist systems, advertising marketeers, and possible considerations about how power maps onto a

media message to reproduce oppression. Yet, the corresponding question for media deconstruction ("Why is this message being sent?") fails to guide students to unpack nuance or to conduct transformative analyses that challenge power relations. Additionally, the related question for students' reflections on their own media constructions does not guide them towards considerations around whether they are opposing or reinforcing dynamics of power that could perpetuate harm. Instead, the surrounding question ("Have I communicated my purpose effectively?") points students more towards whether their media message was expressed with their intended meaning. Therefore, without identifying which theoretical lenses guide this model, this can yield difficulties for teachers when applying this framework into their classroom practices. Further, the lack of explicit connections between critical theories can hinder opportunities for teachers to facilitate transformative media analysis and production for democratic preparedness and participation.

Nonetheless, it is apparent that there is a focus on helping students pose inquiry-based questions during media consumption and production. This can be a useful starting point for students who are beginning to ask questions about the role of media in their lives and society. Leaders within the media literacy movement have also made strident efforts to further develop common ground and techniques to assist practitioners with targeting potential learning goals for their classroom practice. For instance, underneath Faith Rogow's leadership, NAMLE's (2007) "Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States" outlines key objectives to support teachers building media literacy curriculum into their classroom practices which:

1. Requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create.

2. Expands the concept of literacy (i.e., reading and writing) to include all forms of media.

3. Builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice.

4. Develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society.

5. Recognizes that media are a part of culture and function as agents of socialization.

6. Affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs, and experiences to construct their own meaning from media messages. (pp. 3-5)

There is much room for interpretation given the wide scope of principles listed above. For example, core principles two and three notion teachers to rethink literacy instruction to include print and non-print formats with regularly integrated media literacy practices. Core principles one and four advance the importance for students to engage in media analysis and production through meaningful participatory inquiries and critical thinking which are considered within social and cultural environments. Unlike the media arts approach, principle four recommends a union between personal creative expressions and civic participation as necessary skills for democratic progress. Lastly, principle six affirms an asset-based mindset which views students' prior knowledge and talents as legitimate knowledge sources useful for their media deconstruction and construction exercises. However, like the Center for Media Literacy's (2008) practice-oriented model, there is still not a definitive correlation between NAMLE's (2007) Core Principles and the theories that informed their development. This prevents a clear "framework of analysis" (Higdon et al., 2021, p. 1), thus unveiling barriers for media literacy scholars, practitioners, and policymakers alike. Without a transparent understanding of what literature or

theoretical foundations shape the Center for Media Literacy's (2008) model or NAMLE's (2007) Core Principles, it is challenging to transmit these processes into classroom practice in a sustainable or scalable manner (Thevenin, 2022). Long-standing advocates of the media literacy movement have framed the exclusion of academic theories as a mechanism to reach broad audiences beyond the ivory tower. Additionally, others have indicated this choice is rooted in trying to make media literacy more palatable for individuals across political views (Hobbs 2008; Kellner & Share, 2007b, 2007c; Rogow, 2004). Prioritizing the need for researcher and teacher objectivity, some scholars also openly rebuke critical frameworks like critical media literacy and suggest this pushes an "ideological agenda" and sacrifices opportunities for reaching others who embody a "wide variety of ideological positions" (Hobbs, 1998, p. 4). Hence, across the genealogy of the U.S. media literacy movement, a large portion of scholars prescribe to values and media literacy practices at the classroom-level that espouse political neutrality (Thevenin, 2022).

Conversely, there has been a changing tide in the media literacy movement by some researchers and teachers who have brought social and environmental justice issues to the fore of media literacy practices (Melki, 2022). This turn was largely influenced by widespread protests in the Summer of 2020 heralded by the Black Lives Matter movement, among other organizations and grassroots mobilization for racial justice. Concerns around other forms of racial violence, fake news during the 2020 election, the COVID-19 infodemic, and climate denialism narratives further perpetuated conversations around addressing sociopolitical challenges through media literacy education. Many scholars are leading efforts to address these concerns while also inviting others in the field of media literacy education to do the same. For example, Dr. Belindha De Abreu (2022), founder of the International Media Literacy Research

Symposium published *Media Literacy, Equity, and Justice,* which curates voices from around the world. She skillfully builds bridges between media literacy and critical media literacy scholars and practitioners in the name of advancing social and climate justice. Ramasubramanian et al. (2021) advances that a social justice-oriented approach to media literacy education requires a critical awareness that "systemic racism as systemic trauma and normative whiteness as dominant ideology are embedded in the U.S. education and media institutions" (p. 29). Making explicit an actively antiracist approach, these scholars urge practitioners to move beyond an acknowledgement of the role of racism in schools, media, and society. Instead, they beckon teachers to dissent against hegemony and the pervasiveness of whiteness in actionable ways at the classroom-level to take action for racial justice. Drawing on bell hooks' (1994) wisdom from *Teaching to Transgress*, Mihailidis et al. (2021) argues for transformative media pedagogies that make central how systems of oppression impact students' local communities. In this view, teachers and students co-create a "culture of care" (p. 19) and use media deconstruction, production, and participation as a tool to foster critical awareness, agency, and social action.

Leaders at NAMLE are also making concerted efforts to evolve the range of workshops, conferences, and resources it provides to community members to make visible the exigent cry for social and especially, racial justice. For example, for the first time in NAMLE's (2021) history, they developed and implemented an online conference focused on media literacy and social justice during the Summer of 2021. NAMLE's Executive Director, Michelle Ciulla Lipkin, traces the turn in the organization's shift back to a packed-house plenary session about media literacy and social justice delivered at their 2019 conference symposium in Washington, DC (p. 3). The volume of attendees and robustness of conversations ushered an inflection point regarding the needs of the media literacy education community to integrate social justice issues

41

more effectively as a prominent focus. Additionally, NAMLE's Conference Chair, Dr. Stephanie

Flores-Koulish, released a statement to 2021 conference participants that held the organization

accountable for previously adopted models that reproduced problematic ideas. She explicitly

mentions their former usage of the Media Literacy Education Big Tent Model (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Media Literacy Education Big Tent Model[13] (RobbGrieco & Hobbs, 2013, p. 1)
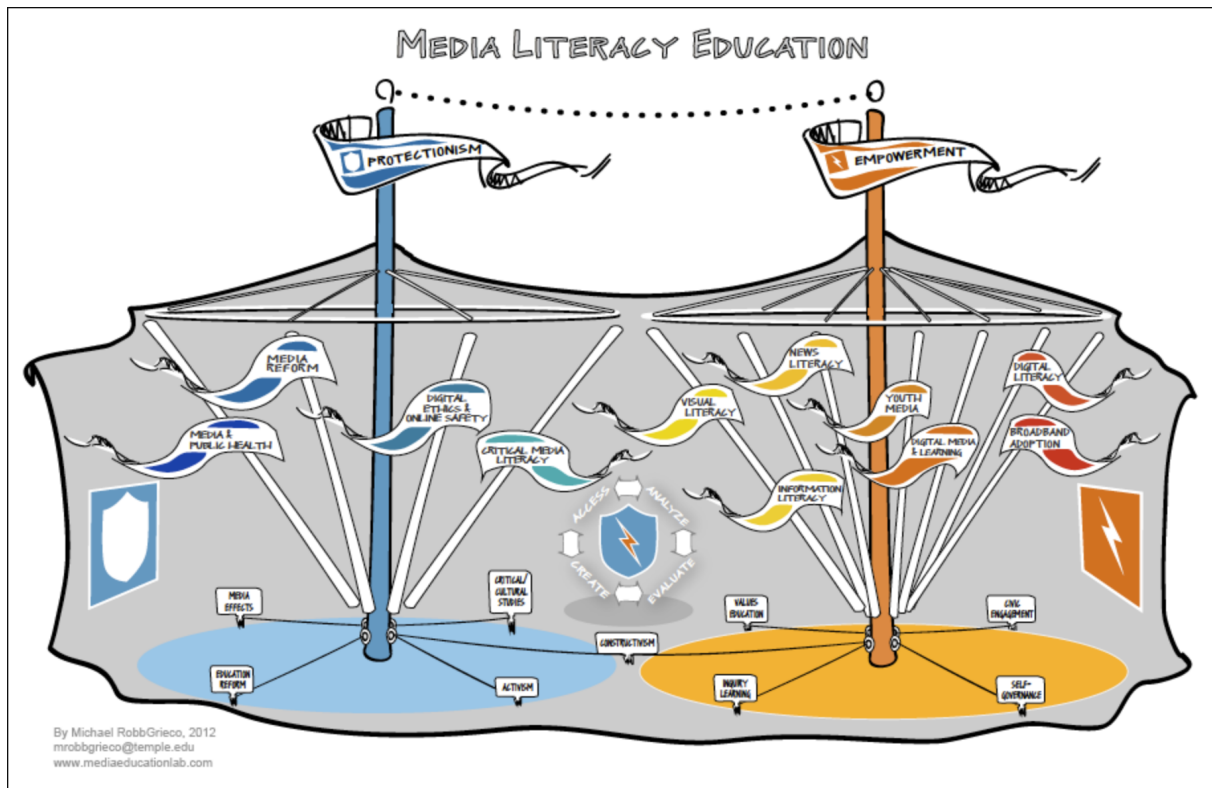
Note. The above model sorts different sub-fields or sectors of media literacy education in two

categories: protectionism and empowerment. Underneath the protectionist category on the left

includes four broader fields or paradigms, including: education reform, media effects,

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[13] As Hobbs (2013) denotes, this model was originally developed by Michael RobbGrieco in 2012 while he was a doctoral student in Temple University's Mass Media and Communication program. Later, at the bi-annual NAMLE Conference in 2013, Renee Hobbs and Erin Reilly (NAMLE Conference Chair) used this model to ask community members and participants where their scholarly and practitioner allegiance was situated. This spawned much conversation from participants, particularly questions around why critical media literacy was situated underneath the protectionist arm, rather than the empowerment designation.

critical/cultural studies, and activism. Then, the following sub-categories emerge from those perspectives, such as: media and public health, media reform, digital ethics and online safety, and critical media literacy. In the middle, an iterative model that reflects the definition of media literacy reads: access, analyze, evaluate, and create. Additionally, constructivism tethers protectionism and empowerment together as a shared theoretical perspective. On the right, the lenses towards empowerment stances to media literacy education includes inquiry learning, values education, civic engagement, and self-governance. The flags that stem outwards from this section are information literacy, visual literacy, news literacy, youth media, digital media and learning, digital literacy, and broadband adoption.

In Flores-Koulish's statement, she articulates that this model

> echoed a colorblind perspective, which is now known as a perspective that erases and neglects the beauty and pain that's been a part of our society since our nation's founding; in other words, we acknowledge systemic racism and white privilege and the ways that that has informed our field. Therefore, this year's conference is different. (NAMLE, 2021 p. 2)

Indeed, there was a significant change in the scope and emphasis on criticality and addressing social and racial issues through media literacy education at this conference. The conference program archived details about 17 presentations that featured critical media literacy pedagogies and others that linked media literacy practices with social justice issues. Some of the topics focused specifically on, "racism, inequality, environmental injustice, cancel culture, discrimination, white privilege, etc." (p. 2).

Unsurprisingly, NAMLE's prominent focus on social justice became an automatic target for derogatory remarks from conservatives. Sailer (2021), a journalist from *City Journal* which is

the flagship publication from the right-wing Manhattan Institute, specifically refuted NAMLE's inclusion of social justice and presentations that fused critical media literacy with media literacy education. The title of his article, "Media Literacy's False Promise" included the charged byline that states: "another social-justice-steeped pedagogy is gaining ground--and like the others, it won't help students understand the world." Sailer makes brash criticisms of NAMLE's conference focus as well as Kellner and Share's (2019) *The Critical Media Literacy Guide*. Sailer cherry picks excerpts from their book with minimal contextualization to attempt to explicate the goals of critical media literacy pedagogy. He targets an array of presenters or the topics featured; including, the presentation I delivered from a Critical Race Theory and critical media literacy perspective about challenging dominant texts through counterstorytelling based on my earlier work as secondary social studies teacher. Sailer also criticizes that NAMLE receives corporate funding, which is not an unfamiliar critique from other scholars (Higdon, 2020). More so, he uses his platform to spew attacks against NAMLE's leaders who contribute research about Critical Race Theory and diversity, equity, and inclusion. He also throws verbal jabs at other community members regarding civics education and the inclusion of addressing LGBTQIA+ challenges within the corpus of critical media literacy. Following Sailer's lead, former attorney Jane Robbins (2021) parrots similar remarks in *The Federalist*. She recounts Sailer's article and expresses charged commentary against media literacy, intersectionality, Critical Race Theory, critical media literacy as well as LGBTQIA+, climate, social, and racial justice. She ends with a call-to-action that elicits parents to examine every aspect of their children's schools and teachers' curriculum to speak out against what she labels as indoctrination and the "toxic World of Woke" (para. 15).

Nevertheless, NAMLE's leadership team persists in their commitment to social justice. For instance, they continue to address the need to incorporate multiple perspectives from different racial identities which has been a longstanding challenge in their organization, as well as more broadly for the media literacy movement in the U.S. (Higdon et al., 2021; Thevenin, 2022). After NAMLE (2019) conducted a survey with their membership base in 2018, they released a report that indicated that 85% of the participants polled identified as white. Their 2021 conference included a greater attention to racial representations in terms of presentations, leadership, and topics around racial injustice. Their subsequent conference, entitled: "Level Up: Building a Media Literate World" (NAMLE, 2022) featured an opening keynote from Ken Shelton, a technology consultant from Futuro Media, to re-ground the community in a commitment to social justice and challenging "dominant cultural hegemony" and "injustice" (p. 4). Flores-Koulish, Lipkin, and NAMLE's Board President Tony Streit observably hold true to their initial commentary during the 2021 conference. It is clear that social, racial, and climate justice as well as bringing together more diverse perspectives in the organization, membership base, and the resources it disseminates will remain an eminent focus moving forward (NAMLE, 2021, pp. 2-4).

While there are formidable developments occurring in the media literacy movement in the U.S., K-12 education is still vastly behind other countries in making media literacy education a prominent focus in each discipline and grade-level (De Abreu, 2017; Galician, 2004; Kubey, 2003; McDougall et al., 2018; NAMLE, 2019; Trope et al., 2021). Regardless of the laborious efforts of the Center for Media Literacy and NAMLE to develop some widely received materials for researchers and teachers to draw upon, the field is still struggling to develop a repository of scholarship, curriculum, and other resources accessible for the broader movement (Thevenin,

2022). These challenges are compounded by a lack of wide-scale policy integration nationwide (Media Literacy Now, 2023) and limited efforts to redress funding and training needs for teachers to be able to integrate media literacy in primary and secondary schools (Trope et al., 2021). On the other hand, how media literacy education is framed at the policy level is meager at best, often debasing forms of media literacy education that contain analyses of ideological positions and identity politics that are typified in every aspect of media messages.

Interestingly, the limitations in legislation and operationalizing media literacy education into practice are not so different from the split opinions remaining in the media literacy movement. Although acritical standpoints suggest media literacy education can (or should) be an apolitical, objective, or neutral endeavor, the field of critical media literacy still draws upon contributions from several media literacy scholars. Some of these contributions include the laudable expansions of literacy practices with print and non-print texts through inquiry-based analyses and productions through media and popular culture participation. There have also been notable developments in guiding students to take onus of their media literacy practices as more informed consumers and creators of media that can creatively express themselves with an array of tools and diverging mediums. Scholars from acritical and critical media literacy education perspectives might consider that they share the same goal of assisting students (and citizens) to carefully analyze, maneuver, and participate in online cultures in meaningful and informed ways.

However, while media studies scholars broadly agree that media is a pedagogical tool that shapes society and reasoning (Morrell, 2008), Sealey-Ruiz (2016) advances an invitation to educators that recommends a critical stance, noting curriculum and media pedagogies must be immediately responsive in addressing the socialpolitical challenges facing youth and society. Sealey-Ruiz further ascertains:

Literacy educators are in a unique position to interrupt the violence, pedagogical

injustices, and misrepresentations…[through] tools we have at our disposal (writing,

visual arts, spoken word, and other modalities more readily accepted in English and

literacy classrooms) provide an outlet to discuss, critique, and dismantle this violence. (p.

294)

Baker et al. (2017) reinforce Sealey-Ruiz's assertion; referencing the urgency to respond to

rampant racial violence and anti-Blackness in media messaging and systems of oppression within

classroom practices. They state that teachers must embrace a critical praxis that positions

classrooms "as spaces for triage, self-care, healing, and social transformation" (p. 138). Like

Morrell (2005), Baker et al. (2017) calls on educators to take up an essential opportunity as

needed actors in bringing a critical focus on social justice issues into their instruction. They also

denote the importance of exposing students from all identity-based backgrounds to a critical

toolkit to deconstruct hegemonic media representations that consider racism as one of several

axes of marginalization. This points to the theoretical views espoused from proponents of

intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Collins, 2000), critical race media literacy (Cubbage,

2022; Yosso, 2002, 2020), queer critical media literacies (Van Leent & Mills, 2018), and equity-

based frameworks for media education (Ramasubramanian et al., 2021). Without critical

frameworks applied to media literacy education, this prevents opportunities for teachers and

students to co-build the urgent set-of-skills necessary to challenge power that undermines their

dignity, stifles democratic reasoning, and delimits transformative civic participation (Funk et al.,

2016; Morrell et al., 2013; Share et al., 2019). Ultimately, some members of the media literacy

movement are making greater efforts to acknowledge, analyze, and act on sociopolitical

conditions, but they still are limited in addressing systems of oppression without adopting more critical approaches to media education.

Critical Media Literacy

Diverging from the previously discussed approaches to media education, critical media literacy explicitly "engage[s] with media through critically examining representations, systems, structures, ideologies, and power dynamics that shape and reproduce culture and society" (Critical Media Literacy Conference of the Americas Steering Committee, 2021, para. 1). Unlike acritical forms of media education that are analytically opaque or claim political neutrality (Higdon et al. 2021), critical media literacy maintains transparency about the critical social theories that guide dissidence against power and oppressive conditions. Cultural studies (i.e., The Frankfurt School and the Centre for Cultural Studies at Birmingham) informs critiques about how capitalist systems drive the culture industries and try to mass produce homogenous forms of identity by encoding hegemonic ideologies onto media messages that attempt to position audiences towards beliefs and lifestyles that sustain dynamics of power (Durham & Kellner, 2002; Hammer & Kellner, 2009). Multiperspectival approaches magnify perspectives of intersectionality to examine overlapping identity-based wounds (e.g., attacks across someone's class, race, gender, sexuality, nationality, dis/ability, etc.) and cultural erasures that attack people's inherent human rights and dignity (Kellner & Share, 2019). As a pedagogical orientation, Deweyan inquiry-based methods converge with Freirean critical pedagogies to reposition teachers and students as co-learners who resituate literacy as a conduit for political education and agentic process to contribute to justice (Darder et al., 2003; Kincheloe, 2007).

Despite a clear theoretical lineage, for most teachers and students "critical media literacy is not an option" (Kellner & Share, 2007c) in K-12 schools. To date, there are no state-wide

policies in the U.S. that advance critical media literacy for school-aged children. Research demonstrates that a lack of policy-level implementation as well as misconceptions about how to incorporate critical media literacy into practice must be addressed (Lyiscott et al., 2021; National Council of Teachers of English, 2021). Several scholars identify barriers to implementation relate to a lack of available training in teacher education programs and school-based professional development programs (Butler, 2020; Garcia et al., 2013; Higdon et al., 2021; Kist, 2022; National Council of Teachers of English, 2021; Trope et al., 2021). These challenges converge with issues related to the digital divide which entails inequitable access to digital devices and stable internet as well as an intense conservative sociopolitical climate with oppositionists who misrepresent the goals of critical education (Ladson-Billings, 2021a). Yousman (2016) and Kist (2022) each identify commonplace aversion to the term "critical." Most regularly, oppositionists falsely interpret "criticality" as indoctrination or manipulation. This is evidenced by the earlier discussion regarding Sailer's (2021) and Robbin's (2021) think pieces that scrutinize media literacy, critical media literacy, Critical Race Theories as well as the widespread censorship wars and surveillance of teachers leading to book bans representing diverse authors, topics, and texts (De Abreu, 2022). For example, since January of 2021, 42 states across the U.S. have considered bills to prohibit the teaching of Critical Race Theories and other critical approaches that address racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression (Schwartz, 2023, para. 5). At the conclusion of the 2021-2022 legislative season, 16 states with Republican leadership have passed bans on teaching Critical Race Theories (Kelly et al., 2023, p. 18). Moreover, PEN America, a non-profit committed to advancing free speech and fighting against censorship, documented the banning of 2,532 books in public schools and libraries during July 2021 to June 2022 alone (Friedman & Johnson, 2022, para. 7). They reported that among the books banned during this time frame, 41%

49

featured LGBTQIA+ themes or characters, 40% represented Characters of Color, 22% included sexual content, 21% addressed issues of race and racism, 10% discussed themes of rights or activism, 9% were biographies, autobiographies, or memoirs, and 4% featured non-dominant religious groups (para. 11). Giroux (2022) contends that the interrelated attacks on critical education pervert the goals of democracy. He traces the contemporary war on criticality back to historical forms of authoritarianism that are now visibly leading to the rise of fascism which he ascertains starts with targeted attacks on language and critical thinking.

Despite opposition to the project of social and environmental justice education, the time is now to implement critical media literacy education. It is imperative to not cower to hate-infused book bans, censorship, surveillance, or the scourge of forced "banking models of education" (Freire, 1970, p. 72) akin to exploitative capitalist labor models (Kist, 2022). While the stakes are high for teachers advancing critical forms of education, Luke (2018) provides a prescient call to action. He states:

> In the face of increasing economic inequality, heightened violence, between--and within--
> Communities and a media and political environment of renewed racism, sexism,
> xenophobia, fear and hatred--despair and withdrawal cannot be the default…This is not a
> time for despair. This is your generational challenge as educators, scholars, and activists.
> (p. 179)

It is no simple feat for teachers and students to take up the complexities of critically learning and acting upon injustice that pervades media discourse and society. However, critical media literacy is more than a set of skills or topics to teach. Rather, it requires a critical embodiment and "way of being and doing" (Vasquez et al., 2019, p. 300) that examines the world and oppression with eyes wide open to challenge and act on power and injustice. From an unwavering critical mindset

(McDaniel, 2004), critical media literacy elicits a commitment to a radical social consciousness for self and societal liberation that rejects "massification" (Freire, 1970, p. 148) through a critical hope (Freire, 2007) ethic to co-build new joyous and just worlds. Thus, to teach critical media literacy requires both a critical embodiment and enacted set of pedagogies that approach literacy and all classroom learning from anti-oppressive lenses which resituate literacy as a conduit for self and social change.

      Expanded View of Literacy and Texts. Critical media literacy expands understandings of literacy. From a critical pedagogical standpoint, literacy becomes a social practice (Freire & Macedo, 1987) that builds students' skills and awareness about how texts are "socially-constructed forms of communication and representation" (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 4). This perspective contrasts commonplace psychological models of literacy instruction in the U.S. that are embedded in traditional and functional literacy methods that situate exercises to support discrete cognitive processes. It is important to note the distinction behind foundational reading and advanced reading. Foundational reading focuses on phonics and alphabetic code to create practical literacy skills, while advanced reading develops analytical and communication skills. Foundational reading generates the literacy competencies that advanced reading builds on. Psychological models also position texts as neutral objects of study. This stance avoids the subjective ideological positions that authors encode onto texts as well as how reader's positionalities influence how they decode messages (Hall, 1980, 1988).

      Alternatively, critical media literacy moves beyond psychological approaches to literacy instruction and adopts sociocultural perspectives. Spires et al. (2020) explain how they enter their inquiry-based learning research and practice from a sociocultural literacy paradigm (p. 8). First, they note that literacy occurs as a communal process in social contexts. This dispels myths

that literacy and meaning-making occurs as independent phenomena. Second, they articulate that cultures and groups' literacy practices and norms vary. Thus, sociocultural literacy perspectives honor and respect an array of literacy practices, rather than instructional stances that assert cultural assimilation or linguistic erasure. Third, they denote that texts are inextricable from the historical contexts that influence their formation. Therefore, it is imperative to consider the relationship between texts and the historical contexts that shape them over time which also impact contemporary understandings and applications.

Morrell et al. (2013) extend similar understandings and apply a sociocultural approach to critical media literacy education. They suggest reading and writing media should be active, authentic, participatory, and empowering (p. 17). Active learning connects literacy practices that are intimately connected to the learner's lives and interests. Authentic learning foregrounds literacy tasks that are purposeful and meaningful for students, rather than practices that are disassociated from the learner's lives or merely prepare students for a standardized or prescriptive assessment. Participatory learning recognizes the communal aspects of literacy instruction. Empowering learning positions critical media literacy as a conduit to enhance students' critical thinking and emboldens their agency "and power to act differently in the world" (p. 17).

It is important to note that critical media literacy research and practice does not aim to replace psychological approaches to literacy. Rather, it advances sociocultural lenses that enhance a repertoire of literacy practices that support more comprehensive and critical methods to reading and writing. Luke and Freebody (1997) assert that sociocultural approaches can aid learners to uncover the sociological relationships between information, knowledge, and power. This is an essential adjustment to single-axis psychological models of literacy instruction that

preference "decoding, comprehension, and personal growth over the sociological concerns about pragmatics, critique, cultural action, and social identity" (Share & Gambino, 2022, p. 13). Instead, sociocultural techniques invite critical questioning that "begins the process of deconstructing the media content we see in front of us. Critical thinking is not a formula--it is a journey" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2011, p. 210). Parallel with Freire's (1970) conceptualizations of critical consciousness (p. 74), sociocultural perspectives view the process of becoming critically literate as never truly finished. Street (2016) explains "one is ever only 'learning to read some specific text or other in a septic context'. It is this sociocultural context and the practices that take place within it that give reading (and writing) its meaning" (p. 336). Therefore, critical media literacy views reading and writing as more than a technical skill; but, as a practice that considers how social, cultural, and historical dimensions influence texts and readers' meaning-making processes in relation to other societal factors.

Moreover, how texts are operationalized within critical media literacy also operate from a wider perspective than traditional and functional literacies which prioritize print-based formats. Similar to colleagues in the media literacy movement, critical media literacy adopts a perspective of "multiliteracies" (New London Group, 1996). This conceptualization advances studies of print and non-print texts that adapt with new advancements to ICTs. For example, this might involve engaging with print-based graphic novels, literature, poetry, or non-fiction as well as advertisements, films, infographics, mass communication, music, news, photographs, podcasts, popular culture, television, social media, video games, websites, etc. Essentially, any form of information that can be read or interpreted can be used as an object of analysis, but critical media literacy culls "multiliteracies" and embeds criticality which is not present in media literacy. This requires analyses of ideologies and hegemony to deconstruct and challenge power relations. Shor

(1992) synthesizes how critical pedagogies map onto literacy as a social practice which aligns with critical media literacy methods that embolden students':

> Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom and mere opinions, to understand the deeper meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media or discourse. (p. 129)

However, an expanded view of texts does not suggest that print-based literacies should be forgotten or are unimportant. Instead, critical media literacy positions print and non-print texts that include all types of media and popular culture as equally valuable discourses of study. Taken together, critical media literacy uplifts a critical embodiment towards literacy as a social practice that should be adaptable, age-level appropriate, culturally relevant, and socioculturally connected (Gambino & Share, 2023; Share & Gambino, 2022).

Critical Media Literacy Pedagogies. Critical media literacy pedagogies refer to the ways that teachers and students expand their critical "knowledge, skills, and dispositions" (Share & Gambino, 2022) through literacy practices that "critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information, and power" (Garcia et al., 2013, p. 111). The teacher takes on the role of facilitator and co-learner with students as they engage in experiential and experimental inquiry-based learning (Dewey, 1910, 1916, 1938) underscored by critical pedagogies (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Horton & Freire, 1990). Scholars from the Critical Media Literacy Conference of the Americas Steering Committee (2021) define:

> Critical media literacy is a dialogical process for social and environmental justice that incorporates Paulo Freire's (1970) notion of praxis, 'reflection and action upon the world

in order to transform it' (p. 36). This pedagogical project questions representations of class, gender, race, sexuality and other forms of identity and challenges media messages that reproduce oppression and discrimination. It celebrates positive representations and beneficial aspects of media while challenging problems and negative consequences, recognizing media are never neutral. Critical media literacy is a transformative pedagogy for developing and empowering critical, caring, nurturing, and conscientious people. Hence, critical inquiry-based processes are at the core of critical media literacy pedagogies.

There are two primary pedagogical methods that undergird critical media literacy education which include: 1) critical media analysis and 2) critical media production which is synonymously referred to as alternative media or countermedia production (Funk et al., 2016; Kellner & Share, 2019; Morrell et al., 2013). First, critical media analysis includes texts that can serve as generative themes (Freire & Macedo, 1987) that ignite explorations of social and environmental issues relevant to learner's lives and sociopolitical conditions. Or analysis might also involve evaluating countermedia to consider alternative perspectives, accurate or truth-bearing, and celebratory representations the challenge hegemonic worldviews. Second, critical media production amplifies students' capabilities as valued co-constructors of knowledge who create their own print and/or digital texts to speak back to power and injustice. "Problem-posing discourse" (Freire, 1970, p. 71) cuts across critical media analysis and production to situate communal sociocultural practices that guide learners to make-meaning in relation to their own understandings of power and privilege in conversation with others' perspectives. Critical media analysis and production work in tandem to help students critically think with and about media while also taking civic action. It is an iterative process that relies on Freirean modes of praxis that embolden students to engage in critical thought, reflection, and action during each learning

process. As Morrell et al. (2013) notes, "students who desire social justice must be critical consumers and producers of texts across multiple genres of both traditional and new media" (p. 5).

As a combined pedagogical method (i.e., critical media analysis and production), three dimensions of critical media literacy emerge (Share & Beach, 2022; Share & Gambino, 2022). The first dimension deepens students' critical awareness about systems, structures, policies, and ideologies that recreate hierarchies of power and knowledge regarding identity-based and environment injustices. This involves examinations of mass or dominant media and how the culture industries socialize audiences about identity-based or environmental representations to make them appear normal. The second dimension focuses on building students' critical thinking skills as they ask open-ended inquiry-based questions to decode implicit and explicit biases embedded in media representations. Students are also positioned as agentic actors who can speak back to power by producing their own countertexts. The third dimension supports students while they expand attitudes for empathy, social and environmental consciousness, and engage in civic participation. Students apply their knowledge from their critical analytical investigations and create their own counternarratives to demonstrate their understanding of social and environmental issues by taking action and creating their own more just media messages.

Critical Media Literacy Framework. To provide a tangible tool to support practitioners with applying critical media literacy theories into classroom practice, Funk et al. (2016) adapted the Center for Media Literacy's (2008) "Five Key Questions of Media Literacy" model into a set of six conceptual understandings and guiding questions from a cultural studies perspective. As noted earlier, the Center for Media Literacy aggregated various conceptual understandings from scholars around the world in accessible language for teachers to use, but there was not a

theoretical or critical framework explicitly included. Kellner and Share's (2019) most recent

adaptation, the "Critical Media Literacy Framework: Conceptual Understandings and Guiding

Questions" (see Table 2) provides an adaptable heuristic useful for classroom practice.

Table 2

Critical Media Literacy Framework: Conceptual Understandings and Guiding Questions

(Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 8)

Conceptual Understandings	Guiding Questions
1. *Social Constructivism* All information is co-constructed by individuals and/or groups of people who make choices within social contexts.	*WHO* are all the possible people who made choices that helped create this text?
2. *Language/Semiotics* Each medium has its own language with specific grammar and semantics.	*HOW* was this text constructed and delivered/accessed?
3. *Audience/Positionality* Individuals and groups understand media messages similarly and/or differently depending on multiple contextual factors.	*HOW* could this text be understood differently?
4. *Politics of Representation* Media messages and the medium through which they travel always have a bias and support and/or challenge dominant hierarchies of power, privilege, and pleasure.	*WHAT* values, points of view, and ideologies are represented or missing from this text or influenced by the medium?
5. *Productions/Institutions* All media texts have a purpose (often commercial or governmental) that is shaped by the creators and/or systems within which they operate.	*WHY* was this text created and/or shared?
6. *Social and Environmental Justice* Media culture is a terrain of struggle that perpetuates or challenges positive and/or negative ideas about people, groups, and issues; it is never neutral.	*WHOM* does this text advantage and/or disadvantage?

The conceptual understandings on the left offer guideposts to teachers as well as theoretical frames that a teacher would need to understand. Teachers can also expose students to the conceptual understandings while making them more age-level appropriate and culturally relevant. Similarly, the questions on the right are adaptable. They situate critical inquiry-based processes that students can build upon during critical media analysis and through iterative reflective practice following their critical media productions. While this framework does not aim to be prescriptive, it does offer a roadmap to support practitioners and students with deepening their critical media literacy skills. Because this framework directly maps onto the teachers' practices in this research study, I offer an extended discussion to further explain each of the conceptual understandings and guiding questions with practitioner examples.

Conceptual Understanding 1 is framed by a social constructivist standpoint. This view dispels myths that there is a uniform or objective truth (Foucault, 1972). Instead, this perspective acknowledges that all information is socially constructed by people who contain subjectivity and biases that are influenced by internal and external factors. In turn, this concept invites critical reading and thinking to reconcile how knowledge and information is co-developed by one or multiple actors who make decisions in their respective social contexts which influences the media they create and disseminate. This diverges from a traditional literacy approach which might invite a student to ask a question about the author's purpose or intent behind creating a text. Alternatively, Guiding Question 1 advances an inquiry-based process to help students to critically think like detectives who question the possible subjectivities of the creators of a text and the mediums through which messages are communicated. Rather than taking an author or information at face value, students can mine the primary text for details, conduct supplemental research, and discover how messages are "encoded" (Hall, 1980, 1988) with the creators' beliefs,

values, and ideologies. This can be a useful routine for students to read between the layers of information that are commonly overlooked or posited by authors to seem natural, normal, or like common sense (Comber, 1993). As Hall (2003) explains, ideologies in media and popular culture are often discrete and "tend to disappear from view" (p. 90), becoming normalized within society.

By learning more about the creator or groups who created a message as well as the contextual features that surround information, students can make calculated decisions about how a text might be trying to position them as consumers of information. This is a pertinent life skill for students to lessen their susceptibility to inaccurate or harmful information. For example, Hoechsmann and hezel ulthinn (2022) discuss the rise of social media influencers and an upward trend in QAnon allegiance during COVID-19 (p. 14). They demonstrate many examples that analyze the relationships between influencers who use their platforms to promote various lifestyles through a premise of spiritual awakening, meditative practices, yoga, fashion or beauty cultures, among others. However, they articulate that some influencers use their wide audience reach (i.e., followers) to circulate QAnon's conspiracy theories. In this way, alternative facts are not in plain view, but instead are buried with alluring aesthetics, visual imagery, balanced rhetoric, and multimodal representations with coded language that is overt.

To assist students with uncovering how a message is constructed, teachers might guide students to pinpoint who created a post on Instagram by asking them to respond to Guiding Question 1. Students can develop inferences by examining the at-handle (i.e., username) or they might "decode" (Hall, 1980, 1988) the post to see if visual or multimedia content contains attribution related to an artist, photographer, or graphic designer. The teacher might ask students to make observations about the medium (i.e., Instagram and its parent company, Meta) and they

can consult the user's profile to mine for clues about whether it holds verified status (i.e., blue checkmark or badge). Verified status typically indicates whether someone is a public figure, celebrity, or is tethered to a commercial brand which can be useful for determining if someone is connected with a corporation or governmental entity. This can come in handy as students later engage with Conceptual Understanding and Guiding Question 5 to ask questions about the possible motives of productions and institutions connected with a text.

Moreover, students can demonstrate their understanding of how a text is constructed by producing their own countermedia to express their findings. For instance, students can take on the point-of-view of the original creator or group and a similar medium (i.e., Instagram or a fake Instagram post generator tool) to provide more context about the original post under analysis while also extending critical insights and creativity. As students move through the other concepts and guiding questions, they can continue to collect even deeper insights to unpack the nuance behind the author and the message, considering possible ideologies and affects. In terms of students' critical media productions, they can also iteratively pull the strings of the Guiding Question 1 to self-regulate and ensure they have not reproduced fallacies, problematic information, or harmful representations.

Conceptual Understanding 2 contemplates how all texts contain specific languages and semantics. Drawing from the field of semiotics, this conceptual understanding considers how print, visual, aural, and multimodal languages work together in media messages to engender ideological discourses (Gee, 1992) through codes, gestures, signs, and symbols (Fairclough, 1989). This also considers how there are often dual meanings "encoded" (Hall, 1980, 1988) among various modes of communication. As Berger (1972) argues, "We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice" (p. 72). This reflects the agentic roles of audiences in decoding

visual images, among other languages, while also considering "the cultural framework within which it has been created and circulated" (McKee, 2022, p. 98).

In practice, a teacher might ask students to deconstruct a digital image by applying Guiding Question 2. Students can begin by making several observations to "decode" a text by contemplating denotation (i.e., literal meaning) and connotation (e.g., more abstract signals that relate to ideologies or cultural signifiers) (Hall, 1980, 1988). First, students can take jottings about what they see or hear explicitly to identify denotation. For example, they might write down observations about certain colors, lighting, people, landscapes, composition, etc. Second, they can consider connotation. This time, they begin to develop hypotheses about how connotation relates to figurative meanings that might be associated with sociocultural factors. For instance, if they observe a subject in an image who is driving a branded tractor labeled with a company name and a desolate natural landscape in the background, they might deduce that the message is constructed by a creator to convey a message about the harms of industrialization or deforestation. The teacher could then propel students to learn more about the company acronym they observed on the tractor. This could lead students to uncover important information about the environmental impact of the company and their relationship to environmental practices. Students can generate inferences to disaggregate the differences between connotation and denotation, while closely adding to their observations about possible ideological meanings.

Further, Romero Walker (2021) argues that for students to garner stronger understandings of semiotics and visual literacies, students should be invited to create their own critical media productions. Drawing on the example above, students can continue to learn more about the person who created the initial image. This process might reveal that this image was indeed a form of resistance by the producer as a form of dissent against a corporation who is engaging in

unethical environmental practices to churn a profit. The teacher might ask students to use mobile devices or tablets to take on the role of photographers and subjects to collaboratively compose their own digital image productions. Kellner and Share (2019) suggest photography can be a powerful pedagogical tool to help students "transform from passive recipients of information into active photographers and/or subjects of their own pictures, co-constructing knowledge and representing their ideas" (p. 49). Students can apply their understanding of connotation and denotation through techniques of photography (e.g., angles, background, composition, clothing, foreground, lighting, props, etc.). Through this process, students negotiate through meaning-making and experiential practice how to express connotation and denotation visually to generate awareness regarding climate injustice which also can become useful when considering Conceptual Understanding 6 (Social/Environmental Justice).

Conceptual Understanding 3 focuses closely on the role of audiences and positionality. This line of thinking emerges from scholars at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham who challenge perspectives like Postman's (1985) suggestion that audiences are passive receivers of information. Again, Hall's (1980, 1988) Encoding and Decoding techniques are imperative. He asserts that every individual has an active role and can consider how to interpret information and especially, ideologies that are "encoded" in media messages alongside other social contextual factors.

Further, Guiding Question 3 evokes students to consider their own subjectivity and biases (i.e., positionality) and how their lived experiences and proximity to privilege and power might impact their "decoding" processes. While this is more explicit in the designation of the term "positionality" in the conceptual understanding, it is important for the teacher to help model self-reflexivity to guide students to remain open to unpacking how their identities, lived experiences,

beliefs, and values influence their readership of a text (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). Self-reflexivity is different from reflection. It involves disentangling possible tensions and discomfort when considering one's positionality through a lens of intersectionality (Finlay, 2002). What is more explicit in Guiding Question 3 is the usage of third-person voice to consider how individuals and groups might interpret meanings differently than another person or group reading the text. This should also be approached sensitively and with culturally relevant practices as to not generalize or suggest that a person or group's power or privilege is all experienced in the same way.

In practice, a teacher might invite students to bring in children's literature from home or from a local library. Then, the teacher might ask students to use Guiding Question 3 to analyze what/who is depicted on the cover and how they interpret the meaning in relation to their own positionality. This would require much discussion beforehand and would be most beneficial after teacher modeling to help students contextualize positionality. After priming exercises about positionality, the teacher might ask students to free-write for five-minutes to consider how their lived experiences and relationship with power and privilege impact their interpretation of the book cover. Next, students might participate in a turn and talk exercise with a peer to share their free-writes depending on what they are comfortable sharing and then students might collaboratively brainstorm different ideas about how folks from other populations and groups might perceive the covers of the books differently than their own interpretations.

When students engage in self-reflexivity and thinking critically about perspectives within and outside of their own, they can consider how power and privilege are experienced differently, which also segues into explorations of Conceptual Understandings 4 (Politics of Representation) and 6 (Social/Environmental Justice). Again, critical media production can be a crucial tool to talk back to texts and for students to re-write texts to make them more inclusive and culturally

63

relevant. This should not occur as a means to speak on behalf of a population or group, but requires ongoing self-reflexivity, unlearning and learning, and actively striving to engage in forms of critical solidarity. For example, students in an undergraduate class worked collaboratively to create their own children's book to address the lack of representation in youth literature (Share & Gambino, 2022, p. 16). The group of students were each from different identity-based backgrounds and forged a strong communal bond where they were able to talk candidly about their lived experiences while problematizing harmful constructions of identity and culture. Together, they authored *Reading Beyond* to encourage early learners to challenge problematic forms of representation and celebrate accurate representations. This critical media product served as an outstanding example of self-reflexivity and counterstorytelling processes which explicates how audiences can use their agentic critical thinking skills to make-meaning about their own relationship to power, while also leveraging opportunities to act in solidarity for themselves and others.

Conceptual Understanding 4 pays close attention to the politics of representation. This includes considerations of how the structure and subject matter of media messages are examined with the intention to question ideology, bias, and the possible overt and covert meanings transmitted in a text. More specifically, this conceptual understanding is concerned with deconstructing harmful representations of age, race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, nationality, religion as well as other forms of identity that are often othered, misrepresented, or excluded in dominant media messages. Morrell (2008) denotes that media can be "a powerful instrument of knowledge production that is used by the powerful in society to configure social thought" (p. 157). Thus, analyzing the politics of representation must be explicit in critical media

literacy analysis and production at the classroom-level to challenge harmful representations and to create countermedia for just depictions.

A multiperspectival approach is essential for analyzing how media creators represent people from different identities which might either be inclusive or problematic (Share, 2015; Kellner & Share, 2007c; Kellner & Share, 2019). Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) developments of intersectionality are applied in conversation with examining the politics of representation to analyze and challenge converging forms of identity-based oppression that are reinforced in media and society. Because one's identities are dynamic and interrelated, several critical social theories should be elicited to attend to how a person or group might be represented in media. For example, to deconstruct dimensions of power and privilege in media messages, a teacher might enlist Black Feminist theories (e.g., intersectionality), critical pedagogy, Critical Race Theories (e.g., Critical Race Media Literacy, DisCrit), cultural studies, Queer Theories, among others.

Similar to thoughtful provocations around Conceptual Understanding 3 (Audience/Positionality), it is important for a teacher to first co-construct a classroom space where open, respectful, and critical dialogues can occur to unpack the politics of representation. Co-developing classroom norms can be a useful tool for building and maintaining classroom spaces where students' identities and perspectives are valued while also nurturing critical and empathetic learning opportunities. For instance, teachers and students might decide to embrace "I" statements as a classroom norm. Building from Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) Critical Race Theory teachings, this can help students to not essentialize another person or group's experiences as one in the same. Additionally, teachers and students should regularly discuss ways to challenge the politics of representation in media. More broadly, this should occur in tandem with considering how power and hegemony are reinforced in society. Ultimately, teachers and

students can work together to deepen their social consciousness and exchange approaches on how to act for justice.

For example, Ortiz (2021) conducted a study with 60 young adults (ages 18-24) about how they navigate racism and sexism in their daily participation in online environments. Results indicated that youth participants applied four techniques, including: "calling-in," "calling-out," "care as intersectional praxis," and "cool rationality." While a "calling-in" method strives to educate others who display misinformation reflective of ignorant and hegemonic beliefs, it can also neglect the longstanding injustices and harms that occur historically and over a person's lifespan. The author notes that "calling-in" was a common approach for white women and Men of Color; this was often applied to educate family and friends who they had pre-established relationships with as opposed to random people's commentary who appeared on their social network feeds. Educational techniques by participants also most prevalently occurred along a single axis (i.e., either race or gender), rather than looking at how racism and patriarchy operate together to reproduce oppression. Ortiz suggests a "calling-in" approach can relate to one's positionality and their proximity to the harm they observe online; she reinforces the urgency of applying perspectives of intersectionality and accountability for all forms of injustice. Alternatively, "calling-out" is a form of resistance that youth applied when they came across targeted racist and sexist disinformation. This approach holds people and groups accountable when they reproduce hegemony. Additionally, "care as intersectional praxis" was most prominently displayed by Women of Color. The participants expressed this became a form of solidarity with other females from similar backgrounds who were targeted by hate speech, slander, and microaggressions in online environments. Lastly, although the white men in this study note frequent observations of racism and sexism online, their dispositions indicated "cool

rationality" which falsely normalizes problematic beliefs and instead reinforces white supremacy. This nuanced study provides tools to help students consider how they might approach and use different techniques to address hate speech, misinformation and disinformation, as well as microaggressions. However, the findings around "cool rationality" become yet another reminder of the deep-seeded and pervasive nature of white supremacy that must be challenged at the classroom-level. Conceptual Understanding and Guiding Questions 3 (Audience/Positionality), 4 (Politics of Representation), and 6 (Social/Environmental Justice) can be especially pertinent for inward self-reflexivity, processes of learning and unlearning as well as guiding students to challenge their own biases, deepen their social consciousness, and better develop attitudes and actions for critical solidarity.

To facilitate processes of learning and unlearning, critical media analysis and production work together to guide students to revisit their positionality and the lenses they bring into readings and writings about identity, power, and oppression. Enlisting critical race media literacy (Yosso, 2002, 2020), culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 2014, 2021a, 2021b), culturally sustaining (Muhammad, 2020a), and trauma-informed pedagogies (Baker-Bell et al., 2017; Ramasubramanian et al., 2021) and other forms of critical pedagogy can offer affirming and healing practices that focus on students' well-being while navigating media analyses and counterproductions as well as critical classroom conversations. As Gambino and Share (2023) assert, critical media literacy exercises should directly correlate with learners' issues of concern and their sociopolitical conditions in order expand their skills and agency to call-out and act upon injustice.

Moreover, Van Leent and Mills (2018) provide a model using critical media literacy and Queer theories to assist practitioners who are addressing the politics of representation and

LGBTQIA+ rights. They recommend that teachers embed texts and inquiry-based analyses to guide students to explore LGBTQIA+ rights, engage in dialogic reflections, reconstruct representations, and reconnect intersectionality. The authors provide tangible samples using an array of media including digital document and multimodal text evaluations to uncover how leadership roles at local and federal governmental institutions commonly reinforce oppression. They explicate how students can conduct individual and small-group media analyses about the politics of representation which can segue into large group problem-posing dialogues to interrogate systemic injustice. To dig deeper, they recommend that students iteratively revisit their initial analyses again from perspectives of intersectionality, while also adding in more texts from multiple perspectives using other artifacts from popular culture. Lastly, they prompt teachers to guide students to craft their own responses to challenge hegemony across multiple axes of oppression based on their investigations.

While Van Leent and Mills provide a comprehensive model and adaptable lessons, their samples for student media production primarily focus on print-based literacies (i.e., written responses to guiding questions) whereas the media examples facilitated by teacher instruction used digital media. It could be useful to build onto their approach by inviting students to create their own media using either low-tech or high-tech formats to demonstrate their learning and express their agency. For example, low-tech options might include asking students to create countermedia collages out of recycled materials, hand-drawn cartoons or mini-graphic novels, or perhaps a letter-writing campaign to speak back to injustice at the local and federal-level to advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights. High-tech options might involve students working independently or together to create short multimedia videos, social media posts, or digital comics, cartoon strips, memes, or poetry. However, technology-based productions should not

supersede the learning objectives, rather these examples reference critical media literacy scholars' recommendations regarding the importance of the learning that can take place through student media production (Aleo, 2022; Clary, 2022). Morrell (2012) advances that critical media literacy production can help students recognize "the potential that they have, as media producers, to shape the world they live in, to help turn it into the world they imagine" (p. 302).

Conceptual Understanding 5 considers the role of productions and institutions to determine possible rationales behind why a text was created and distributed. This paradigm subverts positivist interpretations of texts that typically analyze whether an author or group's message is intended to inform, entertain, or persuade audiences. Instead, critical media literacy perspectives analyze the purpose behind the generation and dissemination of a text in relation to commercial or governmental motives, which are shaped by the social, political, and economic systems that the creators operate within. Guiding Question 5 can aid students' critical analyses about whether an author or group is affiliated with a governmental or political group that is trying to impart certain ideologies or values. Further, this question also problematizes whether a message might be affiliated with a corporation that is marketing a product or lifestyle to turn a profit.

Teachers can draw upon Conceptual Understanding and Guiding Question 5 to help students become more conscientious and critical consumers of information. As Morrell (2008) asserts, "Youth are the targets of mass media campaigns that seek to develop loyal consumers at increasingly younger ages" (p. 155). Not only are mass media marketing products to turn a profit, but they also portray cognitive and psychological messages that are socially constructed with undertones that attach socializing behaviors to how, what, and who youth should be related to their identities. Hence, Conceptual Understanding and Guiding Question 5 can guide learners

to also consider how media messages are socially constructed (Conceptual Understanding 1: Social Constructivism), what ideologies or points of view are conveyed (Conceptual Understanding 4: Politics of Representation), and how a company or political platform might be promoting or undermining social and environmental justice (Conceptual Understanding 6: Social/Environmental Justice).

For example, Vasquez (2014b) provides a compelling example for practitioners from her classroom with early learners. After one child posed a question about why McDonalds gives different toys to boys and girls in Happy Meals, Vasquez then facilitated a discussion with the class to help them problem-pose all types of different attributes about the toys they had received. During discussions, young children expressed how it bothered them when they were given a toy based on their gender. These conversations led to deep analyses and conclusions that children should be able to play with any toy and there should not be gendered characteristics that suggest girls or boys can only play with certain toys. As the students moved on to develop more critiques about McDonald's Happy Meals, Vasquez scaffolded an exercise called "webbing" (p. 154) where they deconstructed all the materials included in Happy Meals and considered the possible actors who contributed to the product development. Together, they created an in-depth web that created linkages between how this product is created, making complex conclusions about toy designers and gender as well as the environmental implications of how this item is manufactured and distributed. This example reflects the interlocking qualities of how Conceptual Understanding 5 operates in tandem with the other parts of the Critical Media Literacy Framework and the adaptability of critical media literacy pedagogies for learners of all ages.

The Critical Media Literacy Framework culminates with Conceptual Understanding 6 which addresses issues pertaining to social and environmental justice. Again, it is important to

note that each of the Conceptual Understandings and Guiding Questions operate not as isolated parts, but they all inform and build from one another. Conceptual Understanding 6 especially points back to challenging myths of neutrality (Conceptual Understanding 1: Social Constructivism) and politics of representation (Conceptual Understanding 4). In turn, teachers help students consider whose voices and identities are represented and whether they are presented in a light that is asset-based or deficit-based. The explicit identification of environmental justice is crucial to consider how more-than-human relatives are represented as a resource for extraction by human or major corporate actors. Additionally, this Conceptual Understanding purports the ways that social and environmental justice are intertwined and inseparable from each other.

Share and Beach (2022) provide a useful example that demonstrates how critical media literacy guides students to address social and environmental justice as well as systems thinking which "explores the interrelationships of the systems that shape society and organize structures, institutions, and ways of thinking" (para. 7). After students in one of Share's undergraduate courses were extensively introduced to the Critical Media Literacy Framework and issues pertaining to racism and the climate crisis, he invited students to collaborate in teams to create their own digital stories. First, students selected their own topic. In one group, they selected environmental racism. Then, the students co-created a paper storyboard and wrote a script to explain how major corporations that are not using sustainable energy practices were generating CO_2 emissions that negatively impacted a local community. Students took turns drawing characters, landscapes, and other visuals on index cards and then uploaded them to a class Google Slides presentation. Lastly, they practiced the lines from their script and took turns reading them aloud. Finally, they recorded their voices using a Voice Memos application on their

cell phones and uploaded and attached them to their respective slides. Lastly, students polished

their digital story with sound effects to help bring their narrative to life. Ultimately, this served as

a powerful form of critical media production that generated awareness and action about the

interconnectedness between the need for social and environmental justice while also telling a

story about how local communities can act together to fight for human and more-than-human

rights.

Summary

After reviewing extant literature on four types of media education, it is clear that acritical

approaches present limitations for assisting students to maneuver the complexities and

challenges of media, popular culture, and ICTs. While the protectionist, media arts, and media

literacy methods each offer different benefits, the literature indicates that critical media literacy

presents more opportunities to develop students' essential skills and critical mindsets. It

enhances their critical thinking, analysis, and capacity to respond to injustice, emboldening them

to take informed action as active citizens and contributing members equipped to build new civic

futures. Additionally, acritical stances do not offer clear designations between the theoretical

lenses or inquiry-based approaches that inform their key ideas, principles, or tenets, which yields

difficulty for classroom application. While there is a changing tide in the media literacy

movement by some scholars and practitioners ready to tackle social, racial, and climate injustice

with an adept focus on issues of inequity--it is still unclear what theoretical paradigms are

informing this work. Again, this poses limitations for helping teachers integrate this approach at

the classroom-level. Alternatively, critical media literacy clearly delineates its theoretical

foundations in the multidisciplinary field of cultural studies with a strong critique of capitalism

and the culture industries as well as pedagogical orientations linked to Deweyan (1910, 1916)

72

inquiry-based methods and Freirean (1970) critical pedagogies that drive literacy as a social practice (Freire & Macedo, 1987) for self and social change. Kellner and Share's (2019) multiperspectival method helps further bring these lenses to the fore, while also generating a stronger focus on the need to incorporate intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Taken together, while acritical methods of media education express an embodiment of political neutrality, critical media literacy requires an embodiment that levies dissent against systems of power and oppression. However, there are many areas rife for examination to determine how teachers are specifically operationalizing their critical stances or embodiments (ways of being) (RQ1) that they bring into their practices (ways of doing) in relation to critical media literacy at the classroom-level (RQ2) which require further exploration.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Guided by the theories and literary bodies discussed in chapters 1 and 2 which emphasize critiques of power and oppression, I chose critical qualitative research methodologies (CQR) which also informed the method selections. Through CQR techniques, I uncovered the overarching aim: "How do secondary teachers' embody and practice critical media literacy during the COVID-19 pandemic?" In pursuing this line of inquiry, I also gained insights on the motivations behind these embodiments and practices of critical media literacy. To further unpack this aim, I also investigated two research questions:

1) How do teachers describe their embodiments (ways of being) in relation to critical media literacy?

2) How do teachers practice (ways of doing) critical media literacy in their classrooms?

The overarching aim and research questions each began with the descriptive term "how" which allowed for an exploratory and interpretive CQR inquiry-based approach. As Creswell et al. (2007) note, research driven by descriptive questions is well-suited for case study strategies, which can facilitate an "in-depth understanding about how different cases provide insight into an issue or unique case" (p. 239). As critical media literacy is a dynamic theory and set of pedagogical processes that vary based on the sociocultural and sociopolitical context of teachers and learners, I opted to use a collective case study approach that unites "different perspectives" (p. 246) from four secondary practitioners to explore how they embody (RQ1) and practice (RQ2) critical media literacy during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research design reflects the adaptable features of critical media literacy by enabling a detailed understanding of how practitioners maneuver its implementation in an array of contexts. In this chapter, I further

describe the methodological design and methods that were incorporated within this research study.

Methodological Design: Critical Qualitative Research (CQR)

I chose to employ CQR methodologies. Drawing on Denzin's (2017) ideations of CQR, Esposito and Evans-Winters (2022) explain that this methodological approach openly "critiques systemic inequalities in an ethically responsible manner" (p. 35). Broadly speaking, this research study pushes back against traditional forms of schooling and literacy as well as systems, structures, and ideologies that reproduce oppression within society, media, and education. In allegiance with Denzin's (2017) call to critical scholars who take up CQR, I center inquiries to make visible systemic inequalities that proliferate oppression and marginalization to respond to "the global cry for peace and justice" (p. 8). Throughout the study, the rationale behind it aims to support transformative approaches to education through critical media literacy. This involves explicitly naming and resisting oppressive systems of power and control, such as: classism, dis/ableism, racism, sexism, homo/transphobia, among others. As a result, this research promotes a discourse of possibility towards "a conscious political, economic, and personal conduit for empowerment" (p. 24). Moreover, CQR methodologies align with critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and techniques influenced by British cultural studies and The Frankfurt School, among other critical theories (p. 10). These theoretical lenses directly correspond with the corpus of scholarship that intertwines with this study. In sum, CQR methodologies commingled with the guiding bodies of literature, theoretical paradigms, and the study's focus on highlighting secondary teachers' embodiments (RQ1) and practices (RQ2) of critical media literacy as a situated inquiry and tool for social and environmental justice within and outside of education.

Critical Qualitative Research Collective Case Study

This study utilized a collective case study approach framed by CQR methodology. As Creswell et al. (2007) denotes, collective case studies incorporate the examination of multiple sites or cases. Within this research, I selected a CQR collective case study approach to gather insights from four teachers from different institutional affiliations, school districts, grade levels, and content areas, rather than focusing on a single case. By consulting with multiple teachers, I aimed to explore the dynamic nature of critical media literacy as a theoretical and pedagogical tool-kit that evolves according to the sociopolitical and sociocultural contexts of educators and learners.

Additionally, Yin (2003) proposes that by moving beyond a single case, researchers can identify similarities and differences using the same methods. However, unlike many collective case studies in educational research, this study does not aim to compare practitioners with an evaluative eye to deduce teacher effectiveness. Rather, I seek to understand and share the nuanced understandings and applications of critical media literacy from the experiential knowledge and wisdom of secondary educators in the field. Thus, this study affirms each teacher's unique embodiment (RQ1) and practices (RQ2) of critical media literacy as equally substantial and valuable.

Methods

Esposito and Evans-Winters (2022) describe methods as "procedures" (p. 34) which support the researcher's data collection and analysis. To answer each of the research questions, I applied several methods that focused on each teacher's unique and multifaceted embodiment (RQ1), and practices (RQ2) of critical media literacy. These methods embraced criticality and qualitative methods, parallel with CQR methodologies.

This study was conducted in four large metropolitan (i.e., non-rural) public school districts in California, each with one secondary school site providing instruction for students in grades 9-12. The selection of these locations was informed by the recruitment strategies. To ensure privacy and confidentiality of the teachers, pseudonyms were used for each individual, school district, and school site. Alternative identifiers were also used and notated with asterisks. This decision was shaped by the sociopolitical climate in the U.S., which involves ongoing attacks on educators who teach critically from oppositional perspectives against neoliberal and oppressive forms of education.

The following data offers information about the student populations of each school district and school site related to the teachers who engaged in this study. This information is included to provide context for the discussion of the findings (see chapters four and five), particularly in relation to the teachers' critical media literacy practices (RQ2). More information about each teacher's identity-based, professional, and content area characteristics are in the Recruitment, Sampling, and Research Participants (Teachers) subsection. The California Department of Education[14] (CDOE) collects various data points that categorize students with particular identifiers as part of their enrollment data. First, Table 3 summarizes terminology, abbreviations, and descriptions commonly used to describe the student populations of each teacher's school district and school site. Additionally, I problematize some of the common terminology used by the CDOE in alignment with CQR, which places criticality at the forefront

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[14] Given concerns for teachers' confidentiality due to the sociopolitical climate and attacks on teachers' discussed earlier in this study, I did not provide in-text citations or full references to the resources utilized to gather each school districts' and school sites' data sets. However, all of the data was made publicly available by the State of California's Department of Public Instruction search tool entitled: "California School Dashboard."

of the methodological design. Second, Tables 4-7 provide the school district and school site information related to each teacher 's institutional affiliation.

Table 3

Terminology Key with Abbreviations, Descriptions, and Critiques

Terms/Abbreviations	Descriptions	Critiques
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (SES-D)	The CDOE classifies a student as SES-D if they receive free or reduced meals and/or if their primary caregiver(s) did not graduate from high school.	Ladson-Billings (2006) discusses that terms like SES-D can conflate or mask the "education debt" (p. 5) owed to students and their families that have accrued over time resulting from external societal factors, such as: racism, poverty, inequitable access to basic needs' resources, among others. "SES-D" does not account for how multiple structural inequalities have contributed to barriers facing a student's family.
Homeless (H)	The CDOE uses the term "homeless" to indicate whether a student experiences unstable housing.	This term does not represent the range of experiences associated with housing insecurity, such as students who are experiencing regular housing insecurity or periods of high mobility. The term "homeless" suggests a "homogenous experience" (Pavlakis, 2018, p. 1044) that fails to acknowledge the systemic variables and structures that contribute to housing crises (e.g., capitalism, racism, etc.).
Students with Disabilities (SWD)	The CDOE classifies a student as a "Student With Disabilities" if they received a	Scholars from Critical Race Theory and Disability Studies (or DisCrit) like Annamma et

	formal cognitive, physical, or behavioral diagnosis from a licensed physician, which often requires an individualized education plan (IEP) at the school-level. At times, this also includes special education services and accommodations, such as: academic instruction, speech therapy, physical therapy, counseling, or behavioral interventions.	al. (2017) argue that the label "SWD" normalizes binaries of "ability" or "disability." This reproduces binaries, generalizations, and othering that does not account for how an individual might experience ableism in tandem with other forms of oppression, such as: racism, sexism, classism, etc. While Annamma et al. (2017) among others do not recommend a different term, they do suggest that the dichotomy of "ability" and disability" are approached from a standpoint of intersectionality to challenge systemic forms of ableism in society and within schools.
English Learners (EL)	CDOE classifies a student as an "English Learner" if they are in the process of learning English and if they are receiving instruction in English for the bulk of the instructional day.	It is important to note that this terminology centralizes English as a dominant language which is a reproduction of settler colonialism, colonization, and white supremacy which marginalizes students, rather than recognizes learners' assets or "funds of knowledge" (González et al., 2005) and their linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005) as students who are emergent bilingual (Gambino & Share, 2023; García, 2009).
Race/Ethnicity (R/E) and Gender (G) Representations	CDOE collects demographic characteristic data in terms of race/ethnicity as well as gender to deduce and make public varying demographic characteristics of students' enrollment per district and	The R/E and G distinctions used by the CDOE propel categorical and oppressive binaries that perpetuate cultural and identity-based erasure. As Critical Race and Queer theorists point out,

	school site.	these sorting categorizations are steeped in hegemonic ideologies such as racism and patriarchy which do not consider the complexities of an individual's identities or relationship to oppression. For example, the current gender choices are limited to only male (M) or female (F), which ignores the existence of other gender identities. Similarly, students who identify as a race outside of the limited choices or for instance, who identify with more than two races are unable to allocate which racial compositions are connected to their identities, resulting in problematic generalizations, conflations, and exclusionary identity-based politics.

Table 4

Case 1, Arlen Bloom's* School District and School Site Characteristics

Characteristic	Valley Union School District*	Valley View High School*
Number of schools	<5	1
Grade levels	9-12	High School (9-12)
Student Enrollment	>5,000	<2,200
SES-D	~16%	~17%
H	~10%	~1%
SWD	~11%	~11%
EL	~5%	3%

R/E	~1% (African American)	1% (African American)
	~<1% (American Indian)	~<1% (American Indian)
	~25% (Asian)	~28% (Asian)
	~2% (Filipino)	~>1% (Filipino)
	~26% (Hispanic)	~28% (Hispanic)
	8% (Two or more races)	~6% (Two or more races)
	~<1% (Pacific Islander)	~<1% (Pacific Islander)
	~38% (White)	~36% (White)
G	49% (F), 51% (M)	51% (F), 49% (M)

Table 5

Case 2, Esme Lankarani's* School District and School Site Characteristics

Characteristic	River Run Unified School District*	River Run High School*
Number of schools	>20	1
Grade levels	Pre-kindergarten (PreK)-12	High School (9-12)
Student Enrollment	~15,000	<2,500 students
SES-D	~33%	~33%
H	~1%	~<1%
SWD	~12%	~14%
EL	~10%	~3%
R/E	~3% (African American)	~3% (African American)

	~<1% (American Indian)	~<1% (American Indian)
	~6% (Asian)	~4% (Asian)
	~4% (Filipino)	~5% (Filipino)
	~33% (Hispanic)	~48% (Hispanic)
	5% (Two or more races)	~6% (Two or more races)
	~<1% (Pacific Islander)	~<1% (Pacific Islander)
	~48% (White)	~33% (White)
G	49% (F), 51% (M)	~49% (F), ~51% (M)

Table 6

Case 3, Valeria Barbarano's* School District and School Site Characteristics

Characteristic	Sunbeam Unified School District*	Sunbeam High School*
Number of schools	>1,000	1
Grade levels	PreK-12	High School (9-12)
Student Enrollment	~600,000	<900
SES-D	~85%	~97%
H	~1%	~<1%
SWD	~14%	~19%
EL	~20%	~22%
R/E	~8% (African American)	~2% (African American)
	~<1% (American Indian)	~<1% (American Indian)

82

	~4% (Asian)	~3% (Asian)
	~2% (Filipino)	~3% (Filipino)
	~73% (Hispanic)	~91% (Hispanic)
	>1% (Two or more races)	~<1% (Two or more races)
	<1% (Pacific Islander)	~<1% (Pacific Islander)
	~8% (White)	~<1% (White)
G	49% (F), 51% (M)	~40% (F), ~60% (M)

Table 7

Case 4, Fernando Flores' School District and School Site Characteristics*

Characteristic	Moonview Central School District*	Moonview High School*
Number of schools	>50	1
Grade levels	PreK-12	High School (9-12)
Student Enrollment	~34,000	~<2,500
SES-D	~83%	~85%
H	4%	~4%
SWD	~12%	~13%
EL	~22%	~21%
R/E	~10% (African American)	~12% (African American)
	~1% (American Indian)	~2% (American Indian)
	9% (Asian)	~5% (Asian)

	~4% (Filipino)	~8% (Filipino)
	68% (Hispanic)	~69% (Hispanic)
	~>3% (Two or more races)	~>2% (Two or more races)
	~<1% (Pacific Islander)	~<1% (Pacific Islander)
	~5% (White)	~2% (White)
G	48% (F), 52% (M)	~47% (F), ~53% (M)

Recruitment, Sampling, and Research Participants

In tandem with the foundational beliefs established in the theoretical framework, guiding literature related to critical media literacy, and CQR methodologies, I consider the individuals who participated in this study as co-constructors of knowledge, rather than external subjects or objects of the study. I chose to use the words "teacher" instead of the term "participant" to recognize that the teachers in this study are trained educators before and after this study was conducted. This choice acknowledges the importance of valuing the voices, lived experiences, and professional expertise of teachers throughout this research process.

This study focused on bringing multiple teachers together, who self-identified as critical media literacy pedagogues. To carry out this task, I utilized purposeful sampling "based on specific criteria instead of random selection" (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022, p. 77). First, I established the following broad criteria listed below.

1) Invite twenty-five teachers who self-identify as critical media literacy pedagogues, to ensure that the sample represents an array of experiences from practitioners within the critical media literacy community.

2) Ensure that each self-identified critical media literacy pedagogue received prior formal

training (i.e., completed teacher education coursework, professional development, or conference workshops) or informal training (i.e., self-studies) in critical media literacy, so that all teachers have a foundational understanding of critical media literacy theories and practices.

3) Call for teachers with $\geq$1-year of teaching experience in K-16 classrooms, in any content area, who are currently practicing critical media literacy as part of a classroom routine during the COVID-19 U.S. context, to confirm teachers have experience and familiarity with critical media literacy in the current educational climate.

Second, I worked closely with two teacher educators who specialize in critical media literacy at a large four-year Research I institution. These professors have extensive experience training and partnering with teachers to bring critical media literacy theories into practice. Together, we established a list of potential contacts who met the pre-established criteria. The selection process involved an initial list of twenty-five teachers who taught elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education courses from critical media literacy perspectives. After obtaining IRB approval (IRB #21-000549) in March of 2021, I wrote and emailed potential teachers, providing a detailed description of the study and its purpose (see Appendix A). I also offered to answer any questions they had before teachers consented or declined to participate. From the initial twenty-five contacts, twenty teachers replied and consented to participate in this study. These teachers participated in three-part semi structured interviews (further details are provided in the data collection/interviews subsection) between March and August of 2021, with each interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes.

Third, after reviewing the preliminary data and conversing with my doctoral committee, I decided to narrow the participant pool for the scope of my dissertation study. In turn, I partnered with four secondary teachers in California to collect additional data. This decision was consistent with principles of emergent design in CQR methodologies, which allows for the study to remain open to changes and adaptations as it progresses (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022, p. 73). CQR methodologies also prioritize depth over breadth (p. 72), which provides opportunities to engage closely with a smaller group of educators to gain a deeper understanding of the topic and build more reciprocal relationships over time.

While the original criterion for the study included twenty-five teachers from various geographic locations, disciplinary areas, and grade levels, the final study narrowed the focus to four secondary teachers in California who taught English, history, or other humanities courses. This is especially valuable given the recent call from the National Council for Teachers of English Critical Media Literacy Task Force (2021) who report the need to increase the general public's awareness and understanding of critical media literacy and the urgency to "promote its relevance to English Education, communication, and democracy" (p. 3). Further, because history and humanities disciplines often create opportunities to examine how sociocultural and sociopolitical systems and structures impact democratic progress, these disciplinary settings offer strong conditions for critical media literacy explorations (Morrell et al., 2013). The other criteria for selecting teachers remained the same, including self-identification as a critical media literacy pedagogue, prior training in critical media literacy, and experience teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to note that all teachers in this study were familiar with Kellner and Share's (2019) Critical Media Literacy Framework (p. 8) before this study began, but this was

not a part of the recruitment criterion selection and instead emerged during the data collection phase.

The tables below provide additional information about each teacher, including demographic and professional characteristics, content areas and grade-levels, as well as their respective school districts and institutional affiliations. To maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the teachers, pseudonyms are used, and any item that includes an asterisk below indicates that a pseudonym was attributed. It is important to note that all demographic characteristics related to gender (G), race/ethnicity (R/E), and pronouns were based on how the teacher self-identified during data collection.

Table 8

Teachers' Demographic and Professional Characteristics

Name	G	R/E	Pronouns	Years of Experience	Formal Training	Informal Training
Arlen Bloom*	M	White	he/him	17	Y	Y
Esme Lankarani*	F	Iranian American	she/her	14	Y	Y
Valeria Barbarano*	F	Latina	she/her/ella	3	Y	Y
Fernando Flores*	M	Filipino American	he/him	9	Y	Y

Table 9

Teachers' School District, School Site, and Content Areas/Grade Levels

Name	School District	School Site	Content Areas/Grade Levels
Arlen Bloom*	Valley Range Union	Valley View High	Advanced Placement

	School District*	School*	Literature (12); Film Analysis (12); Broadcast Journalism and New Media Literacy Elective (10-12)
Esme Lankarani*	River Run Unified School District*	River Run High School*	English (9; 10; 12)
Valeria Barbarano*	Sunbeam Unified School District*	Sunbeam High School*	Ethnic Studies Elective (9-12); World History (10); Dual-language World History (10); U.S. History (11)
Fernando Flores*	Moonview Central School District*	Moonview High School*	English Language Development (9); English (11); Ethnic Studies Elective (9-12)

Data Sources and Collection Process

Ravitch and Carl (2019) argue that CQR involves making strategic choices that promote "justice to people's lived experiences and having a fidelity to exploring topics in deeply contextualized ways" (p. 105). This process recognizes that data collection is "cyclical, emergent, and recursive--methods build upon, and are situated in relation to, each other in terms" (p. 112). To closely examine teachers' embodiments (RQ1) and practices (RQ2) of critical media literacy in a way that aligns with the foundational bodies of literature, theories, and CQR, I used three primary modes of data collection: 1) semi-structured interviews with lesson demonstrations, 2) teachers' lesson plans, and 3) related artifacts, such as: photographs, videos, and student work samples.

Interviews. With each teacher, I conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B) online via Zoom which lasted between 60 and 90 minutes in length. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to pose pre-developed questions guided by the literature, theories, research questions, and study scope, while also making space for flexibility if the conversation organically proceeds in another direction (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022, p. 89). Additionally, as part of the CQR tradition, interviews or storying becomes essential for demonstrating how an individual's lived experiences and experiential wisdom converges to shed light on a particular topic or phenomenon. In this research study, interviews were crucial for contextualizing how teacher's backgrounds, professional experiences, and lifeworlds influenced their embodiments (RQ1) and practices (RQ2) of critical media literacy.

To gain a holistic picture of each teacher in relation to critical media literacy, I adapted Seidman's (2013) "three-interview series," which focuses on understanding the interviewee's experiences, reconstructs part of their experiences, and incorporates reflection/meaning-making about the individual's experiences (pp. 20-23). Typically, interviews bound within Seidman's model occurs during different days or time periods. As part of a CQR methodology, Esposito and Evans-Winters (2022) recommend that researchers are mindful of the time constraints and schedules of teachers. With this in mind, I asked each teacher if they would rather participate in an elongated interview or three short interviews. Each individual opted to complete the interview in one session. Although each teacher opted to complete their interview in one sitting, the interviews were still divided into three parts. Part I included a focus on teachers' lifeworlds and the influences that shaped their self-identification as critical media literacy pedagogues. Part II involved discussions about how teachers ideate complex critical media literacy theories into practitioner language as secondary educators. Part III involved a lesson demonstration in which

the teacher walked through an entire lesson or multiple lessons to reveal examples of real lessons they recently incorporated in the classroom. After the lesson demonstration, clarifying questions were asked and teachers provided additional critical reflections about their practices and posed further recommendations for other practitioners, policymakers, and school administrators to further propel critical media literacy into schools. While each teacher was asked the same set of core questions throughout their interviews (see Appendix B), I also asked additional probing questions to request clarifications or elaborations based on the discussions with each teacher. Before the onset of each interview, I requested each teacher's permission to record the interview. Interviews were recorded using the Zoom desktop recording feature and through a secondary modality using my Voice Memos application on my mobile device. I then transcribed the interviews verbatim.

Lesson Plans. As part of this study, each teacher was asked to provide one or more lesson plans that exemplified how they designed and implemented critical media literacy into their teaching practices. During their interview sessions, each teacher demonstrated their chosen lesson or activity, but they also provided additional examples afterwards via e-mail correspondence. These examples included materials such as Google or Microsoft Word documents, Powerpoint or Google Slides presentations, student-facing handouts, and texts such as curricular materials and popular culture/media-based resources.

Artifacts. CQR methodology allows for flexibility in data collection by providing an array of different data points. In this study, teachers were able to select representative artifacts that could help illustrate different features of their practices as critical media literacy pedagogues. These artifacts included photographs such as screenshots from recent lessons, teacher-created videos or podcasts that discussed their critical media literacy processes, and

student work samples. The variety of artifacts collected provided fascinating insights into how critical media literacy is highly contextual and varies according to the sociopolitical and sociocultural of teachers and learners.

Data Analysis Procedures

After I conducted and transcribed the interviews as well as received the lesson samples and artifacts, I analyzed the data using two distinct phases of coding. The first phase involved inductive in vivo coding, which centered on teachers' verbatim descriptions of their embodiments (RQ1) and practices (RQ2) of critical media literacy. In line with CQR methodologies, this approach was chosen to be reflexive, iterative, and grounded in the data.

The second phase utilized deductive axial coding, which entailed grouping the in vivo concepts and categories into broader themes and analyzing their relationships. This approach allowed for a more detailed understanding of how concepts and categories related to one another and how they fit into a larger framework, while also considering guiding theories and literature. By first sequencing in vivo codes and determining broader categories, the subsequent axial codes were situated in relation to guiding theories while also allowing for areas that operated outside of the guiding theoretical frameworks. This technique helped to expound upon existing knowledge of critical media literacy theories and practices.

An example of the coding process is provided in Table 10. The table includes sample quotes from each teacher's interview, which are related to their descriptions of practicing (RQ2) critical media literacy during the Insurrection on the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Table 10

Coding Phases Sample (RQ2)

Teachers' Names	Sample Quotes	Phase 1: Inductive In Vivo Codes	Phase 2: Deductive Axial Codes	Theme and Theoretical Connections
Arlen Bloom*	"We did stop and talk about the story [Insurrection]."	"We did stop and talk about the story [Insurrection]."	Pedagogical Sociopolitical Shift; Insurrection	Teaching About the Insurrection
Esme Lankarani*	"I had no idea what was happening. And one of my students, she just like, she just popped in. She was like, 'Mrs. [sic],' she's like 'they're storming the Capitol.' And I was like, 'What?'. And then, you know, obviously I pull it up. And I was like, alright, this is what we're looking at now. And I just shifted gears."	"And one of my students, she just like, she just popped in. She was like, 'Mrs. [sic],' she's like 'they're storming the Capitol.' And I was like, 'What?'. And then, you know, obviously I pull it up. And I was like, alright, this is what we're looking at now."	Pedagogical Sociopolitical Shift; Student-facing Generative Theme; Insurrection	Critical Pedagogy; Generative Themes; Political Education (Freire, 1970)
Valeria Barbarano*	"At the beginning of class, the chat was filled like, 'Miss, did you hear about blank? Miss, did you hear about blank?' And so, we had to sit down. And sometimes, I'd even play videos to try to catch up	"Miss, did you hear about blank?' And so, we had to sit down. And sometimes, I'd even play videos to try to catch up the class and what was going on."	Pedagogical Sociopolitical Shift; Student-facing Generative Theme; Insurrection	

	the class and what was going on. I'm like, I remember teaching during the January 6 Insurrection. I think I always will."			
Fernando Flores*	"When the Insurrection of the Capitol happened on the 6th of January, I'm like, 'We're talking about this today because it's there."	"We're talking about this today…"	Pedagogical Sociopolitical Shift; Insurrection	

Although each teacher described their teaching event differently, as demonstrated by the in vivo codes, it became clear during axial coding that each teacher adapted their teaching in the moment to respond to the sociopolitical context impacting students' lives resulting from the attempted coup. This finding aligns with the theoretical framework presented in chapter one, particularly Freirean (1970) critical pedagogy and how generative themes are often tethered to sociopolitical conditions relevant to the context of community members. Additionally, Freirean teachings explicate a radical political education which suggests that teachers face external sociopolitical challenges occurring in society head-on at the classroom level.

Reliability and Validity

To enhance reliability and validity of the study, I employed several techniques guided by Denzin's (2009) recommendations for CQR methodological triangulation and data triangulation. For methodological triangulation, I used a "between-methods" (p. 301) approach which

integrated three main data points and generated the overall data set for each case. I also incorporated data triangulation guided by Denzin's techniques which pertained to three factors: 1) time, 2) place, and 3) multiple perspectives. Timeframes varied; data was collected on different days and times in accordance with the teachers' schedules and preferences. Place-based locations differed given that each teacher was a member of different school districts and school sites. Multiple teachers were included and framed as a collective case study with four secondary educators. To ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data, member checks were carried out during the analysis phases and findings write-up, which involved follow-up correspondences (e-mails; text messages) and conversations (Zoom; audio calls) with the teachers. This process confirmed that the teachers' stories and practices were quoted and presented accurately.

Researcher Reflexivity

Part of CQR methodology prioritizes reflexivity to consider how an individual's ontology, epistemology, and positionality map onto the researcher's purpose and processes throughout the study. The following paragraphs describe how my ontological or beliefs about the "nature of reality or of being" (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022, p. 27), epistemologies or ways of being and knowing (pp. 29-30), and positionality (i.e., relationship to the research) mapped onto my thinking and processes during this research study, including the CQR methodological approach.

Ontologically, I adopt a social constructivist stance which aligns with many of the guiding literature and theoretical bodies that shaped this research. My ontological worldview also maps onto my epistemological stances. I embrace the legacies of cultural studies, critical pedagogy, critical literacy, and critical media literacy which view that all material realities and knowledge are socially constructed. This includes developing and deepening a social

94

consciousness which critiques how societal systems, structures, and ideologies are reproduced and cause oppression and marginalization to persist. Additionally, I approach my own process of becoming as well as a practitioner, researcher, and activist from Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) teachings of intersectionality. This is crucial, both when revisiting and critiquing history and in relation to our contemporary context, as I believe that societal transformation requires active processes of critical thought, reflection, and action that hold accountable and make visible both explicit and implicit ways oppression occur at the nexus of one's identities, rather than in isolated parts. This also allows deep inward reflection about my own identities and my own responsibility to challenge white supremacy and all other forms of systemic and ideological oppression.

Moreover, as the teachings of Paulo Freire reveal, I believe a crucial component of emboldening one's social imagination and activism necessitates an ethic of critical hope. While the current sociopolitical context and the multiple conditions in society can yield belief-sets of helplessness, I remain resolved through critical hope that teachers and students deserve and can co-create an education that does not shy away from the sociopolitical. That not only provides opportunities for texts (and contexts) that reflect representations across identities, but more so that endeavors to ensure those representations are full--that they are just. And, when they come across representations that are not, in the media or otherwise, that teachers are able to work alongside students in solidarity. Through those moments of struggle, may they grapple together to "problem-pose" (Freire, 1970, p. 71) and co-create the critiques necessary to make visible historical and contemporary reproductions of power and ideological indignance. Through these processes, in this case, the epistemological forms of "being and doing" (Vasquez et al., 2019) of

critical media literacy, may they take those critiques and reach beyond reform--towards abolition--and the making of the world anew.

Methodologically speaking, when I designed this research study, I grappled with whether to use the term "critical" in front of "qualitative research." Would it be necessary to include this insertion when this study travels alongside the stories of how teachers come to their critical embodiments (RQ1) and do the hard yet necessary work of putting critical media literacy into practice (RQ2)? I determined the answer to this inner researcher monologue for myself was an automatic and unapologetic *yes*. Naturally, when I reflected on this design choice, my mind turned outward to the purpose-driven and activist work of so many social and environmental justice educators. More often than not, they stay in the crucial work of teaching because they believe in students and wield Freirean critical hope that explores, names, and pushes back against that which is unjust in order to co-activate thriveable futures with their students.

As a former secondary English and history teacher (2008-2018), this study is especially interconnected with my positionality as an educator implementing the guiding theories shaping this study into classroom practices. My identity as a teacher is situated in Dr. Bettina Love's (2019) description of becoming a "co-conspirator" for social justice. I *choose* this self-identification because I believe that until the liberation of all is achieved then the liberation of none is sustained. For me, being a co-conspirator aims to move beyond allyship or acting for justice when it is convenient, but instead necessitates holding accountable policies, worldviews, and structures in society that reproduce racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, nativism, ableism, the exploitation of workers, and all other forms of oppression that denigrate the inherent dignity and rights of humans and more-than-human relatives. I am committed to deconstructing my own implicit and explicit biases as well as the social

conditioning that has occurred while growing up as a White cis-gender female, living, and learning within a racist, classist, sexist, capitalist, and settler colonialist nativist society. For me, this requires intentional learning and unlearning, working within and across identities that are similar and different to my own, and constantly engaging in an ongoing process of critical thought, reflection, and action. It is a lifelong, necessary, messy, and beautiful journey.

Additionally, my career as a teacher was forged in a sociopolitically divided state with a largely conservative localized government. However, I was fortunate enough to teach and learn in two schools with progressive administrators. At each school, the administration valued social and environmental justice education which were at the core of each of these schools' and community's missions. Further, each space served students across diverse identities (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, nationality, religion, etc.) with a large portion of each population being first-generation college-going.

In each of the school-contexts I taught, I was able to bridge the sociopolitical and sociocultural context of students into my curricular and pedagogical designs. Each school was uniquely connected with my alma mater institution and undergraduate/graduate department (North Carolina State University; College of Education). This allowed for the opportunity to work closely with university-partners, namely: Drs. Hiller A. Spires (doctoral committee member), Carol Pope, and Candy Beal in two inquiry-to-action initiatives over several years and iterations. These university-to-school projects blended opportunities for students to collaborate with other secondary and post-secondary students while conducting inquiry-based techniques to explore texts ranging from topics connected with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 as well as representations in young adult literature. The commonality across these projects was rooted in magnifying students as co-constructors of knowledge, honoring their

identities/ways of knowing, and creating conditions where they could explore social and climate issues while also producing their own countertexts and real-world solutions. For each of these projects, I served as the lead teacher, often participating in individual or focus group interviews. Within these opportunities I was able to witness first-hand the importance of reciprocal research, story sharing, and how this crucial dialogue between researchers and teachers can help form new directions for critical theoretical and practitioner applications.

Additionally, throughout my doctoral program at the University of California, Los Angeles I have been able to continue my journey as an educator as a teaching assistant in 13 undergraduate and graduate courses (Writing Programs; Graduate Professional Development; Education). Three of the courses that I co-taught were with Dr. Jeff Share specifically focused on critical media literacy. This offered experiential exposure to gain a deeper understanding of an array of coinciding topics pertaining to critical media literacy while also gaining more tools to apply theories into practice. The bulk of this teaching also occurred remotely, while all of it occurred in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I share this with a goal of transparency and recognition that academic research is political, personal, and oftentimes commonly described as "me-search." While I recognize my closeness to the research topic and that I uphold the belief that I am both a researcher, doctoral student, and teacher, it was with deep intention that I worked closely with each teacher to ensure that their stories and wisdom remained central, rather than inserting my own embodiments (RQ1) or practices (RQ2) of critical media literacy within the explication of the research findings. This was also why member checks were a crucial and integral part of this study to assure that the teachers' voices remained at the locus of this study at every phase of analysis and the findings articulation. It is my sincerest hope that this work and the powerful stories and teaching

approaches of these brave teachers can be heard and received by other teachers and teacher educators in the field. I look forward to the future and am so grateful for the opportunity to keep collaborating with each of these remarkable souls who I am indebted to and who this work would not be possible without.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study is that I did not physically spend time in the teachers' classrooms. Originally, part of the goal of this study was to spend extensive time with teachers in their classrooms to gain a more nuanced understanding of RQ2 (i.e., How do teachers practice (ways of doing) critical media literacy in their classrooms?). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers and students shifted to remote instruction, and the school sites did not allow for virtual observations. Despite this challenge, lesson demonstrations as part of the teachers' interviews provided an opportunity to witness how teachers design and practice critical media literacy. While lesson demonstrations could not illuminate the organic and dialogic nature of critical media literacy that occurs in partnership with students as co-constructors of knowledge, the meta-cognitive discourse during the interviews provided insight into the thinking behind teachers' pedagogical decisions and how their critical embodiments (RQ1) transmitted into their critical media literacy classroom practices (RQ2). Further discussion for subsequent critical media literacy research is presented in chapter 6 (Discussion and Conclusion).

CHAPTER 4: TEACHERS' DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR EMBODIMENTS (WAYS OF BEING) IN RELATION TO CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY

This chapter addresses the findings related to research question 1: "How do teachers describe their embodiments (ways of being) in relation to critical media literacy?". The concept of embodiment or "ways of being" (Vasquez, 2010, 2014a, 2014b, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019) encompasses the critical lenses through which teachers engage critically with the world. The first theme that emerged exhibited how teachers' journeys towards criticality influenced their development of their critical media literacy embodiments. Teachers used dialectic storytelling and shared anecdotes about how their lived experiences directed their critical media literacy mindsets. Analysis of teachers' interviews demonstrated that teachers' journeys towards criticality varied, but that they were commonly influenced by their: 1) Formative experiences and 2) Exposure to critical lenses. The second theme showcased how teachers' embodiments of critical media literacy emboldened their transformative worldviews. Teachers provided critical reflections which explained that after they embraced critical media literacy as a way of being, they expanded their examinations of systems of power, media, and popular culture. They also illustrated how their critical media literacy stances influenced changes in their positionalities as teachers and on a personal level. Analysis of teachers' interviews indicated that their transformative worldviews impacted their: 1) Readings of the world and the word and 2) Readings of themselves.

Journeys Towards Criticality

Across cases, teachers articulated how their journeys towards criticality guided their subsequent pathways to their embodiments of critical media literacy. In accordance with the multiperspectival theoretical perspective and literature related to critical media literacy (i.e.,

sociocultural literacy paradigm), an individual's lived experiences play a significant role in each teacher's continuum towards critical consciousness. I have divided these introductory moments into two varieties, formative experiences and exposure to critical lenses. Teachers in all cases made frequent references to educational and sociopolitical experiences which took place in their childhoods, and often attributed those experiences as central to their motivations for embodying critical media literacy in current practices. Another sub-theme which emerged was the varying introductions each teacher received to critical theories; these experiences frequently referred to "gaining language" to express previously held beliefs. These exposures are clear markers in the trajectory towards embodying critical media literacy.

Formative Experiences

The sub-theme formative experiences focused on stories of the teachers' experiences which influenced their disposition towards educational and sociopolitical topics but predated their exposure to critical social theories. During Arlen's interview, he discussed how his mother imparted the importance of education early in his life. He described how she encouraged him to actively engage in schooling and to pursue learning to the fullest extent. Arlen noted, "I think my mom really wanted to see me give school all I had, she was very serious about my graduating high school. I am the youngest of four and was the first male who finished and got my diploma" (interview transcript, June 3, 2021). He also affirmed the positive impact of his high school English teachers, expressing that they noticed his creative writing skills and strongly encouraged him to develop his talent. Arlen explained that after graduating from high school, he began his undergraduate studies in government and history. After obtaining his bachelor's degree, he pursued his passion for creative writing and earned a Master's in Fine Arts (MFA) degree in playwriting. He noted that after he graduated, he taught undergraduate courses in creative writing

at his alma mater. Arlen discussed that after teaching in higher education for 3 years, he decided to make a career move and he reflected on his lifelong interest in film. He noted, "I secretly always loved film and wished I'd gone to film school and I didn't." Arlen further described that this love of film led him to become a screenwriter in an expensive metropolitan city in California. He recounted, "I was really living hand to mouth while I was trying to write scripts." He mentioned that while financial hardship played a role in his decision to pivot careers in his mid-30s, he really wanted to pursue the last vocation that brought him fulfillment. Arlen noted that he realized that his earlier work with undergraduates brought him joy.

Fernando reflected on his decision at an early age to dedicate himself to becoming a resource in the Filipino-American community he grew up in which he described as a historically low-income area in California and was deeply affected by redlining. He recalled that as a young person, he observed that people in his community were being treated unfairly, but, Fernando noted that he was unaware that what he was observing at the time was institutionalized racism. He reflected, "As a young person, I wanted change and I knew that, but, I didn't really have the language, you know? To know where to begin or to name what I saw going on, like high asthma rates, pollution, institutionalized racism" (Fernando, interview transcript, June 28, 2021). He discussed the influential role of his grandfather's legacy on his life. Fernando noted the challenges that his grandfather faced as a farmworker which led him to participate in labor movements. Fernando mentioned that his grandfather's stories provided a living history that was excluded from the K-12 curriculum he received. He recounted how his high school was known as a "dropout factory," but that he did not learn about this deficit-based perception until he later became a teacher at his former high school.

Valeria told a story about her father's immigration journey to the U.S. as a young child from Jalisco, Mexico in the 1970s. Valeria described how her father was undocumented when he enrolled in public school as an "English Language Learner" (interview transcript, June 15, 2021). She discussed memories of listening to her father describe how "teachers would tell him to sit up in the back and tell him not to speak." She noted that eventually, her father decided to stop going to school because "teachers would not address him." Valeria explained that years later, her parents enrolled her in the same school district that her father previously attended. She described how she often thought about her father's experiences in school--especially how he navigated racism and linguistic discrimination. Valeria recounted, "I didn't have a language for it completely when I was younger, but I felt the pain of my ancestor's generational trauma, right? All of our lives and all of our ancestors are truly intercorrelated." Valeria also discussed how she experienced marginalization as a first-generation Latina student during her K-12 schooling.

Corresponding with Fernando's and Valeria's reflections on how their families influenced their choices to become critical educators, Esme discussed early memories of spending time in her mother's preschool classroom after they immigrated to the U.S. from Iran when she was four years old. She mentioned how witnessing her mother's approaches to working with students influenced her own aspirational goals for serving others. Esme completed a bachelor's degree in social work and English. Immediately after graduation, she completed an accelerated teacher credentialing program. Afterwards, she taught middle school English Language Arts and then took a position teaching high school English.

Exposure to Critical Lenses

The sub-theme exposure to critical lenses centered on the experiences which directly led to adopting critical theories as personal worldviews and pedagogical techniques. After being in

the classroom for five years, Esme began her Master's in Education. Esme traced how taking a critical media literacy course shifted her approaches to teaching English from a critical stance. She reflected:

> Because I teach English, looking at sources and evaluating their validity has always been embedded in our standards and our teaching practice. But, really looking at it from a critical lens happened when I did my master's program and took [sic's] critical media literacy class. (Esme, interview transcript, June 9, 2021)

She pontificated on how the bulk of district-level training at her school were disassociated with discussions about power and real-world issues facing students' lives. Reflecting on her time in her critical media literacy course, she noted: "For the first time in a long time I felt like I was learning something that I could actually apply, you know it helped me shift gears as far as the style which I teach, especially with critical media literacy."

Arlen discussed how he entered an accelerated district-level internship credentialing program that trained people to become K-12 teachers. He noted that once he entered the classroom, his earlier experiences with poverty and his passion for film profoundly shaped his approaches to mentoring as well as his usage of media analysis and production in the classroom. However, he said that the evolution of his critical media literacy mindset occurred after he became a mentor for pre-service teachers affiliated with a nearby university. When guiding student teachers in his classroom, he met the supervising instructor who was responsible for teaching all the pre-service teachers about critical media literacy. Arlen formed a longstanding partnership with the instructor, joining an ad hoc critical media literacy group that met regularly at the instructor's home. They co-built critical media literacy training for other pre-service and in-service teachers outside of their respective institutions. Arlen mentioned that these defining

moments inspired him to develop a "broadcast journalism and new media literacy course" (interview transcript, June 3, 2021) at his school foregrounded by the principles of critical media literacy. He described that upon seeking approval of the course, his assistant principal said, "that sounds kind of political" and that they were "skeptical." Arlen noted that he responded by saying, "Everything we are doing is political, it's up to us whether or not we are going to engage or run away from that political reality." After this response, his assistant principal trusted his vision for the course and students' learning.

Fernando recalled that he understood his grandfather's stories differently after he found a critical language through ethnic studies, critical pedagogy, Critical Race Theory, and critical media literacy in his postsecondary schooling. Fernando majored in Asian American studies and sociology and worked with the local community through a program which supported Pinoy/Pinay youth. Eventually, Fernando made his way into a teacher education program where he met a practitioner of critical media literacy. During his studies of critical media literacy, he also noted that he deepened his understanding of ethnic studies tenets and interconnected critical social theories. Specifically, Fernando emphasized the importance of finding Yosso's (2005) Community and Cultural Wealth Framework. He explained that his embodiment of critical media literacy and the Community and Cultural Wealth Model inspired him to develop a community media project in his hometown. He explained that he wanted to help generate "a living history archive through podcasts that celebrates our assets and power across generations of Pinoys/Pinays and other Communities of Color" (Fernando, interview transcript, June 28, 2021). He affirmed how all these factors impacted his decision to become a critical educator at his alma mater high school. He recalled that in 2010 one of his proudest moments came when he assisted with the institutionalization of ethnic studies in his hometown's school district. Fernando

recounted that this ethnic studies program yielded a 100% college acceptance rate for youth mentees. He detailed that this success created strong motivation to follow-up with the creation of a comparative ethnic studies program, including a Black African American studies program, a Chicanx studies program, a Southeast Asian and Asian American studies program, in addition to the original Filipino studies initiative.

Similar to Fernando, Valeria's postsecondary education and community engagement broadened her critical paradigm. Through her undergraduate studies of history and ethnic studies, she gained a deeper understanding of her own experiences and those of her family, particularly in relation to systems of power and oppression. She explained that after she decided to become an educator, she entered a teacher education program and took a course in critical media literacy. She made comments about the potent role a course in critical media literacy played in her life. Valeria pointed out:

> It's like it gave me this whole new critical layer. We were always engaging and grounded in challenging injustice we saw in media and ahistorical curriculum, right. We'd make like memes challenging racism and sexism that we saw all around us and I knew that, that was something that I wanted to bring into my classroom because if I felt engaged, I knew my students would too. (interview transcript, June 15, 2021)

She also reflected on how exposure to her ethnic studies and critical media literacy professors shaped her belief in community-grounded learning in solidarity with students.

Transformative Worldviews

This theme examines the reported shifts in teachers' sociopolitical worldviews, personal relationships with media, and personal identity after exposure to critical theories and critical media literacy in particular. This theme is divided into two sections: the first refers to Freire's

106

notion of "reading the world to read the word" and includes teacher's explications of embodied worldviews and critical stances. The second theme focuses on the effects of critical theories on teacher's feelings of purpose and self-perception.

Reading the World and the Word

This sub-theme examines teacher's reports of shifts in sociopolitical worldviews and media perceptions after embodying critical theories, especially critical media literacy. Fernando's reflection cut across all teachers' anecdotes. He emphasized:

Critical media literacy causes you to ask critical questions about systems and how information is communicated, you can't turn it off. But, it brings you this awareness to understand and change how you see the world around you, whether you're looking at misinformation or what's happening with COVID-19, it helps you think about a purpose bigger than yourself and how to be aware and motivated in solidarity to find your allies and say there's gotta be a better world than the one we currently see around us. (Fernando, interview transcript, June 28, 2021)

Additionally, Fernando offered a story about the importance of trying to bring other folks along on the journey towards their own criticality. Referencing Freire, he pointed to a lesser popular aspect of critical pedagogical philosophy, in which people who are oppressed aim to also contribute to the liberation of the oppressor. Fernando described a conversation he had with a colleague who was suspicious of the language being used at their school to describe critical media literacy and ethnic studies. This conversation took a turn when Fernando's colleague explained his hesitance by saying "it's just media" (interview transcript, June 28, 2021). Fernando replied "well, yeah, it is. But that's why we teach them how to be critical of that, how to challenge what's there, you know, how to like, critically think and ask questions and reflect on

their own thinking." Fernando expressed his hope that critical media literacy would "help young people love themselves and do the best they can, and just be aware so that they can work toward a better life, better society, better world, you know?"

Esme shared that critical media literacy gradually became a regular classroom practice and personal mindset noting her view that "critical media literacy is a way of looking at the world" (interview transcript, June 9, 2021). She elaborated more on how embodying critical media literacy altered her craft as a teacher. Esme asserted her belief that critical media literacy should be treated as a broad pedagogical approach rather than a specific unit or class. She said: "all students need to be exposed to this from the beginning to really get them to see that this isn't a subject. It should be the foundation of their education." She emphasized her belief that critical media literacy lenses develop people's knowledge and civic orientations to "stand up for your rights." Esme described:

> I don't feel like I'm teaching critical media literacy or teaching just like English anymore. It's just this is what I teach and how I teach it. Critical media literacy is about teaching students to kind of look at things and say, where is this information coming from? Why is it out there? And, what's its bigger impact on me, on the world, and all the things around us?

Esme offered how critical media literacy provides a means to "authentically question what we see in the world around us" through inquiry and "a way of being conscious." Esme operationalized that this process propels critical questioning, but "not in a cynical way. It's really understanding why things are the way they are and understanding our thinking and reasoning." Esme counteracted a common misconception that embodying and exercising critical media literacy employs criticisms for the sake of confrontation. Rather, she conveyed that critical media

literacy is "not about playing like gotcha all the time or thinking that everyone is like out to trick somebody, but it's a process for questioning information and considering multiple perspectives."

Esme's reflections added additional layers to Arlen's comments about what it means to wield a critical media literacy mindset. Arlen stated, "critical media literacy is about being savvy, everything from being your own curator of information, hyper vigilant and hyper aware of the context in which you encounter information media messages" (interview transcript, June 3, 2021). Arlen also connected how the pillars of critical media literacy afford a "healthy skepticism" about all types of information. Parallel to Valeria's and Fernando's distinctions of raising a critical eye to the world and information, Arlen explained how critical media literacy expands "being aware of perspectives that are omitted, emphasized, de-emphasized, [and] being aware of stylistic choices that are sometimes unconscious having manipulative effects on us." Arlen elaborated:

> Critical media literacy makes them active participants in their learning, you know rather than passive observers, you know they're not not just being filled up with information from the teacher, we've been saying that for decades that the sage on the stage has to go, but we've kind of lurched around to find ways to not do that, and this is the most sophisticated and powerful answer that we've had.

He urged that part of dissecting power requires being intentional and critically aware about all the different components of how media are constructed, how people are represented, and the importance of reflecting on positionality to consider the way he processes information.

Moreover, Valeria explained: "Everything that we teach is media, right, whether it's a newspaper, a primary source document, a picture, whether it's a current event, [or] a news article. Everything is media" (interview transcript, June 15, 2021). She noted the importance of

109

correcting the misconception that the term media only refers to social media, describing examples about Instagram and Facebook. She drove home the point, "The reality is that everything around us is media."

Valeria asserted:

It's not just a theory, right. It's not just something that's prescribed. It's honestly about like a way of being. Critical media literacy is being able to decode the world around you, being able to decode the cover of that book, decode the first thing that comes on your phone screen. Why is it the way that it is? Critical media literacy is a way of decoding the world around us and identifying the systems of oppression that exist everywhere. A way of existing in a world that is ableist and racist and sexist and homophobic. Decoding is our duty as educated citizens, [and] as educated people.

Her systems-level focus on decoding the world to evaluate oppression connected with the other teachers' meaning-making about critical media literacy as a framework for questioning hegemonic forces. While Valeria named ableism, racism, and sexism in this example, she also identified other forms of injustice during her interview. She often referenced the importance of challenging the "isms" that overlap and impact people's access to human rights differently given their identities and unjust systems of power.

Across cases, teachers also relayed how their embodied critical media literacy lenses enable and encourage them to view systems of power within sociopolitical conditions or media messages, commonly problematizing the interlocking effects of capitalism, racism, sexism, ableism, colonialism, transphobia, xenophobia, among others.

Reading Themselves

This sub-theme focuses on the changes in teachers' self-perception after exposure to critical media literacy among other critical theories. Arlen described the importance of how his critical media literacy stance shifted his approach to dialogue inside and outside of the classroom. He noted how critical media literacy expanded his critical thinking about what information is being presented and why, but also how it helped him become more critically reflective. Arlen pointed out that critical media literacy "kind of stops you from becoming that keyboard warrior online, it makes you pause, asking yourself what kinds of biases or how your own experiences might influence your thinking" (interview transcript, June 3, 2021).

Further, Arlen noted the significance of how his critical media literacy disposition has been especially useful during sociopolitically divided times since the 2016 election and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. He identified how his critical embodiment shapes his approach to dialogue across differences at work and in his personal life who voted for and supported Donald Trump. He provided an anecdote to explain how critical media literacy cultivates opportunities for open dialogues. He discussed an author named George Saunders (2022) who wrote the short story: "A Swim in a Pond in the Rain." He discussed that Saunders' approaches writing and teaching short stories in the same way that we should approach dialoguing across different political worldviews and topics. He explained that Saunders' talks about how one can maintain their beliefs while engaging in dialogue with others by being curious in an "authentic way to learn about others' perspectives" (Arlen, interview transcript, June 3, 2021). He also discussed wisdom imparted to him by one of his former teaching mentors who talked to him about developing relationships in the classroom that could cultivate strong dialogue. Reflecting on his learning, he discussed the difference between "compliance" and

"cooperation." He mentioned, "You can have compliance anytime you want. But you don't want compliance, you want cooperation. Compliance is not a great atmosphere for learning. Cooperation is forged by relationships."

Additionally, Esme's insights complemented Arlen's statements regarding how a critical media literacy embodiment altered their approaches to critical dialogue and interpreting other perspectives. Esme shared that critical media literacy is "a way of life" (interview transcript, June 9, 2021). She discussed how critical media literacy has opened up new ways for her to engage in respectful conversations with students and families. She recalled,

> I teach students with lots of perspectives and backgrounds, and during the pandemic I'd have parents pop-in you know when I was teaching about election misinformation. And, instead of being defensive, I start up a friendly conversation about what we're learning about and we go over critical media literacy. I tell them about the guiding questions and how we're thinking critically about how to make the world better.

Esme emphasized the value of cultivating buy-in with students and their parents around the significance of critical media literacy, at times mentioning how raising a critical lens to media has changed her life.

Fernando referenced the influence of Freire's and Macedo's (1987) concept of "reading the world" as foundational to his critical media literacy mindset. He discussed how critical pedagogies are at the center of his "critical thinking and positionality as a Filipino American, as a teacher, and as a community organizer" (interview transcript, June 28, 2021). He emphasized how Freirean, ethnic studies, and critical media literacy principles permeate his approach to decode and act on the world. He said that for him, an embodied ethnic studies and critical media

literacy perspective garners "self love," "self care," "wellness," and "respect for his existence and his people's history."

Valeria expressed how teaching from ethnic studies and critical media literacy principles has impacted her. She reflected, "It's healing in so many ways because I feel like I've healed my father's experience. I've healed my own traumatic experiences in education. And I feel like it's work that absolutely matters" (interview transcript, June 15, 2021) Valeria stated that the combination of ethnic studies and critical media literacy lenses is "empowering" for her and students alike. Further, reflecting on her decision to become a critical educator in her home district, she stated, "I wanted to become the teacher that I didn't have, but also the teacher that would have been good for my father to have in the public education system." She articulated her commitment to centering community-oriented education that advances social justice. However, Valeria provided a different perspective about the reciprocal benefits of critical media literacy for teachers and students based on her lived experiences as a practitioner. She said:

> A lot of times, we talk about this work is for our students. But, this is also work that helps us see the world in a different way, not just the students, right. Because we're always learning something new about theories, these practices, these ideologies, these frameworks, these philosophies. But truly, it's transformative for you and your practice as an educator. It will help you see the world in a different way, not just in your classroom, but you'll be able to decode the world around you beyond the four walls of your classroom.

Conclusion

Teachers' descriptions about their embodiments of critical media literacy espoused several similarities. Through storytelling, they provided commentary and examples that

demonstrated their trajectories towards how critical media literacy expanded their critical engagements with the world. They reported shared beliefs that critical media literacy is more than an isolated academic theory or classroom pedagogy. In particular, they focused on shifts in their thinking resulting from their critical media literacy stances that changed their examinations and actions towards systems and ideologies of power. At times, the teachers flowed between personal anecdotes from their everyday lives as well as their approaches to teaching from critical media literacy perspectives. They also articulated that their critical lenses aid how they decode socializing factors that maintain systems of oppression that are reproduced in media, popular culture, and society. After examining similarities in how teachers embody critical media literacy, I will now investigate the practices which put these embodiments into action.

CHAPTER 5: TEACHERS' PRACTICES (WAYS OF DOING) OF CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY

This chapter presents the findings that address research question 2: "How do teachers practice (ways of doing) critical media literacy in their classrooms?". Practice or "ways of doing" (Vasquez, 2010, 2014a, 2014b, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019) refers to how teachers' developed and implemented curriculum and pedagogies from critical media literacy standpoints in their classrooms with secondary students. The first theme that emerged demonstrated how teachers' critical media literacy practices were contingent on how they co-constructed safe and critical communities. Teachers' approaches were highly contextual and rooted in their respective students' sociocultural contexts. Analysis of teachers' interviews and artifacts illustrated that teachers co-constructed safe and critical communities through the following pedagogical moves: 1) Modeling teacher-facing discussions about their identities, 2) Facilitating student-centered identity-based dialogues towards critical praxis, and 3) Cultivating ongoing community wellness. The second theme established that teachers' practices of critical media literacy occurred through scaffolded approaches to develop students' engagement with critical media analysis and production. Analysis of teachers' lesson demonstrations during their three-part interviews as well as their lesson artifacts and student work samples revealed that they incorporated critical media analysis and production in varied ways. However, findings evidenced common sub-themes across cases. Teachers employed critical media analysis and production and guided students in specific areas by: 1) deconstructing and reconstructing multiple perspectives, 2) addressing advertising and identity, 3) engaging current events, and 4) teaching about the Insurrection on the Capitol.

Co-constructing Safe and Critical Communities

Each of the teachers emphasized community-building as the foundational precursor to their critical media literacy practices. In alignment with the pedagogical progenitors of critical media literacy (i.e., democratic inquiry-based and critical pedagogies), teachers' decisions to prioritize inquiry-based dialogic exchanges and reading each other's worlds first provided the conditions for subsequent critical explorations related to media, information, and power. Teachers noted how co-constructing relationships with students afforded a "safe" space where all members could openly discuss their identities, perspectives, as well as social issues. At times, teachers used the terms "difficult," challenging," and "uncomfortable" to convey possible emotions that might arise for students when entering conversations about power and injustice. The teachers discussed the importance of beginning each course with community-building exercises that spanned over several days or weeks. They also articulated how they modeled and scaffolded opening activities which occurred through teacher-facing and student-centered dialogues, but prioritized developing an understanding of one another's identities, experiences, and interests. This also involved communal dialogues to form consensus about pathways to build and maintain a safe space and a critical environment to discuss issues related to systemic injustice. While each teacher emphasized launching their courses by fostering communal bonds grounded in understanding each other's identities, they also asserted the importance of cultivating ongoing community wellness as an integral factor to practicing critical media literacy in the classroom.

Modeling Teacher-facing Discussions About Their Identities

During Valeria's interview, she described how community-building occurred in each of her history courses with students. She noted:

The first two weeks of school for me are always community-building. They always

encompass my students understanding each other and myself understanding them, and

them understanding me. The very first day, right, I demonstrate to them what my

intersectional identities are, first generation Woman of Color, heterosexual, right? I'm

talking about my grandma's story coming in a trunk of a car, right, when she immigrated

to the U.S. And a lot of students didn't come in the trunk of a car. But they can relate to

the struggle of what it means to immigrate or their parents or grandparents. (Valeria,

interview transcript, June 15, 2021)

Valeria later reflected that being "vulnerable" with students about her "identity markers" and her

grandmother's journey immigrating to America served as an entry point for co-developing a

community where students could talk openly about their identities, struggles, and systemic

injustice.

Similarly, Esme discussed the importance of starting off each of her English classes with

community-building dialogues. Like Valeria, Esme articulated how she shared stories about

herself first to help students get to know more about her identities as well as her personal and

professional journey. She mentioned how she talked to her students about when she moved from

Iran to the United States before she entered elementary school. She also noted that she proposed

goals for their class community to be a space where everyone "respects each other" and knows

their perspectives are "valued" (Esme, interview transcript, June 9, 2021).

Correspondingly, Fernando described how he developed community-building exercises

in his English Language Development (ELD) courses with emergent bilingual students to

understand their own and each other's identities. He asserted, "I want them to know who I am, I

am very open with my students, and I want them to know I'm here for them and we're here for

each other, and we need to be intentional about that" (Fernando, interview transcript, June 28, 2021). To get to know one another in the remote learning context, he designed a digital poster making activity that students could later use as a Zoom background. He modeled this exercise for students by demonstrating a teacher-generated example. He showcased how he used visual images, colors, and short written text to demonstrate his identities as a Filipino American, cis-gender male, teacher, and community activist.

Related to the other teachers' practices, Arlen also expressed how he facilitated community-building early with each group of students in his Advanced Placement Literature, film analysis as well as his broadcast journalism and new media literacy courses. He described similar opening community-building exercises to Valeria's, Esme's, and Fernando's examples which included a teacher-facing dialogic example. He articulated the importance of modeling how to discuss and reflect on "positionality" (Arlen, interview transcript, June 3, 2021). He noted that he talked to his students about his identities as a "white, cis-gender male." Then, he mentioned that he shared stories about his time as a screenwriter and how he maneuvered trying to make a living. He closed his introduction about himself to his students by noting how he pursued a new career as a secondary critical educator. He recalled how he also talked to students about his commitment to support their "agency and critical thinking about media and the real world."

Facilitating Student-centered Identity-based Dialogues Towards Critical Praxis

Valeria noted that after she shared information about herself with her classes, she provided guiding questions which prompted student-centered dialogue. She asked students to think about anything they felt comfortable discussing related to their identities, families, home communities, interests, and questions about the world around them. Valeria stated that she wrote

down notes when students shared information about their lives and asked questions about the world. She described how she utilized the notes she gathered during each course and adapted her curriculum and pedagogical approaches, making them more culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 2014, 2021a, 2021b) and closely aligned with students' real-world experiences, interests, and concerns.

Moreover, Valeria expressed that she transitioned from this opening dialogic exercise into an activity where she and her students co-created classroom norms with the goal of creating a "safe classroom" (interview transcript, June 15, 2021). She described a large visual sign that she displayed to her students that foregrounded this conversation. Valeria noted that she pointed students' attention to the sign which read, "you are safe here." She said this was a useful pedagogical tool for discussion because they were able to co-create community agreements that were mindful of each other's identities and perspectives. She articulated that she and her students discussed the meaning of "safe." They forged consensus that "safe" means: "understanding each other's and our different identities," "being inclusive," and "respectful" of each other's "experiences and ideas." Valeria noted that after she and her students established agreements to sustain a "safe" class community, they segued into a closing conversation. She explained that she and her students talked about the importance of honoring their community agreements and providing a supportive environment, especially when addressing "uncomfortable" and "challenging" topics. Valeria recalled that she introduced students to terms like "intersectionality" and other vocabulary that related to systemic injustice, such as: "racism, sexism, and other isms." She reflected on the significance of building community rooted in their identities, commitment to each other, and openness to learn and take action for social justice.

Valeria recalled, "we stepped into that uncomfortability, but after developing that community, and feeling welcome like it is our space to have those conversations."

Esme stated that she explained her rationale before she asked students to discuss their own identities and experiences aloud as a community-building activity. She explained to students that her purpose was to help the class form a "common understanding" about each other and that "this is going to be a safe place" (interview transcript, June 9, 2021). She noted that after students took turns talking about themselves and actively listening to each other, they continued their conversations by co-defining the meaning of "a safe place." After teacher-guided probing questions, they formed conclusions about how to nourish "respectful relationships" and "inclusive dialogues." Esme extended that they decided as a class to maintain respectful relationships and dialogues by working together to embrace "uncomfortability" about "difficult topics." She remembered telling her students, "There are going to be times when we talk about challenging things that you might not learn about in other classes. It might be uncomfortable." She described that she and her students initiated conversations about power. She provided an example about how she told students that they would study plays, literature, commercials, and other media. Esme also shared with students that they would examine systemic injustices, such as: racism and sexism. Esme noted, "I remember telling them, we are going to have real conversations. But, at the end of the day we wanna do something that is relevant to all of us, and we can do that and respect each other."

Arlen took a slightly different approach to facilitate student-centered dialogues about their identities. First, he welcomed students to talk about their lives, backgrounds, interests, and goals for the class. Part of his prompting to students invited them to think about issues in the world that concerned them that they might like to examine throughout their studies together.

120

Like the other teachers, he invited students to speak aloud about themselves. However, Arlen diverged from Valeria's and Esme's approach to asking students to co-develop a meaning around the idea of cultivating a safe space. In turn, Arlen recalled that he offered his own framing to the class about the phrase "safe space" (interview transcript, June 3, 2021). He noted that he shared with students that part of developing a safe space means that "we want to open, not close conversations." He recalled how he talked to students about his beliefs in "constructivist methods to education and project-based learning." In this way, he denoted he launched a conversation with students to co-develop norms around "collaborative learning" and "respecting each others' beliefs and ideas." He discussed that he mentioned to students how they should not only ask him questions in class, but that he wanted them to ask each other and be resources for one another. He noted how part of this conversation with students emphasized:

> There are going to be times when we are going to talk about things in here, and we might think differently than each other. But, we want to be curious in a really authentic way and listen to each other in a safe environment.

Fernando also took a different approach than the other teachers and asked students to create their own media. After he discussed his identities and modeled his Zoom background, he invited students to produce their own digital poster. He emphasized that students had "choice" and "autonomy" when selecting graphics, text, and what they wanted to share (Fernando, interview transcript, June 28, 2021). He provided guiding questions and scaffolded the opening exercise. He asked students to creatively express ten things about themselves and to consider how visuals and colors could enhance their representations of who they are and what they care about. He also invited students to share their pronouns if they were comfortable to set a tone that all gender identities and expressions are welcomed and valued.

Additionally, Fernando reflected on how part of his purpose behind this exercise was to help students celebrate their identities and feel supported in who they are. He noted his awareness about a problematic deficit-based perception about ELD courses in his school. Fernando described that many teachers and students referred to ELD as a "dumping ground class." He said, "It's students just dumped there. And it's like, a gamble, if your teacher's gonna actually support you, [and] your language acquisition." Reflecting on his embodied stance of Yosso's (2005) Community and Cultural Wealth Framework, he described that this exercise helped challenge deficit-based perspectives through student media production that affirmed their individual and collective assets. He shared that after students presented their new Zoom backgrounds, they discussed how their class is "a safe and inclusive space for building self and community pride and well-being" (Fernando, interview transcript, June 28, 2021). Fernando said that this conversation also sparked an entry point to talk to students about how their community would be a safe space, but also grounded in real-world issues that they were interested in. He reflected:

> We can learn about your writing, and how to structure paragraphs, but we are going to be talking about real things in here. If it's important to you, it's important to me. We will respect each other, you know, whether it's talking about defunding the police, or protesting, or other you know uncomfortable and maybe difficult things. And we are going to talk about challenging things like racism and COVID and misinformation, but we're going to maintain a safe space.

Cultivating Ongoing Community Wellness

Each teacher discussed their utilization of multiple pedagogical approaches to establish continual community wellness, which was deeply rooted in their relationships with one another

and their attentiveness to real-world challenges. They commented on the difficult nature of teaching during the shelter in place pandemic public health mandates. They emphasized the personal impact of COVID-19 on both them and their students, discussing the emotional weight of managing grief, loss, and uncertain futures. The teachers also highlighted their awareness of how their students were navigating the impact of media representations regarding COVID-19 deaths, social and racial violence, misinformation, and disinformation. Each teacher expressed that while community-building was always a fundamental aspect of their critical media literacy approach, they placed an even greater emphasis on prioritizing students' well-being amidst the pandemic context. The teachers fostered community wellness by implementing regular check-ins, adapting instruction to address one another's needs, and facilitating dialogues to address interpersonal challenges and responses to media coverage and real-world issues.

For instance, Esme and Fernando discussed how they used digital tools and implemented well-being check-ins with their students. They underscored how they fluctuated between using Google Forms, Mentimeter, and the Zoom or Google Meets chat features. They both noted that they changed their lesson plans if student perception feedback reflected concerns. Fernando conveyed, "They were hearing so much COVID you know misinformation, and police brutality was impacting us, we'd just have to pause everything and talk because, it was just so hard and I am really big on students' mental health" (interview transcript, June 28, 2021). Fernando also described that during this check-in, he learned that one of his students was organizing people in their local community for a Black Lives Matter protest during Derek Chauvin's trial for the murder of George Floyd. He said:

> I told her, anytime you want the floor, you get it. What you're doing is really dope. And
> we talked about how we could support her in this and started making posters and a lot of

us went well I was the only teacher that went.

Fernando commented on how important it was for him to be in "solidarity" with his students and for him to "show students how to find and be allies." He also reflected on his frustration with some of his colleagues' decisions to not discuss or address issues like public health misinformation, disinformation, and racial violence. He noted that he advocated regularly in his school and department for teachers to "hear students out and talk to them, and to put themselves aside and be there for students."

Moreover, Esme offered remarks about how she adapted her teaching to address students' concerns and anxiety before the presidential election. She noted: "Sometimes students would bring things up, like did you see this on Twitter, and almost kind of be like fearful and, is it okay to talk about this? And, I'm like, yes, it's fine. This is real life" (Esme, interview transcript, June 9, 2021). She also expressed the importance of pointing students back to their shared norm of a "safe place." Esme extended that she picked up on students' hesitation to be able to question or talk about things that could be considered "political," even if they expressed worry about it during a wellness check-in. She noted that she wasn't quite sure where their apprehension came from, but that she perceived it was likely because "they're conditioned in schools" to not ask questions and instead are expected to follow the teacher's agenda. She emphasized how she reminded students that taking care of each other's wellness in a safe community meant that they "could figure things out together and make connections with things happening in their lives." Valeria also mentioned that she used digital tools (i.e., PearDeck, Zoom polling and chat features) to gather feedback from students about their well-being. She noted that she observed students' fears related to the public health emergency and charged sociopolitical tensions. Like Fernando and Esme, Valeria adapted her lessons based on students' feedback and their

awareness of community needs. She reflected on how she shifted her lessons when she witnessed students' reactions to media coverage. She mentioned how students would come in with social media posts from TikTok or Instagram about COVID-19 information, sometimes that extended competing views or misinformation about vaccines or masking efficacy from people on their friends' lists. She talked about the importance of centering students' wellness, which sometimes meant reminding the community of their shared values of a "safe" place to exchange their perspectives (Valeria, interview transcript, June 15, 2021). She said, "You know, sometimes we needed to like go back and say, hold on, are we listening, are we learning from and with each other? Are we giving each other a safe space in these difficult conversations, right?" She noted that "relationship building and critical media literacy" are inseparable from each other. Valeria summarized the importance of community-building in relation to practicing critical media literacy that mirrored the other teachers' reflections. She asserted, "Community-building and relationship building is critical. You can't do this work if you don't have a relationship."

Unlike the other teachers, Arlen focused on how he facilitated a dialogic exercise to help repair community wellness after an incidence of "trolling" between students in one of his classes (interview transcript, June 3, 2021). He explained that after he learned a student with conservative beliefs "harassed" a student with progressive beliefs, he needed to help find a way to bring the community back together. He contextualized that there was also another challenge going on at this school where students posted harmful statements in a comment thread on articles embedded in the digital version of their school's newspaper. Arlen recounted how he addressed these conflicts as a teachable moment and tried to mend severed relationships. In his broadcast journalism and new media literacy class, he asked students to define trolling as a full group. After students grappled with coming up with a definition, Arlen described trolling to students as:

"[It's] when you're communicating solely to get a rise out of someone, you're not seeking to have a conversation or a dialogue." He asked students about their perceptions of trolling; specifically, why they thought it might be easier to troll someone in an online environment rather than face-to-face in a physical context. After students mentioned that it was possible to conceal their identities online, this led Arlen to talk to his students about how "anonymity" can be "the enemy of empathy" because it creates a "buffer" between recognizing each other's humanity. As Arlen reflected more on this teaching event, he mentioned that the class made comparisons between instances of trolling they witnessed on social media. Drawing on their previous community-building exercise, Arlen noted they forged consensus about how to dialogue across differences by "acknowledging we're not here to troll each other or to win a conversation, we're looking to open not close conversations, even if it's uncomfortable." Arlen extended that while trolling was challenging to address in the moment, that it aided him and his students in knowing how to move forward with a renewed commitment to empathy for their class community.

Scaffolding Critical Media Literacy Analysis and Production

In alignment with literature by Morrell et al. (2013) as well as Kellner and Share (2019), all four teachers' situated their critical media literacy practices through critical media analysis and production as a regular classroom routine. However, before introducing critical media literacy, each teacher offered an opening exercise to provide an entry point for students to understand the key principles. Four primary sub-themes emerged across teachers' practices of critical media analysis and production which included: 1) deconstructing and reconstructing multiple perspectives, 2) addressing advertising and identity, 3) engaging current events, and 4) teaching about the Insurrection. While there was some overlap in teachers' approaches to

126

community-building, their practices also varied based on their knowledge of students' identities and real-world circumstances.

Deconstructing and Reconstructing Multiple Perspectives

To help students consider how media are socially constructed, each teacher demonstrated how they guided students to deconstruct and reconstruct information from multiple perspectives. Part of teachers' critical media analysis and production exercises also helped students develop a critical engagement towards texts. A key attribute across teachers' critical media literacy practices were their strategies to cultivate students' awareness that media are not neutral and contain biases.

Esme recounted how she used children's literature in her English classes. She noted that her aim was to expand students' critical thinking about how stories are created by people with different perspectives and told from the author's and narrator's point of view. Before teaching students formally about critical media literacy, Esme explained that she implemented a lesson to expose students to some of the overarching ideas from The Critical Media Literacy Framework: Conceptual Understandings and Guiding Questions (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 8). She selected *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs!* (Scieszka, 1996) as a common reading for the class. Esme expounded that she selected this text as an example of alternative media because it offered a different perspective from the original story. First, Esme shared that she announced, "We're having storytime!" to pique students' engagement (interview transcript, June 9, 2021). Then, she displayed the book cover and asked students to talk to each other about what they knew about the traditional version of the fable. Esme noted that students discussed how the original story was told from the three pigs' perspectives. Afterwards, she invited students to analyze and discuss the print and visual representations on the book cover. She recalled that students "made inferences"

that the story would be told from the wolf's perspective because of the large illustration prominently featuring the wolf on a newspaper titled "Daily Wolf" and the phrases "true story" and "by A. Wolf."

Moreover, Esme articulated that she read this story aloud to the class for their overall comprehension of the plot and characters. Then, she asked students to close read and revisit an excerpt from the book. She displayed the following excerpt:

> I'm the wolf. Alexander T. Wolf. You can call me Al. I don't know how this whole Big Bad Wolf thing got started, but it's all wrong. Maybe it's because of our diet. Hey, it's not my fault wolves eat cute little animals like bunnies and sheep and pigs. That's just the way we are. If cheeseburgers were cute, folks would probably be thinking you were Big and Bad, too. (Scieszka, 1996)

Esme elaborated on how her students experienced "aha moments about perspective" (interview transcript, June 9, 2021). She explained that students' exposure to narrative prose, dialogue, and visuals that centered the wolf's story shifted their thinking about the original story and how characters were portrayed.

After a full class dialogue, Esme clarified that she helped students build connections between what they learned and other Common Core State Standards related to language and rhetoric. She presented the following slide (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Esme's Connection Between Socially Constructed Perspectives and Language and Rhetoric

It's all about perspective…

- How does the author employ
  - ethos (appeals to credibility and image)
  - logos (appeals to logic)
  - pathos (appeals to emotion)

to sell us on his/her perspective, or depiction or situation.

Esme noted that students were familiar with "ethos, logos, and pathos," but that they were unfamiliar with critiquing texts in the classroom. To help students become more comfortable with questioning texts and "perspective meaning-making and taking" she invited them to engage in critical media production. She asked students to select any fairy tale that interested them and to "retell it" from the antagonist's perspective. She reflected on how the students enjoyed creating their own alternative media using print and digital tools to creatively shape the antagonist's story arc. Esme underscored that after students created and shared their alternative fairy tales, they engaged in a debrief session to reflect on their learning. She mentioned that when she asked students to talk about their writing process from the antagonist's perspective, students commented on "how easy it is to shift perspectives and tell the story from a different side." She described that students tied in connections from their own experiences when their parents or teachers accused them of doing something wrong and they tried to share their side of the story with them. Esme recounted that students' first exercise with critical media analysis and

production onboarded them to "the base of critical media literacy, to understand that media aren't neutral." Esme approximated that she closed this lesson with students, stating: "it's really easy to put information out there whether it's reliable or not reliable, biased or not."

During subsequent lessons, she formally introduced students to Kellner and Share's (2019) Critical Media Literacy Framework: Conceptual Understandings and Guiding Questions (p. 8). She reported that she used a lot of time at the beginning of every course helping students grasp the vocabulary related to each conceptual understanding. After Esme checked for students' grasp of each of the conceptual understandings, she articulated that the class moved onto more complex grade-level literary texts. She described that she guided students to deconstruct Edgar Allan Poe's (1983) *A Tell Tale Heart*. Esme offered, "Teaching literature, you have so much wiggle room with critical media literacy. We talk about how the author and the point of view of the narrator has full control of how you see the character" (interview transcript, June 9, 2021). She described how students formed conclusions about how authors construct narrators which shape the way stories are told. Referencing Freirean critical dialogic approaches, Esme detailed that students' "problem posed" how Poe's classic might be represented differently from another perspective. She recalled that students discussed how someone from another age-range, racial, or gender identity might reconstruct the story. She also conveyed that this exercise interconnected with aspects of the Common Core State Standards related to craft and structure.

Like Esme, Arlen discussed that he also used a common reading before introducing students to the overarching concepts of critical media literacy in his broadcasting and new media literacy class. Instead of literature, he selected an informational multimodal text from CNN about a charter school in Camden, New Jersey. He offered context about the video. He noted that it juxtaposes "a successful charter school" (Arlen, interview transcript, June 3, 2021) in a

metropolitan city and people living in impoverished neighborhoods. Alluding to parts of the Critical Media Literacy Framework (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 8), Arlen mentioned that after students watched and listened to the video he facilitated an inquiry-based dialogue related to social constructivism and the politics of representation. He clarified that he adapted the original guiding questions and did not explicitly teach students the technical critical media literacy terminology until a subsequent lesson. He recalled: "We stopped the video and I go, so let's talk about who made the message? When we get to the perspectives represented, I say, can you tell me everybody they interviewed?" (Arlen, interview transcript, June 3, 2021). Arlen pointed out that students postulated that the reporters interviewed a local police officer, mayor, and the school principal. He noted that he enacted another round of questioning until the class deduced that teachers' and students' perspectives were excluded, despite the video being about a charter school. He detailed that he prompted students to make observations about the visual and aural features of the clip to consider how aesthetics converged with dialogue, narration, and music. Arlen explained that students asked more nuanced questions about how the video was constructed. He recalled that some students focused on why the director or editing team embedded "dramatic music." He shared that students built off each other's ideas and co-developed inferences about how the music and B-roll footage reinforced stereotypical representations of people in poverty. He provided further details on how students formulated the claim, "the director reproduced a stereotype and used music for a rough and tumble amped up affect when we saw the neighborhood." Similar to Esme's lesson, Arlen mentioned that students gleaned a foundational understanding of "how texts are constructed." Comparatively, he also noted that students started to grasp the concept of the politics of representation as well as features of language and semantics (i.e., Conceptual Understanding 2). He recalled, "For the rest of the

year, they say, you'll not believe who didn't get interviewed in this thing. It never leaves them, and they see it everywhere. One lesson, it can change the way they look at things."

Following the completion of the aforementioned lesson, Arlen described that he introduced students formally to "the pillars of critical media literacy." Closely related to Esme's approach teaching students about language and rhetoric, Arlen also guided students to "identify how language and grammar and images" represent different perspectives according to who is telling a story. He demonstrated another lesson example that took place after students were introduced to critical media literacy and received practice corroborating informational texts from multiple sources. In one of his lesson examples, he noted how students examined articles and videos about "the yellow vest taxation on the working-class protests that happened in France right after lockdown." He reflected on how students gathered contrasting perspectives and formed evidence-based claims about the different depictions of this story across various media outlets. Then, he noted how he tasked students with an exercise in critical media production. Students wrote their own "on the scene journalistic report scripts" and recorded them on their mobile devices. He played an example of one of the students' videos. During the video, the student took on the role of a news reporter, cited examples from their research, and generated awareness about the context and construction of stories around the human rights of laborers in France. After Arlen provided this example, he posited that the combination of critical media analysis and production helped students develop a "critical lens to break down what perspectives are included."

Conversely, Valeria took a different approach in her ethnic studies class. She employed a lesson sequence that began with an overview of Kellner and Share's (2019) Critical Media Literacy Framework: Conceptual Understandings and Guiding Questions (p. 8). She explained

that she used print and non-print examples to help students engage with the target vocabulary related to each of the conceptual understandings. She walked through the Google Slide that she used with her students (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Valeria's Introduction to Kellner and Share's (2019) Critical Media Literacy Framework

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS	QUESTIONS
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM: ALL INFORMATION IS CO-CONSTRUCTED BY INDIVIDUALS AND/OR GROUPS OF PEOPLE WHO MAKE CHOICES WITHIN SOCIAL CONTEXTS.	WHO ARE ALL THE POSSIBLE PEOPLE WHO MADE CHOICES THAT HELPED CREATE THIS TEXT?
LANGUAGES/SEMIOTICS EACH MEDIUM HAS ITS OWN LANGUAGE WITH SPECIFIC GRAMMAR AND SEMANTICS	HOW WAS THIS TEXT CONSTRUCTED AND DELIVERED/ACCESSED?
AUDIENCE/POSITIONALITY INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS UNDERSTAND MEDIA MESSAGES SIMILARLY AND/OR DIFFERENTLY DEPENDING ON MULTIPLE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS.	HOW COULD THIS TEXT BE UNDERSTOOD DIFFERENTLY?
POLITICS OF REPRESENTATIONS MEDIA MESSAGES AND THE MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH THEY TRAVEL ALWAYS HAVE A BIAR AND SUPPORT AND/OR CHALLENGE DOMINANT HIERARCHIES OF POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND PLEASURE.	WHAT VALUES, POINTS OF VIEW, AND IDEOLOGIES ARE REPRESENTED OR MISSING FROM THIS TEXT OR INFLUENCED BY THIS MEDIUM.
PRODUCTION/INSTITUTIONS ALL MEDIA TEXTS HAVE A PURPOSE (OFTEN COMMERCIAL OR GOVERNMENTAL) THAT IS SHAPED BY THE CREATORS AND/OR SYSTEMS WITHIN WHICH THEY OPERATE.	WHY WAS THIS TEXT CREATED AND/OR SHARED?
SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MEDIA CULTURE IS A TERRAIN OF STRUGGLE THAT PERPETUATES OR CHALLENGES POSITIVE AND/OR NEGATIVE IDEA ABOUT PEOPLE, GROUPS, AND ISSUES; IT IS NEVER NEUTRAL.	WHOM DOES THIS TEXT ADVANTAGE AND/OR DISADVANTAGE?

Valeria pointed out that before students learned about critical media literacy, they explored Chinook Fund's (2010) "Four 'I's' of Oppression." She recounted that the "Four I's" related to internal, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological oppression foregrounded with examinations of racism and other interlocking forms of systemic injustice. Valeria also noted that students were formerly introduced to the Four Tenets of Ethnic Studies Framework[15] (McGovern &

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[15] During Valeria's interview, she provided context about each of the tenets of ethnic studies and referenced McGovern's and Buenavista's (2016) "Ethnic Studies with K-12 Students, Families, and Communities: The Role of Teacher Education in Preparing Educators to Serve the People." The following involves how she explained each tenet. Tenet 1 questions white supremacy, ideological objectivity and neutrality, and adopts a social constructivist stance in regards to knowledge formation. Tenet 2 challenges essentialist representations of race, and seeks anti-essentialist representations. Tenet 3 emphasizes community-centered praxis and draws in part on Freirean critical

Buenavista, 2016). She explained that the "Four 'I's' of Oppression and the "Four Tenets of Ethnic Studies Framework" (interview transcript, June 15, 2021) scaffolded students' awareness about the relationships between power, perspective, and how information is socially constructed. Valeria demonstrated how she helped students generate parallels between the Critical Media Literacy Framework: Conceptual Understandings and Guiding Questions (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 8) as well as the other critical frameworks they learned about in earlier classes. She described that they worked together as a community to consider the interrelated scope of the Critical Media Literacy Framework: Conceptual Understandings' 1 (social constructivism), 3 (audiences and positionality), 4 (politics of representation) as well as Ethnic Studies Tenets' (McGovern & Buenavista, 2016) 1 (questioning white supremacist notions of objectivity and neutrality in processes of knowledge construction) and 2 (move towards anti-essentialist representations of racialized communities).

After establishing a shared understanding of how information is socially constructed and can reproduce racist ideologies, Valeria guided students in analyzing primary and secondary sources as part of "a unit on optics in social movements" (interview transcript, June 15, 2021). She contextualized the lesson sample by providing additional information:

> Students looked closely at the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. and other social
> movements. We talked about how many women stood up and fought against the
> Montgomery bus segregation. We talked a little bit about why Rosa Parks was
> the person chosen to be the face of the movement and why we only learn about her in
> school. To challenge anti-essentialist narratives and to talk about how media
> is constructed right, we looked at articles written about Claudette Colvin and the way she

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pedagogical praxis methods. Tenet 4 emboldens self-empowerment and communal self-determination towards societal transformation; this tenet also corresponds with Freirean conceptualizations of critical hope.

is described you know as a 15-year old girl who refused to get up. But the words that

are used to describe what she did right, like assault and battery, disorderly conduct and

with violating a city ordinance, and the way she's criminalized in the newspaper.

Coinciding with Esme's and Arlen's focus on language and rhetoric, Valeria explained how

students engaged in a critical media literacy analysis. She contended that students mined a

newspaper clipping about Claudette Colvin. She showed the Google slide (see Figure 5) that she

used with students during this lesson. She modeled how she scaffolded approaches for students

to annotate and extract textual evidence to help them justify their answers to the critical media

literacy guiding questions related to social constructivism, audience and positionality, and the

politics of representation.

Figure 5

Valeria's Connection Between Socially Constructed Perspectives and Language and Rhetoric

Valeria explained that after students completed this exercise, they discussed words and phrases they selected from the text and explained their analysis of each question. Then, she discussed how students continued this process using other written and visual archives about Rosa Parks and Mary Louise Smith. While students continued to work with the same critical media literacy guiding questions, Valeria also asked students to synthesize their learning across all source material by reconstructing digital media through a "See, Mean, Matter" three-column chart. She explained that the "see" section tasked students with curating textual evidence about how racism is socially constructed in the media perspectives they examined. Valeria highlighted how the "mean" section prompted students to synthesize observations from the "see" column, forming evidence-based explanations about the authors' use of language and rhetoric to socially construct different perspectives on historical figures. Lastly, she emphasized that the "matter" column prompted students to consider the enduring impact of racist perspectives embedded in the texts on contemporary studies of the Civil Rights Movement. She recalled that she asked her students, "Who gets to become the face of a movement? Why? Who decides? How do these choices impact our understanding of the movement?". Valeria explained that students exhibited a strong grasp of Critical Media Literacy Conceptual Understandings 1 (Social Constructivism), 3 (Audience/Positionality), and 4 (Politics of Representation) as well as aspects of the ethnic studies standards (i.e., Tenets 1: White Supremacy/Social Constructivism and 2: Move Towards Anti-essentialist Narratives of Racialized Communities). She asserted that students recognized "There's a pattern in the way people have been criminalized, the way history and textbooks show perspectives about people, and how people have been treated whether it's the 1960s or 2020."

Coinciding with Valeria's approach, Fernando discussed how he introduced a lesson in his English Language Development (ELD) class by providing students with an overview of the

key concepts to critical media literacy. He stated, "I provide a plain definition when I bring up critical media literacy, teaching them how to have a stronger sense of awareness of how information is communicated and shared, and presented to them" (Fernando, interview transcript, June 28, 2021). Then, he co-constructed a dialogue with students drawing upon Kellner and Share's (2019) Critical Media Literacy Framework: Guiding Questions and Conceptual Understandings (p. 8). Fernando noted, "I talk to students about how these questions can help us all ask very thoughtful and careful questions around what is being brought to their attention" (interview transcript, June 28, 2021). Like Arlen and Valeria, Fernando chose informational texts to guide a lesson that enabled students to examine how texts are socially constructed and represent different perspectives influenced by the authors' subjectivities. He curated a thematic text set comprising social media posts from Instagram and TikTok focused on mental health. Similar to Arlen's example of students analyzing a video on a charter school, Fernando also encouraged students to deconstruct media. He asked them guiding questions about "Who created this text? Who do you think decided what pictures are displayed and why? What words and phrases are being used to describe mental health? What perspectives are included or left out?". Fernando explained that he used Freire's (1970) problem posing technique to engage students in a dialogic exchange. He noted that the class compiled a list of observations, identifying individuals who influenced "perspectives to the public about mental health" (interview transcript, June 28, 2021). He explained that students formed hypotheses regarding the roles of social media content creators, such as: "marketing teams, photographers, the person or organization who posted it on social media." Like the other teachers' examples, he prompted students to analyze the language and rhetoric present in the social media posts. He stated that students provided examples that demonstrated understandings about whether mental health was portrayed by

137

different perspectives in either a positive or stigmatizing light. Then, he assigned students to search for their own examples from social media related to a social justice issue that was important to them. Instead of requesting students to find a hegemonic example, he asked students to find "different Instagram or TikTok pages to follow that were educational and extremely informative about an issue." Then, he engaged students in critical media production. He requested that students create a mini presentation, teach the class about the social media page, and to provide examples from posts that accurately generated awareness around a social issue. He indicated that many students used Canva or other digital tools to create their presentation and share resources with the class. He reflected on the array of student-generated media presentations and how students "taught each other about really powerful activist poets, mental health, and people from our local Indigenous communities." He shared that by the end of this exercise students revealed that they understood how to "ask intentional questions about how information is put together" while also bringing in examples relevant to their own lives and social issues they cared about. Fernando detailed that he polled students after this exercise and learned they enjoyed this activity and wanted to do it again. He explained that because of his students' feedback, he embedded this as a weekly exercise where students took turns teaching each other about social media, social justice issues, and that they continued to break down other critical media literacy understandings.

Addressing Advertising and Identity

Across cases, teachers described how they expanded students' understanding from prior lessons about the critical media literacy guiding principles and questions. They noted how they examined the ways that advertising techniques socialize audiences about dominant norms and values related to people's identities. Teachers used similar methods. Each teacher discussed how

they relied on publicly available print advertisements online and multimodal commercials accessible via YouTube. Esme framed her goal of using advertisements in the classroom to help students think about Conceptual Understanding 5 (Production/Institutions). She shared:

> Again, we talked more about ethos, logos, and pathos, and how advertising appeals to different parts of people's emotions and logic. The purpose of that is, that big corporations or institutions are always trying to get us to buy something or buy into a thought. (Esme, interview transcript, June 9, 2021)

The other teachers shared similar rationales to Esme, emphasizing the concept of "buy" and expressing how students are socialized by the media in their daily lives. They highlighted the socialization process; underscoring how audiences are positioned to believe that they either need to obtain products or adhere to the characteristics associated with the identities represented in popular culture.

Esme and Arlen each relied on YouTube to archive playlists of commercials. First, they noted how they modeled the process of deconstructing a commercial. Then, they each elicited oral or written responses for students to provide their observations. Esme mentioned she honed students' focus to respond to the Critical Media Literacy Framework Guiding Question 5 (Productions/Institutions). She reflected, "I asked students, why do you think this commercial was created? Why was it shared? Think about who created it and what their motivations are and why. Can you identify what techniques the people and production companies are using to appeal to us?". Arlen used similar inquiry-based questions rooted in Conceptual Understanding 5 (Production/Institutions). Arlen recalled that students developed critiques about mass media and how companies "skew ideas" that align with their motivations to "sell you on ideas or products" (interview transcript, June 3, 2021).

Additionally, Esme and Arlen each noted they segued from their critical media analysis exercise about advertising to embolden students to create their own media. Arlen reflected on how he invited students to make their own public service announcements. He recalled, "I had them invent a commercial for a fictitious sneaker, like rebrand, like types of Nikes, you know, based on their own life experiences." Arlen noted that students were able to express their identities and beliefs critically and creatively by using images, colors, single words, or short phrases that endorsed characteristics about themselves. He explained that students articulated their motivations behind the "messages they wanted to show others about themselves." Resultantly, Arlen indicated that his students developed awareness about how major corporations use advertising techniques to market and sell suggestions about identity by engaging in critical media production.

Esme noted that she paired her lesson about advertising with a novel study using S.E. Hinton's (2016) *The Outsiders* to facilitate a media creation activity for students. She explained that she activated students' prior knowledge about "social constructivism" and "perspective" to help them think about how characters were represented in the book (Esme, interview transcript June 9, 2021). She recounted how she prompted students to "think about what kinds of products the characters would endorse if they were to be approached to shoot a commercial or what products would be in their line if their character had their own brand." She described a presentation slide that she used to scaffold students' discussions with a guiding question that stated: "What are some products that Ponyboy Curtis would endorse?". She then explained that this slide also provided visual images to help students make connections between commercial products and their previous understanding of direct characterization related to Ponyboy and his social category as a Greaser. Esme noted that she included pictures of clothing, recreational

spaces, and popular products for youth. Esme discussed how students co-developed ideas as a

group about some possible products Ponyboy Curtis might endorse. She noted that students

relied on their knowledge of Ponyboy's peer group identity as "a Greaser" and how "the

language in the book described that he wore dark colored clothing so he might endorse hightop

black Converse sneakers." Esme elaborated on how she guided students to explain examples

from the book to justify their hypotheses. Once students verified their inferences with textual

evidence and demonstrated that they knew the difference between how advertising techniques

promote ideas and products, she invited students to create their own advertisements. She

described that students selected a character from the novel and were tasked to create a digital or

print advertisement. Esme noted that each student marketed aspects of their selected character's

identities through advertising techniques. She shared that students' media productions illustrated

their understanding about how advertisements position audiences towards ideas about their

identities "like race, gender, sexuality."

On the contrary, Valeria embedded critical media analysis activities using vintage

advertisements in a unit entitled, "Unpacking Systems of Oppression: Isms in Media" (interview

transcript, June 15, 2021). She explained that the essential question for this unit was: "How do

we identify and critique systems of oppression in media?". She reviewed that she collated a text

set of advertisements and asked students to revisit key vocabulary they learned in previous

classes related to "the isms" such as: racism, sexism, heteronormativism, capitalism, etc. First,

she modeled an example using an advertisement and asked students to "name the isms." She

noted that students most frequently observed visuals and short text that related to racism and

sexism. Esme offered that this became a teachable moment to engage students in considering

"how intersectionality shows up in advertising," guiding students to think beyond a single axis of

interpretation. Like Esme and Arlen, she highlighted how she assisted students to connect their analyses about socializing techniques in advertisements and the role of capitalism. After Valeria assessed students' understanding of production and institutions, she tasked them with creating their own media to challenge the hegemony they noticed in the advertisements by remixing it. She explained that students had access to the original vintage advertisements and utilized digital editing tools to modify the text and images, aiming to challenge the systemic issues and issues depicted in the text. Valeria shared an example that included a Kellogg's (1939) "Pep campaign" advertisement, which the class analyzed, along with a student-created example that remixed the vintage advertisement to challenge sexism (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Valeria's Media Recreation Lesson Sample of an Original Vintage Advertisement and a Student Media Recreation Combatting Systems of Oppression (Sexism)
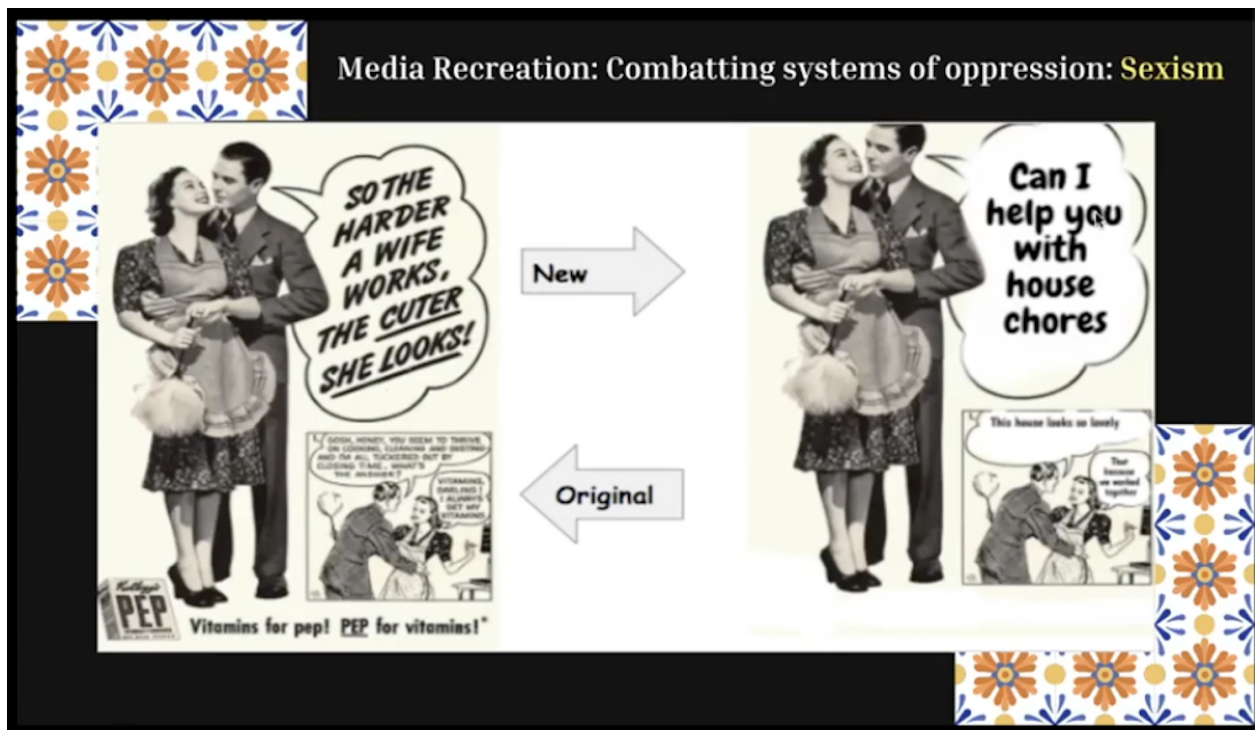
Note. The vintage advertisement on the left depicts a cis-gender white male who states, "So the harder a wife works, the <u>cuter she looks</u>! The smaller image below the larger representation on the left includes a dialogue bubble from the man who says, "Gosh, honey, you seem to thrive on cooking, cleaning and dusting and I'm all tuckered out by closing time. What's the answer?" The white cis-gender female replies, "Vitamins, darling! I always get my vitamins!" The bottom left-hand corner demonstrates a product logo from a Kellogg's (1939) cereal "Pep campaign" suggesting the nutritional value of the product. The image on the right represents a student generated alternative media advertisement. The student constructed a different question, positioning the man to ask, "Can I help you with house chores?". In the bottom image, the student wrote a sentence where the man states, "The house looks so lovely" and the woman responds, "That's because we worked together."

In contrast, Fernando explained his approach to discussing advertising with students. First, he described his pre-pandemic practice of using YouTube commercials as a primary resource for teaching students about persuasive techniques in advertising. He explained similar pedagogical methods to Esme's and Arlen's critical media literacy commercial analyses. Second, he clarified his reasons for shifting his focus during the pandemic, emphasizing his increased focus on the exploration of misinformation and disinformation disseminated on social media. He explained: "I used to you know find videos or articles that had ads in them you know that kind of like targets youth to buy things or think things" (Fernando, interview transcript, June 28, 2021). Then he shared that he felt a responsibility to address political messaging from QAnon. Fernando contextualized that he shifted gears after he read students' responses on a wellness survey and they expressed anxiety related to "Qanon misinformation and disinformation ad campaigns" that went viral on YouTube advertisements and social media platforms. Ultimately, Fernando

developed a lesson that explained the historical emergence of Qanon as a terrorist organization and then connected critical media literacy conceptual understandings related to social constructivism as well as the role of institutions. He said:

> There was so much dialogue around this, and we actually went deep into this at different points all semester, there was just so much misinformation and disinformation that needed to be addressed.

Fernando reflected that while he ran out of time for students to create their own countermedia advertisements, that he and his students were able to deconstruct a range of political advertisements related to "wokeness, defunding the police, and that criminalized democrats and circulated false information." He mentioned that between critical message analyses, he continued to conduct wellness surveys. Fernando noted that students' commented that these activities helped them identify incorrect information, alleviating some anxiety around figuring out how political messaging can steer decision-making and require verification.

Engaging Current Events

Each of the teachers discussed the significance of incorporating current events into their teaching practice. Esme, Arlen, and Fernando pointed out that in secondary English settings, the traditional approach to current events often stems from "the 5 Ws method." They explained that this pedagogical technique requires students to read informational texts and write evidence-based summary responses to "who, what, when, where, and why" questions. Valeria also described how "the 5Ws method" is a common strategy used in traditional secondary history classrooms. She shared that many teachers supplement this method with exercises to scaffold students' understanding of "key vocabulary, comparing and contrasting events over time, or to sort fact from opinion" (Valeria, interview transcript, June 15, 2021). After the teachers described how

current events are typically taught in their respective disciplinary areas, each teacher provided examples of how they deviated from traditional approaches. They demonstrated how they used a critical media literacy perspective in teaching current events, showcasing examples from their students' critical media analyses and productions.

Teachers across the cases emphasized the importance of compiling text sets from publication outlets representing diverse political ideological stances. Esme highlighted that her students analyzed the same news event storyline, but from different news outlets. Then, she engaged students in a critical media production exercise where she asked them to "write an article from the perspective of the left wing media, right wing media, nightly news and tabloid" (Esme, interview transcript, June 9, 2021). Esme underscored the benefit of modeling examples of different news outlets and genre-based journalistic styles. She demonstrated the news samples that she used to scaffold this activity in her class. She further explained that once students demonstrated their understanding of deconstructing news sources and reconstructing them in written format for different audiences, they embarked on creating their own newscasts. She articulated that students wrote their own scripts and applied similar writing skills from their previous critical media production exercise. Esme noted that after students wrote their scripts, they acted out their newscasts, filmed them using their own mobile devices, edited them using their preferred software, and shared them with the class. She reflected on how students demonstrated their understanding of multiple critical media literacy concepts. She expressed:

> [When students] dressed up, used their iPhones and realized they can film and it doesn't have to be a big production, and were like, look how easy it is to create media, they thought a lot about how media is put together and shows you what it wants to show you.

Esme noted that students deepened their awareness about how the news, like all media, are never neutral. She described, "students learned how they can take the same facts and spin them, just like different news sources do, to reach different audiences." Esme also pointed out that this exercise became a building block for helping students' critical engagement with news sources, attuning their awareness about the importance of corroborating news sources to verify credibility.

Connected with Esme's remarks, Arlen also emphasized the value of bringing in informational texts about the same event from news outlets that represented different political lenses. He noted that he used multiple approaches for students' critical media analysis and productions about breaking news stories. He explained that in a general sense, students referred to the pillars of critical media literacy and evaluated articles, podcasts, newspapers, and videos. He also referenced his earlier lesson example that he demonstrated about student produced multimedia newscasts (i.e., yellow vest protests in France). Arlen noted that student generated newscasts are a recurring project throughout his broadcast journalism and new media literacy class.

Additionally, Arlen provided another lesson example about how he scaffolded students' learning to deconstruct news stories about topics or events that could be trauma-producing. He reflected on the day that he taught about the racist and sexist shootings at two massage parlors that killed eight individuals, six of whom were of Asian and Asian American descent and seven whom were women in Atlanta, Georgia on March 16, 2021. First, he and his students visited a website that provided the top headlines framing the Atlanta shootings from national and international news sources. Second, they generated a list of all the top headlines together and recorded them on a Google Slide (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Arlen's Lesson Example Co-constructing a Class List of Headlines Related to the Atlanta

Shootings

Atlanta suspect had rehab, felt 'shame over addiction, ex-roomates say

Atlanta shootings: Suspect charged with murder as victims identified

The Cop Who Said The Spa Shooter Had A "Bad Day" Previously Posted A Racist Shirt Blaming China For The Pandemic

Asian Americans grieve, organize in wake of Atlanta attacks: "We've been raising the red flag"

8 Dead in Atlanta Spa Shootings, With Fears of Anti-Asian Bias

Suspect in Atlanta-area spa shootings might have intended more shootings in Florida, mayor says
Official Who Said Atlanta Shooting Suspect Was Having A 'Bad Day' Faces Criticism

Atlanta murders: Reckless gun laws may have played a role | COMMENTARY

The Atlanta suspect isn't the first to blame 'sex addiction' for heinous crimes. But scientists are dubious.

What we know about Robert Aaron Long, the suspect in Atlanta spa shootings
FBI under pressure to tackle anti-Asian hate crime in wake of Atlanta shootings
Shooting suspect blames sex addiction, not racism

More **headlines** from today's newspapers.

Third, they analyzed and discussed the headlines. Arlen guided the students and asked them to

extract words and phrases "analyzing how language, grammar, syntax, and active vs. passive

voice" (interview transcript, June 3, 2021) impact how the story is told.

After this exercise, he facilitated another dialogue with students, and they co-constructed

a bubble map to consider all the social issues related to gun violence and the Atlanta shootings.

Mirroring Vasquez's (2014b) "webbing" (p. 154) technique, Arlen described that he drew a

circle on a digital whiteboard and placed the word "Atlanta" in the middle of it. He explained

that because students had extensive practice analyzing information across the pillars of critical

media literacy, that they were able to generate more in-depth responses. He noted that he

prompted the students to help them elaborate on their observations, consider the interrelated

critical media literacy tenets, and cultivate awareness about intersectionality. For example, he recalled: "Keep telling me every possible story that's inside of that story. So gun control is inside that story, mental health is inside of that story. Racism is inside that story" (Arlen, interview transcript, June 3, 2021). Arlen illustrated that he and the students continued drawing "branches" and "problem posing" until "they couldn't go any further" naming converging social issues. He delineated that after they completed their bubble map, they engaged in a critically reflective debrief. Arlen recalled that he adapted probing critical media literacy questions to the class related to social constructivism, the politics of representation, production and institutions, and social justice. He discussed that he asked students:

> Which one of these stories is not being told or investigated in the mainstream news? Which ones are being pushed? Which ones are not being paid attention? How can we find stories that should be getting told that aren't being told or the perspectives that should be shared that aren't being shared or valued?"

Arlen explained that one of the main purposes behind creating this lesson was to encourage students to explore the concept of "stories within stories" that are connected to social issues. He emphasized that it is important for students to develop skills in searching for underreported stories while also creating their own media to "tell stories that are not being emphasized" to take action for social justice.

Corresponding to Esme's and Arlen's techniques for teaching current events, Fernando took a similar approach to guide his students to critically analyze media. However, he diverged slightly, relying on a more Freirean critical pedagogical method. For example, he noted that he wanted to make current events "extremely student-centered" (Fernando, interview transcript, June 28, 2021). Therefore, he facilitated a full class dialogue asking students to suggest

generative themes around relevant social issues of concern. He said that students' problem-posed several ideas related to misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech campaigns targeted at undocumented populations. Then, the class came to a consensus that they wanted to study "ICE, the immigration raids in our community." He noted that, "although my students didn't tell me they were undocumented, they asked a lot of questions about knowing your rights, what you should do, how to protect yourself, and your family, and your community." He shared that he curated texts from different news outlets. Then, he guided students to unpack articles related to undocumented peoples' rights relevant to their local context.

Instead of embedding an exercise asking students to produce their own media, Fernando commented that he felt a responsibility to seek external support for students and their families. He recalled, "There are moments when I may have this whole lesson plan lined up, but students bring in something that's like, huh, let's push that shit aside. And let's talk about that. And when this happened, I learned again, how sometimes, we need to do that in the classroom." He noted that he contacted and invited professionals from a legal service center for undocumented people and other related organizations to share information with the class. Fernando shared that after external community members extended resources and support to students, they debriefed the conversations and fielded any additional questions about assessing students' rights. He remembered emphasizing to students the importance of "finding your allies" and being "in solidarity" with one another.

Similar to Fernando's Freirean approaches, Valeria also embedded related techniques. She highlighted the common practice in their class of sharing viral breaking news stories on social media that they personally encountered during media consumption. She stated that as a teacher, she often increased her social media use to consider what students might be viewing on

149

platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Then, she expressed that she aimed to make current events student centered and invited them to generate themes and topics around current events that connected with social issues that concerned them. As students brought in different social media posts or news sources, she allocated time for students to review the text and engage in a problem-posing discussion to "call out the isms" (Valeria, interview transcript, June 15, 2021).

Moreover, she provided an example of when students brought in a video that went viral on social media. The multimodal text she demonstrated showcased a high school student who experienced racism at his high school graduation. The media coverage reported that he was not allowed to receive his diploma because he wore a Mexican flag over his regalia. Valeria noted that she and her students held a critical dialogue and also applied the six guiding questions from the Critical Media Literacy Framework (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 8). Valeria provided a more comprehensive explanation of the important role of implementing current events relevant to students' lives. She said, "Current events tend to be really helpful because students have already seen that something went viral. And so, we unpack that. We unpack the bias. We really look at how it applies to our life and why it's important for us to know" (Valeria, interview transcript, June 15, 2021). Valeria also provided an anecdote from a dialogue with one of her students to reflect on the potency of employing critical media literacy and current events in the classroom. She recalled that after one weekend, the student came into class and said, "Miss, I was laying in my bed last night, just trying to relax on Instagram, and all I could think of is welp that's racist, that's discriminatory, that's a system of oppression, like I can't even relax anymore." Valeria suggested that this exchange with her student validated her embodied beliefs and practices of critical media literacy, noting: "I felt like my job was done there, while there's so much more

work to be done around this, I could see how students were influenced to ask critical questions about media they're so exposed to in their lives."

Teaching About the Insurrection on the Capitol

While teachers demonstrated that studying current events was a regular habit of their critical media literacy practices, a primary discussion point across cases included how they adapted their pedagogies to address the Insurrection on the Capitol on January 6, 2021. Teachers provided vivid accounts of where they were and what it was like for them to teach from a critical media literacy perspective about the Insurrection.

On the day of the attempted coup by insurrectionists on Capitol Hill, teachers each recalled how they were teaching remotely in their homes due to COVID-19 lockdowns and shelter in place orders still being in effect. Fernando and Valeria each recalled that their partners were watching TV in their homes and the level of confusion they felt trying to figure out what they witnessed on the screen. Fernando remembered, "I was just like, 'What the hell is going on?' I was texting with folks and then in a few minutes, I had another class" (interview transcript, June 28, 2021). Valeria also noted that her partner is a teacher, and they came together in the middle of their home with their eyes glued to the TV set. She said they talked about how traumatic and fear-inducing it was. Valeria noted, "I remember looking at the TV and just seeing like, 'Wait, what is, what is happening? Is this really happening? And we were, you know, thinking of our students and how they saw, students saw a lot of America. And the real America" (interview transcript, June 15, 2021).

Esme provided another perspective. She noted that she was in the middle of teaching English and had all of her social media, email, and text message notifications turned off. She detailed:

I had no idea what was happening. And one of my students, she just like, she just popped

in [Google Meets]. She was like, 'Mrs. [sic],' she's like 'they're storming the Capitol.'

And I was like, 'What?'. And then, you know, obviously I pull it up. And I was like,

alright, this is what we're looking at now. And I just shifted gears. (Esme, interview

transcript, June 9, 2021)

Similarly, Valeria's recollection mirrored Esme's anecdote. She recalled as soon as her next

class began and the Insurrection news coverage aired, students entered their remote class on

Zoom and flooded the chat asking her questions. Valeria described:

At the beginning of class, the chat was filled like, 'Miss, did you hear about blank? Miss,

did you hear about blank?' And so, we had to sit down. And sometimes, I'd even play

videos to try to catch up the class and what was going on. I'm like, I remember teaching

during the January 6 Insurrection. I think I always will. (interview transcript, June 15,

2021)

For Esme and Valeria, they each noted that they stopped everything they were doing to quickly

"hold space" and check-in with their students about their initial perceptions and feelings around

the media coverage and the attack on the Capitol. They each held open dialogues with students to

try to process what was going on and examined different articles, videos, and live streamed

content to make-meaning using the tools of critical media literacy alongside their students. Esme

and Valeria also each offered sentiments about how essential their community bonds, class

norms, and earlier practice using critical media literacy was at this moment.

Fernando's and Arlen's narrative retelling about their experiences teaching during the

Insurrection were similar. Each of them discussed the difficulties about teaching about the

attacks on the Capitol given the sociopolitical dynamics at their schools. Fernando discussed how

he received emails from district leadership and from his school principal that placed constraints on "what teachers should and shouldn't be saying in class" (interview transcript, June 28, 2021). He expressed his frustration over their censor and surveillance of teachers' autonomy and expertise to teach from critical perspectives as well as about real-world issues facing students. Fernando reflected, "I find myself constantly just doing what I feel is right. Like, if I follow all of their bureaucratic rules that are apolitical, ahistorical, not critical, it's just, I wouldn't get anywhere. And it would just be a very sterile class and curriculum." He also noted that at a brief departmental meeting before the following school day, that as a school leader he approached his colleagues about the importance of holding non-judgmental conversations with students about the Insurrection and to "listen and talk with students, and to check in with them." Fernando explained that he received pushback on his advocacy recommending that his colleagues address the Insurrection and focus on students' mental health. He mentioned that several of his conservative colleagues expressed opposition to teaching about this event suggesting that "well, we don't know what actually happened" or worse, that they planned on teaching conspiracy theories to students that they perceived were fact-based. Despite resistance from some of his colleagues, Fernando emphasized that he tried to build bridges between them to convince them that students "needed their teachers to make time for the students to talk and share their ideas and to just be there for them." He described that he was disheartened by some of his colleagues' choices. He concluded, however, that he "had a responsibility to shift and adapt" and decided to engage students in respectful and critical dialogues while also "maintaining a safe space."

Nevertheless, Fernando shared that with only a couple of classes left to teach that day, he had to make quick decisions about how to address the Insurrection footage. He noted that he assumed his students were likely watching coverage at home alone, tending to their siblings

without parents present. He provided context that many of his students' families were farmworkers and were in the fields early in the morning until dusk. He commented that he wanted to "be supportive, it's already a very uncertain time. So I just kind of made space and held space with students." Corresponding with Esme's and Valeria's decisions to hold an open dialogue with students, Fernando adapted his lesson in the moment to focus on students' wellbeing and to "hear them out" about what media they saw and any questions and concerns they were feeling.

Moreover, Arlen recounted feeling "pressure" (interview transcript, June 3, 2021) around teaching about the Insurrection as a broadcasting and new media literacy teacher. He said:

> It kind of felt like treacherous terrain for me. It's hard when you're a liberal and you're like, well I'm just talking about the facts. And there's going to be a certain portion of parents that can say, no you're pushing a leftist agenda.

He detailed that while his school encompassed a "strong progressive energy," he was aware that some students, families, and colleagues supported Donald Trump. Arlen elaborated more on his concerns teaching during this time; he shared a story about a colleague in his district. He mentioned a history teacher who embedded a lesson comparing speeches delivered by Donald Trump to other global leaders in power who espoused fascism. Arlen expressed that although the teacher used standards-based materials to guide students with comparing texts and historical events across time periods, the teacher ended up "getting pushed out" because he was perceived to claim Donald Trump is a fascist. Arlen recalled that what happened to this teacher "had a chilling effect on our district" and heightened several teachers' hesitation about whether to address contemporary issues across political spectrums.

Despite Arlen's concerns, he noted how he modified his instruction immediately to address the Insurrection. Like Esme, Valeria, and Fernando, he changed his original lesson and talked with students candidly. He recalled,

> We opened up Zoom and just kind of checked in with each other. I said, I can't have class today. I don't know what to say yet, but I need you to know I am very distraught, and I need a day to think about what we are going to do. We can't just plow through what we were going to do in class today.

Arlen discussed how vital it was that he and his students had a pre-established community with one another. He mentioned that this allowed him to be vulnerable with his students, sharing his discomfort about the Insurrection. He said, "I knew we needed to open up space, for all of us, to talk, you know, to process." Arlen also pointed out the difficulty of being a high school teacher during such painful sociopolitical times. He explained that he often had to find a balance between knowing when and how to raise certain issues in class. Arlen reflected, "Sometimes students need school to be a refuge, like can I just not think about that for five minutes and just have class today? Or other students need to talk about it. I think there's both those feelings." He revisited his value of building a shared community and norms with students. He also shared the importance of checking in with students first before broaching "trauma-producing topics."

After their initial dialogic exchanges with students, teachers across all cases discussed how they further addressed the Insurrection in subsequent classes. Each teacher recounted how they prepared for the subsequent class to address the media coverage around the Insurrection. They built on their earlier approaches to teaching informational texts and current events through the Critical Media Literacy Framework (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 8). They also each ensured

that critical dialogue and holding space with students was at the forefront of their pedagogical designs.

For example, each teacher curated print, aural, and multimodal informational texts from local and international news outlets with divergent political affiliations. They each commented on how they expanded upon students' prior investigation of news sources by emphasizing the guiding questions of critical media literacy. Additionally, every teacher culled students' attention to language and rhetorical critical media analyses to focus closely on the terms, phrases, and whether active or passive voice was used to report the story.

For instance, Esme's students compared the terms "terrorists and patriots" (interview transcript, June 9, 2021) after they observed multiple instances across several news sources depending on the political affiliation. Esme and her students focused closely on how descriptive language was used to frame the insurrectionists, police, and politicians. Then, they discussed their observations and challenged vocabulary they felt watered down the severity of the attempted coup. She noted that students had several questions about how the people who stormed the Capitol should be framed by news sources. She also articulated that the students mentioned concerns about whether it was okay for them to talk about the Insurrection and their different viewpoints because many teachers had not addressed this event in their other classes. Esme reflected, "And I'm like, yes, it's fine. This is real life. Like, we always talk about preparing students for real life, as if they're not living in the real world right now." She recounted that as students shared more questions about what terms should be used to describe the participants in the January 6th riots, the class segued into a nuanced critical conversation about ideological worldviews and differences. Esme noted that they discussed the tenets of critical media literacy while unpacking racist and nationalist ideologies embedded in the Insurrection media coverage.

She recalled, "We kept breaking down each source, thinking about them, talking about them, using the critical media literacy questions, and in some ways deconstructing insurrection coverage in the same way we do with characters and stories."

Correspondingly, after Fernando started class with an "open forum discussion" (interview transcript, June 28, 2021) to gauge students' wellness and make space for students to share any new questions or feelings that came up from their last class. Then, he shifted their focus to examining media coverage across several news outlets from international sources. He also noted that their prior studies on Qanon misinformation and disinformation was useful for them to build on their awareness of how media is socially constructed and subjective. Fernando emphasized that students conducted critical analyses of print and visual texts. They focused on how language and rhetoric played a role in how the story was framed and how images added complexity to narrative. He noted that students raised points about some of the "graphic photos and how they were violent" as well as portrayed "nationalist" and "nativist" signs and symbols worn by insurrectionists in photographs. He said students also noticed differences in the language attributed to participants as either "patriots, terrorists, insurrectionists, or protestors." He asserted that critical dialogues and students' critical media analyses helped students form meaning about the complexities and implications of the Insurrection to democracy.

Like Esme and Fernando, Valeria also brought in an array of print, visual, and multimodal texts for students to deconstruct from U.S. and international news outlets. She noted that she relied heavily on her students' consistent and regular practice applying the Critical Media Literacy Framework Guiding Questions (Kellner & Share, 2019, p. 8). She demonstrated examples of different articles, primary and secondary source documents, and videos that represented perspectives across political affiliations. Valeria explained that students

deconstructed text excerpts from statements made by Rudy Giuliani and Donald Trump that incited violence before the Insurrection, as well as several other politicians' Tweets which were posted on Twitter during and after the attempted coup. She mentioned that dialogue was a crucial aspect in every phase of this lesson. Valeria remembered checking on her students' wellbeing and how they were processing the Insurrection media coverage constantly. She reflected:

> You know, sometimes I had to say, let's figure out how to engage in dialogue about what we are seeing and feeling. And I think for a lot of my students, they realized like this is America, right? This is where we live. And I think for a lot of my undocumented students, it was really fear-inducing, right? I just remember them saying like, 'It looks like a lot of Americans.' And almost like my students feeling like, we're not American because we're not, we don't see anybody who looks like us. They're fighting for this Trump America. (Valeria, interview transcript, June 15, 2021)

As students continued to discuss their reactions, Valeria mentioned that they discussed a lot about the written language and compared the terms "rioting and protesting." They also examined the phrase "transition of power" and reviewed historical speeches from John McCain and Obama, as well as letters exchanged during the moments leading up to the next presidential inauguration. She elaborated that as students harnessed their historical thinking and critical media analysis skills to corroborate multiple news sources, they became more aware of just how "remarkable and terrifying" the attempted coup was, and how different this set of circumstances was from other transitions between presidential candidates in America.

Additionally, Valeria noted that she also used a digital tool called PearDeck (i.e., an interactive polling tool) that elicited students' responses to guiding questions. She described that she asked her students:

1. In your opinion, were the events in Washington D.C. a threat to democracy in the United States? Why or why not?

2. Who stands to lose from the actions on Wednesday? Why?

3. Who stands to benefit from the actions on Wednesday? Why?

As Valeria synthesized the dialogues and critical media analyses they conducted, she described how surreal it all was to try to forge meaning about this event herself while also supporting her students to do the same. She said:

I still get teary-eyed thinking about that day and about the election. I remember crying when we heard the election news. Like okay, we can breathe a little bit more even though there's still a lot of work to be done. And then the riots, it was super emotional for a lot of my kids and for myself.

Similarly, Arlen also curated multiple texts from different global news outlets and political perspectives. Like the other teachers, Arlen's focus on print, aural, and multiple languages was foundational. Arlen recalled that dialogue was at the center of their media analyses and that they centered the pillars of critical media literacy to guide their investigations of texts about the riot at the Capitol. He explained that after he checked in on students' comfortability discussing the Insurrection and encouraged them to take breaks and step away from Zoom when needed, they were able to unpack information together. He recalled, "I tried to keep students' focus on the pillars of critical media literacy, asking them, 'What do we notice about what is being reported on? How is it being reported?'" (interview transcript, June 3, 2021). However, he veered slightly from the other teachers' approaches because he also tasked students to use their previous skills of writing and producing newscasts. He explained that after students examined multiple sources, he asked them to create "compare and contrast newscasts" to

articulate different patterns they observed about language and rhetoric across sources. Arlen

shared that he wanted to help students revisit earlier lessons around language and rhetoric as well

as sharpen their attention towards identifying misinformation and disinformation. Arlen shared

an example of a student-produced newscast that considered what terminology should be used to

describe who engaged in the attempted coup (see Figures 8 and 9).

Figure 8

Arlen's Example of a Student Newscast Examining Language and Rhetoric from the Capitol Riot

Figure 9

Arlen's Example of a Student Newscast with Terms they Analyzed from the Capitol Riot

Arlen described that students produced powerful newscasts that not only demonstrated their critical media literacy competencies, but also that were relevant and generated awareness. He said a regular practice involved students sharing their work on social media for their peers, family, and friends to watch. He shared that although he entered this exercise with concern given the sociopolitical tensions in his school district, it was worth it.

Conclusion

Across cases, teachers demonstrated a primary focus on building "safe" and "critical" communities as a pedagogical foundation, which all of their critical media literacy practices rested upon. While they varied in approach, each emphasized that community-building was rooted in honoring each others' intersectional identities and that relationship development was ongoing. They reflected similar goals of taking time out to be there for their students during unprecedented sociopolitical times and rampant media coverage. Similarly, while all teachers demonstrated critical media analysis and production as a regular class routine, their techniques manifested in different ways. Each teacher focused on helping students deconstruct and

reconstruct multiple perspectives, understand the influence of advertising on identity, and engage with nuanced current events. Teachers demonstrated that critical media literacy must be rooted in students' sociocultural contexts and connected to sociopolitical conditions. This was especially present in their incorporation of current events and the sociopolitical shifts they made in their classrooms during the Insurrection on the Capitol. A clear focus on deconstructing the relationship between media and audiences, information, and power was also evident. Overall, an emphasis on prioritizing early and consistent community-building was a formidable characteristic that shaped all teachers' critical media literacy pedagogies and was crucial when addressing the news coverage and sociopolitical climate during the Insurrection.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' embodiments (ways of being) and practices (ways of doing) of critical media literacy through an in-depth collective case study of four secondary teachers during the COVID-19 context in California. Using a critical qualitative research approach, I aimed to demonstrate teachers' lived experiences, experiential wisdom, and critical reflections about what influences their critical embodiments and practices of critical media literacy, while drawing from literature and several critical social theoretical lenses to analyze how their perspectives and experiences could communicate critical media literacy as a way of life and pedagogical orientation. First, I present a synthesis of findings that emerged in chapters 4 and 5. Second, I assert implications for subsequent research investigations, theory development, classroom practice, and school-based policies. Third, I articulate the limitations of this research study and identify areas for future research. Finally, I extend a conclusion with final commentary and call-to-action to stakeholders and newcomers for critical media literacy education. The following abstraction (see Figure 10) provides a visual representation of the findings discussed in this chapter responsive to the research questions.

Figure 10

Visual Abstraction of Research Findings

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                          This study                             │
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         │                                          │
         ▼                                          ▼
┌──────────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ Research Question #1:     │          │ Research Question #2:        │
│ How do teachers describe │          │ How do teachers practice     │
│ their embodiments        │          │ (ways of doing)              │
│ (ways of being) in       │          │ critical media literacy in   │
│ relation to critical     │          │ their classrooms?            │
│ media literacy?          │          │                              │
└──────────────────────────┘          └──────────────────────────────┘
         │                                          │
         ▼                                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Critical Qualitative Research Methodology              │
│          Two rounds of coding (in vivo and axial)               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
         │                                          │
         ▼                                          ▼
┌──────────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ TEACHERS' DESCRIPTIONS   │          │ TEACHERS' PRACTICES          │
│ OF THEIR EMBODIMENTS     │          │ (WAYS OF DOING)              │
│ (WAYS OF BEING) IN       │          │ OF CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY   │
│ RELATION TO CRITICAL     │          │                              │
│ MEDIA LITERACY           │          │                              │
└──────────────────────────┘          └──────────────────────────────┘
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Journeys Towards Criticality
- Formative Experiences
- Exposure to Critical Lenses

Transformative Worldviews
- Reading the World and the Word
- Reading Themselves

Co-constructing Safe and Critical Communities
- Modeling Teacher-facing Discussions About Their Identities
- Facilitating Student-centered Identity-based Dialogues Towards Critical Praxis
- Cultivating Ongoing Community Wellness

Scaffolding Critical Media Literacy Analysis and Production
- Deconstructing and Reconstructing Multiple Perspectives
- Addressing Advertising and Identity
- Engaging Current Events
- Teaching About The Insurrection on the Capitol

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
- Synthesis of Findings
- Implications
- Limitations and Future Research
- Conclusion

Synthesis of Findings

The first theme demonstrated that teachers' embodiments of critical media literacy were preceded by their journeys to criticality. Parallel with Freirean (1970) critical pedagogies, an individual's process towards becoming critically aware requires reflexivity about one's positionality and lived experiences that propels their continuum to critical consciousness. Analysis of teachers' interviews demonstrated that teachers' journeys towards criticality varied,

but that they were commonly influenced by their: 1) Formative experiences and 2) Exposure to critical lenses.

Teachers' formative experiences pertained to specific educational and sociopolitical events in their lives. From childhood classroom experiences to influential family members, the influences which guide journeys to critical media literacy were nuanced and specific to each individual's connection with sociopolitical events. For example, Fernando's and Valeria's familial lineages detailed how generational trauma reproduced itself in their K-12 trajectories, whereas Esme's and Arlen's narratives represented a network of support towards K-12 education. Despite teachers' different K-12 educational experiences, they reported these key moments as important to their journey to criticality; this shows that there are many paths to an embodiment of critical media literacy. This points back to Comber's (2016), Vasquez et al.'s (2019), and Luke's (2014) notion that "ways of being" are not prescriptive, rather they are steeped in sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts.

Exposure to critical lenses related to the events directly before and after teachers' introductions to critical social theories. This revealed several introductory points for teachers to gain the critical language necessary to embody critical media literacy. For instance, Fernando's and Valeria's introduction to ethnic studies offered new understandings of their familial and cultural backgrounds with a critical focus on the injustices (e.g., racism, xenophobia) experienced by their communities. Their narratives exemplify the effectiveness of ethnic studies in forming critical stances which then map onto their subsequent embodiments of critical media literacy. While Arlen's direct entry point to critical media literacy occurred when he joined an ad hoc practitioner community, the other teachers each noted how they first encountered critical media literacy through teacher education programs. Contrasting the other teachers' exposure to

critical lenses, Fernando also emphasized Yosso's (2005) Community and Cultural Wealth Model as an essential asset-based frame for self-reflection about racial identity. Across all cases, regardless of the introductory point to critical media literacy, each teacher's journey eventually led them to employ their critical media literacy embodiment as educators.

The second theme indicated that teachers described their embodiments of critical media literacy in alignment with a transformative worldview. Corresponding with scholars from the Critical Media Literacy Conference of the Americas (2021), critical media literacy offers a transformative pedagogy for building and emboldening an individual's critical engagement with media, information, and systems of power towards self and social change. Analysis of teachers' interviews indicated that their transformative worldviews impacted their: 1) Readings of the world and the word and 2) Readings of themselves.

Teachers' readings of the world and the word corresponded with specific shifts in teachers' sociopolitical worldviews and critical engagement with media and popular culture. Across teachers' cases, each individual described how their readings of the world and the word changed towards a critical awareness of systems of power and oppression with an attention to intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Interrelated with Hall's (1980, 1988) Encoding and Decoding Model, teachers demonstrated congruences in how their embodiments of critical media literacy propelled their agency to actively decode how media and society are encoded with hegemonic ideologies. Similarly, each teacher underscored how embodying critical questioning was central to their processes of "reading the world and the word" (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Teachers' readings of themselves connected with changes in their self-perceptions after their adoption of critical social theories, including critical media literacy. Each teacher illustrated elements of Freirean (1970) critical pedagogical praxis, among other critical theories as key

166

features of their embodied stances to critical media literacy. For example, Arlen's points honed a focus on the critical dialectic which aims to consider multiple perspectives and deconstruct one's possible biases. He also offered an anecdote that portrayed the differences between "compliance" and "cooperation" which mirrored similar understandings to Deweyan (1916) methods for democratic education. Similarly, Esme's critical mindset complimented Arlen's observations on dialogic practices and the potential of a critical media literacy ethic that seeks to understand multiple perspectives. However, she also connoted an underlying belief that critical media literacy is a "way of life" that connected with the Freirean (2007) notion of critical hope. Relatedly, Fernando's and Valeria's anecdotes also reflected Freirean praxis towards critical consciousness that their embodied worldviews of critical media literacy and ethnic studies enhanced. Their commentary about how these combined lenses also expanded understandings of critical media literacy as an embodied praxis for healing racial harms and generational trauma that Baker-Bell et al. (2017) and Yosso (2002, 2020) also address through bringing Critical Race Theories of Education into the fore of critical media literacy praxis.

Chapter 5 elaborates findings on the second research question by investigating how secondary teachers practiced (ways of doing) critical media literacy. The first theme demonstrated that teachers employed similar approaches to co-constructing safe and critical communities. Echoing the calls to disrupt banking models of education (Freire, 1970) and for democratic education (Dewey, 1916), critical media literacy practitioners used multiple methods to cultivate relationships and inclusive learning environments with an attention to intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Analysis of teachers' interviews and lesson demonstrations revealed that teachers who practiced critical media literacy cultivated safe and critical communities by: 1) Modeling teacher-facing discussions about their identities, 2)

Facilitating student-centered identity-based dialogues towards critical praxis, and 3) Cultivating ongoing community wellness.

Teachers employed similar approaches to co-constructing safe and critical communities. First, they initiated community-building by orchestrating teacher-facing discussions about their identities. Teachers across cases expressed similar focuses on introducing themselves through their positionalities and inviting students to examine their own. Each teacher initiated an introductory pedagogical move that modeled their attention to intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Resultantly, it became clear that teachers endeavored to create the conditions for inclusive learning environments that valued each other as co-learners. Here we can see the multiperspectival benefit of applying intersectionality to expand Deweyan (1916) and Freirean (1970) methods. By centering positionality, teachers were able to set the conditions to honor and respect each other's differences as a strength. For example, across all cases teachers openly discussed their racial identities as an invitation to feel welcome and open conversations around cultural histories.

Second, teachers facilitated student-centered identity-based dialogues towards critical communities. Teachers across cases described their practices in creating a "safe space" for students to authentically express themselves and to provide opportunities to be seen, heard, and valued. For example, the pedagogical moves that each teacher made to orient student dialogues about their identities, lived experiences, and real-world connections reflected a core element of critical media literacy which intersects with Ladson-Billings (2014, 2021a, 2021b) culturally relevant pedagogies. Additionally, all teachers' attention to co-developing definitions or dialogic processes through consensus-building conversations reflected Deweyan (1916) democratic education. However, teachers also demonstrated critical pedagogies (Freire, 1970) and

intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) through their rationales to co-construct safe and inclusive learning environments to situate subsequent critical learning contexts necessary for cultivating conditions that can aid all community members processes towards critical consciousness (Freire, 1970).

Third, teachers emphasized cultivating ongoing community wellness by sustaining regular community-building exercises. Teachers demonstrated a keen critical awareness and commitment to support students' holistic well-being during the pandemic context by providing a safe space to process grief and trauma related to COVID-19 deaths, a swath of public health misinformation and disinformation, police murders of Black lives and anti-Asian violence, as well as heightened tensions leading up to the 2020 presidential election. Teachers' adaptability to modify their instruction based on students' needs and real-world conditions were at the core of a critical media literacy education that is flexible, culturally relevant, and mindful of students' sociopolitical conditions (Share & Gambino, 2022). However, teachers' strong attention to tailoring their community-building exercises to be responsive to students' needs also steers new directions to trauma-informed critical media literacy pedagogies that are just beginning to develop by Ramasubramanian et al. (2021) following the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, teachers across cases validate the necessity for ongoing community-building that is responsive to students' needs and provides opportunities to co-develop critical solidarity which indicates possibilities for critical media literacy as a post-pandemic trauma-informed healing praxis.

The second theme exhibited that teachers' practices of critical media literacy were implemented in the classroom by providing frequent opportunities for students to engage in critical media analysis and production. In alignment with seminal U.S. scholars in the field of

critical media literacy (Morrell et al., 2013; Kellner & Share, 2019), all teachers centered critical media analysis and production through critical inquiry-based processes that guided students to generate awareness about hegemonic forms of media and popular culture, while also expanding their capacities to construct their own alternative media messages. Teachers also foregrounded advanced literacy approaches rooted in sociocultural literacy paradigms (Morrell, et al., 2013; Spires, 2020) that were grounded in multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996). Additionally, each teacher drew upon Kellner and Share's (2019) Critical Media Literacy Framework: Conceptual Understandings and Guiding Questions (p. 8) as an adaptable critical inquiry-based heuristic that framed their practices. Analysis of teachers' interviews, lesson demonstrations, and artifacts (i.e., lesson plans and student work samples) illustrated that teachers who practiced scaffolded critical media literacy analysis and production guided students in specific areas by: 1) Deconstructing and reconstructing multiple perspectives, 2) Addressing advertising and identity, 3) Engaging current events, and 4) Teaching about the Insurrection on the Capitol.

First, teachers situated opportunities for students to deconstruct and reconstruct media texts from multiple perspectives. Across all cases, teachers emphasized expanding students' critical awareness that all media are never neutral and are socially constructed by people who make choices and contain biases. However, teachers crafted several different approaches to guide students' critical media literacy analyses and productions. For example, Esme used literature to guide students' awareness about subjective storytelling whereas Arlen, Fernando, and Valeria each used informational texts. Regardless of the genre, teachers demonstrated how they adapted their critical media literacy pedagogies to be interconnected with students' interests and relevant to their lives. Teachers also showcased how they scaffolded students' understandings of multiple conceptual understandings related to critical media literacy, such as: language, semantics, and

politics of representation, among others. Across all cases, teachers utilized lessons which placed

focus on language and rhetoric to examine the role of how information is socially constructed

and therefore can be deconstructed and reconstructed. Teachers provided an array of critical

media literacy analysis and production activities that focused closely on unpacking what and

whose perspectives are represented and why. However, Valeria's approaches to critical media

literacy with Four Ethnic Studies Tenets (McGovern & Buenavista, 2016) and the "Four 'I's'of

Oppression" (Fund, 2010) offers important in roads to expanding the multiperspectival approach

in tandem with other critical lenses that disentangle racism and other forms of oppression.

Second, teachers addressed the impact of advertising on identity. Across all cases,

teachers created lessons which used real advertisements to examine how messages are

constructed. While teachers' orchestrated various methods to incorporate aspects of critical

media literacy analysis and production related to advertising, their techniques remained

connected to Horkheimer's and Adorno's distinction of the culture industries as well as Hall's

(1980, 1988) Encoding and Decoding Model to deconstruct how commercial industries and the

mass production of culture reproduce social norms which reproduce hegemony and benefit

capitalist motives. Their methods are also closely aligned with Kellner and Share's (2019)

Conceptual Understanding 5 (Production/Institutions) to consider the motivations behind why a

message is created or shared and how it pertains to governmental or institutional aims. For

example, Fernando demonstrated how QAnon political messaging on social media stirs

misinformation and disinformation which interrelated with the emerging literature on Qanon

conspiracy theories rampant during the COVID-19 mediasphere (Hoechsmann & hezel ulthinn,

2022). Alternatively, Esme, Arlen, and Valeria each used a range of print and multimodal

commercials to disentangle aspects of identity marketeering that socially construct identity-based

expressions and benefit hegemonic norms and capitalist interests. For instance, Esme and Arlen each orchestrated exercises that focused closely on students' creating their own media to apply their understanding of advertising and identity-based messaging whereas Valeria oriented her students to produce countermedia advertisements to challenge "the isms" and oriented a teachable moment to help students consider oppressive marketing techniques from a perspective of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).

Third, teachers frequently incorporated instruction that engaged with current events. Across all cases, teachers used relevant current events as an opportunity to demonstrate how media can be intentionally constructed to influence the viewer's perception of sociopolitical conditions for political purposes. Each teacher specified how critical media literacy offers an advanced form of literacy as a social practice (Freire & Macedo, 1987) which utilized problem-posing methods (Freire, 1970) to study media based on generative themes related to students' sociopolitical conditions. Teachers gathered text sets from multiple outlets relating to one specific event and embedded critical media analysis guiding questions to expand students' critical thinking about informational texts related to systems of power, rather than the traditional "5ws" method reflective of traditional approaches to current events. Again, a close focus on examining language, semantics, and multiliteracies remained essential to teachers' practices of using current events in the classroom from a critical media literacy standpoint. Teachers foregrounded critical media analysis that disentangled complex social issues, ranging from Fernando's lesson considering ICE raids and immigration rights to Arlen's analysis and production exercise unpacking the multiple systemic issues that intersected with gun violence towards Asian American communities (e.g., the mass shooting in Atlanta in March of 2021). Through-lines from teachers' practices emphasized their usage of multiliteracies, generative

themes, and topics rooted in students' sociopolitical conditions that helped them deconstruct informational texts during challenging times. While Fernando's lesson reflected adaptability to meet students' and community's needs to form critical solidarity with each other amidst attacks on people given their immigration status, Esme, Arlen, and Valeria each also incorporated a range of exercises where students produced their own alternative media.

Fourth, teachers denoted a distinct inflection point of their critical media literacy practice when they altered their lesson plans to discuss and make-meaning about the Insurrection on the Capitol on January 6, 2021. Across all cases, teachers reported making rapid adjustments to their lessons for the day following the Insurrection. Teachers emphasized consistent community building practices were essential to creating an environment where teachers and students could come together to make meaning about what they witnessed in the media. Teachers and students made-meaning together, remaining vulnerable and prioritizing each other's well-being, reflective of teachers' earlier commentary on the need to maintain community wellness and harnessing critical media literacy as a trauma-informed pedagogy during the pandemic context and fragmented sociopolitical conditions. Each teacher made dialogue central as they read their worlds together through Freirean methods, and problem-posed the language and semantics around print, visual, and multimodal texts to consider the effect of media representations and labels around the people involved in the Capitol Riots. Arlen and Fernando also brought into focus what so many teachers have been navigating since the onslaught of attacks on Critical Race Theories of Education and the censorship and surveillance of teachers' and students' engaging in critical forms of education (De Abreu, 2022; Friedman & Johnson, 2022). Ultimately, teachers' practices of maintaining a "safe" and critically dialogic space drives home the crux of critical media pedagogies and demonstrated how teachers and students "make the

road by walking" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 3) through a literacy praxis that cultivates critical consciousness (Freire, 1970, p. 74). Teachers demonstrated the crux of critical media literacy education--that education is indeed political and demands innovative pedagogical responses that guide students to critically analyze and respond to media and popular culture as prepared civic actors to meet the complex challenges presented by fraught governmental systems, the depths of white supremacy and settler colonialism, and a helm of identity-based injustices that requires an all hands-on and minds-on political education.

Implications

This research study extends valuable implications for subsequent critical media literacy education research, theory, practice, and policies. First, this study emphasized the importance of conducting a critical qualitative research collective case study that centered the experiential wisdom and professional expertise of practitioners in the field in secondary English and social studies settings. Rather than providing a sole focus on what practices teachers incorporated, a focus on what informs teachers' critical lenses highlights important understandings responsive to long-standing misconceptions within the field of media literacy education regarding acritical and critical perspectives. Ultimately, this research advances the benefits of teachers' embodiments of critical social theories and their experiential wisdom rooted in their identities that drives their practices of critical media literacy. Hence, I recommend that further studies with teachers and teacher educators from varying identities, grade-levels, disciplines, and geographic locations are implemented to provide a fuller portraiture of what informs, guides, and sustains their practices as critical media literacy pedagogues on a longitudinal level. Additionally, one coherent but inconclusive theme centered on equity, funding, training. Teachers regularly expressed concern related to these issues, however further studies are needed to build consensus on resource

174

allocation. Nonetheless, it is crucial to magnify the voices and expertise of educators as central to growing the field and practical applications of critical media literacy education. Lastly, students' perspectives could also greatly contribute to subsequent developments of critical media literacy pedagogies and considerations around potential trauma-informed post-pandemic pedagogies.

Moreover, this study's focus on teachers' embodiments and practices of critical media literacy provides important considerations for building on Kellner and Share's (2019) multiperspectival approach. More specifically, the incorporation of Four Ethnic Studies Tenets (McGovern & Buenavista, 2016), "Four 'I's' of Oppression" (Fund, 2010), and Yosso's (2005) Community and Cultural Wealth Model, among other critical social theories to make examinations of racist media, popular culture, and systemic injustice a stronger focus in the ongoing struggle for racial justice and in critical solidarity with interlocutors in the field of Critical Race Theories of Education. Additionally, teachers' strident focus on community-building and harnessing critical pedagogies expands critical media literacy as a trauma-informed pedagogy which also offers important directions for the future of the field in more aptly prioritizing critical media literacy as a tool for self and social healing and wellness.

This study provided several highly contextual examples that transmitted complex critical media literacy theories into classroom practice through frequent scaffolded exercises using critical media analysis and production. However, the range of exercises demonstrates the importance of non-prescriptive forms of critical media literacy pedagogies and ideas which provide opportunities for other teachers to create their own culturally relevant exercises in alignment with their students' sociocultural contexts. Seldomly does existing literature reflect on the practices critical media literacy pedagogues use to co-create transformative communities rooted in an intersectional focus and prioritize consensus building with a commitment to critical

solidarity. However, explorations of teachers' critical rather than acritical lenses provide important context and observations that demonstrate how imperative it is to critically reflect on one's positionality and commitment to co-creating social justice education that is unapologetic, grounded in a political praxis, and ultimately dedicated to emboldening the power of teachers and youth as critical actors to actualize new democratic futures.

Lastly, while each of these teachers demonstrated their avowed commitment to critical media literacy education and advancing the goals of social justice, teachers each happened upon their exposure to critical lenses either through a unique teacher education program that featured coursework in critical media literacy or in Arlen's case, through a chance meeting in the field. As demonstrated in the literature review, there still is not a statewide policy in the U.S. that incorporates critical media literacy in K-12 education. While media literacy education policies are passing in fragmented ways in the U.S., it is clear that there needs to be a greater attention to incorporating critical media literacy education at the classroom-level. The movement for critical media literacy education around the world persists, and hopefully the more that a centering of teachers' stories and practices of critical media literacy are shared in the U.S. and abroad at town halls and school board legislations in tandem with other interlocking forms of critical education, there can be a stronger attention to the potency and possibilities that critical media literacy education offers for deconstructing and reconstructing systemic and ideological forms of injustice in favor of critical solidarity, healing, and justice.

Limitations and Future Research

The chief limitation of this study was the restriction on classroom observations during the COVID-19 pandemic. This also limited the study's access to students' lived reactions to critical media literacy education. Also, for the sake of examining rich accounts of critical pedagogical

applications, the participant pool was limited to specific grade levels, subject areas, and geographic locations. This creates significant opportunities for future studies, including studies from a classroom-embedded perspective. An embedded study would offer insights into the real-time emotional affects which arise from the critical analysis of students' lifeworlds. Another area of the utmost importance for study would center stories of students' usage of critical media literacy practices in their own lives. There is also an enormous opportunity to conduct a similar study beyond the California context, both at the United States and multinational levels. Additionally, similar research across grade bands with attention to age-appropriate adaptations will be enlightening for the field of critical media literacy as a whole.

After having built strong rapport and collaborative partnerships with each of the teachers in this study, I intend to conduct a follow-up study with them. This will lead to a longitudinal study that builds on the research questions and findings from this dissertation. The follow-up study will include a similar methodological approach but will expand the methods to incorporate extensive classroom observations so that teachers' practices can be seen in real time with students.

Conclusion

This critical qualitative collective case study demonstrated how four secondary teachers' embodiments (ways of being) and practices (ways of doing) converged to implement critical media literacy at the classroom-level in California amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers revealed that indeed, critical media literacy does espouse a way of being that is rooted in their personal histories, identities, formative experiences and exposure to critical lenses. Their stories reflect the possibilities of critical media literacy as a way of life that enables a transformative worldview and endeavors to harness a critical engagement with media, popular culture, their

177

roles as teachers, and informed critical actors in society. Additionally, teachers demonstrated the power of co-constructing community-building in the wake of social and racial violence, a public health emergency, and ongoing struggles for human rights made more visible through information communication technologies. Through an array of critical media analysis and production exercises, they brought complex critical social theories into classroom practice that challenged the relationship between media and audiences, information, and power. They revealed how critical media literacy can be a crucial toolkit to adapt in the moment to help deconstruct some of the most complex and unprecedented sociopolitical challenges facing our democracy. Ultimately, this is a call-to-action for teachers, students, and anyone committed to the pursuit of cultivating a radical self and social consciousness that responds to the burgeoning quest to "become more fully human" (Freire, 1970, p. 55) on the path to liberation.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Exploration of Secondary Teachers' Embodiments and Practices of Critical Media Literacy Recruitment Email

Hello [Teacher Name],

My name is Andrea Gambino and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California, Los Angeles. Currently, I am developing my dissertation study and am seeking teacher collaborators who self-identify as critical media literacy pedagogues. More specifically, I am passionate about exploring how teachers come to their work as critical media literacy pedagogues and how they relay complex critical media literacy theories into pedagogical processes as practitioners. Part of this exploration also intends to observe examples from teachers using lesson walkthroughs to better understand how teachers are currently practicing critical media literacy during COVID-19 and the remote learning context.

I received your contact information from Drs. [Professor Name] and [Professor Name] who discussed they have partnered with you formerly to help bring critical media literacy into classroom practice. This study ultimately will help other teachers who are beginning with or deepening their practices of critical media literacy.

If you agree to engage in this study, you would be asked to participate in a 60-90 minute interview on Zoom that could take place in one session or in three sessions depending on your preferences and at a day/time or multiple days/times that would work best for your schedule. The interview would include discussions about your journeys to CML, how you are thinking about critical media literacy theories and relaying those into practice, and a lesson or activity-based walkthrough using an example or examples from your classroom. You will also be asked to

provide the lesson or activities you demonstrate, among any other examples, and teacher artifacts (e.g., photographs, videos, and student work samples, etc.) that you might like to include that contain elements of how you teach critical media literacy.

If you would like to volunteer or would like additional information about this study, please email Andrea Gambino at algambin@g.ucla.edu. Agreement to be contacted or a request for more information does not obligate you to participate in this study.

Thank you sincerely for your time and consideration to support this study.

With Gratitude,

Andrea Gambino, M.Ed.

University of California, Los Angeles

Appendix B

Semi-structured Three-series Interview (Adapted from Seidman, 2013)

Part I: Teachers' Lifeworlds and Influences Towards Critical Media Literacy

1. Can you please share your name as well as your pronouns if you are comfortable?

2. I want to talk with you a bit about your lived experiences and teacher training.

   a. Could you describe your informal teacher training? For example, this might include non-college or non-university training. Or, life experiences that you believe have helped shape you as a teacher, your self-identification as well as your work as a critical media literacy pedagogue today? For instance, this might include any familial, community level or cultural influences among other lived experiences, self-studies, and/or activist work.

   b. Could you describe your formal teacher training? For example, this might involve college, university-level coursework, teacher education programs, advanced degrees or certification programs, professional development experiences, professional learning teams, teachers or professors. Or, perhaps any other experiences, courses, teachers/professors, that have helped shape your self-identification as well as your work as a critical media literacy pedagogue?

   c. Optional probing question: Who and/or what inspired you to become a critical media literacy practitioner?

3. How long have you been teaching and in what contexts? For example, K-12, post-secondary, formal and/or informal settings, and which geographic locations.

4. What school district and school are you currently teaching at?

a. Optional probing question: Is there any additional context you would like to provide about your school district or school site that you feel is important to understand in relation to your journey as critical media literacy practitioner or that impacts your teaching practices? If so, what?

5. What subjects and grade levels are you currently supporting?

a. Optional probing question: Is there any additional information you would like to provide about the subjects and grade levels or students you are supporting that you feel is important contextually in relation to your practices as critical media literacy pedagogue?

6. Can you describe your journey to critical media literacy? For example, who or what inspired or influenced you to learn and practice critical media literacy with students? Who/what informs or guides your practices today?

a. Optional probing question: When did you first learn about critical media literacy? Where or from who/what do you draw inspiration or guidance for your critical media literacy practices currently? For example, other educators; coursework; self-studies; partnering with students, activists, teacher affinity groups, lived experiences, family, other scholars or bodies of work, etc.?

Part II: Ideating Critical Media Literacy Theories into Practice

7. How do you define or describe critical media literacy as a theory?

8. How do you define or describe critical media literacy as a practice?

9. Optional probing question: If you were to help support another teacher who is just beginning their journey with critical media literacy, how would you describe it to them as

both a theory and practice? Are there any examples you might use when discussing critical media literacy with fellow practitioners? If so, what/how/why?

10. Optional probing question: What disconnects do you observe among critical media literacy theories and practices?

Part III: Demonstrating Critical Media Literacy in Practice

11. Is there a lesson or exercise you could describe that demonstrates an example of how you integrated critical media literacy with students in your classroom context?

12. Would you still be comfortable providing a walkthrough of a lesson, lessons, or exercises that demonstrates critical media literacy in practice?

    a. Optional probing question: How, if at all, do you use critical media literacy to address issues related to social, racial, and/or environmental justice in the classroom?

    b. Optional probing question: How, if at all, do you use critical media literacy to bring in multiple perspectives in the classroom? Are there any units or lesson examples that come to mind? If so, what/how?

    c. Optional probing question: How, if at all, do you use critical media literacy to situate student-centered learning, rather than sit-and-get-instruction (i.e., direct teaching)? Could you describe how you initiate and maintain this process?

    d. Optional probing question: How, if at all, does critical media literacy assist you with addressing societal issues (i.e., such as: identity-based or environmental) happening in real life that impact students?

e. Optional probing question: How do you guide students to challenge the relationships among audiences, media, information, systems, and ideas that are normalized in society and reproduce hierarchies of power?

f. Optional probing question: How, if at all, does critical media literacy analysis and/or production play a role in your classroom practice? If this occurs in your classroom, are there any pedagogical scaffolds you have found useful to guide students with this process? If so, what/how?

g. Optional probing question: If you are comfortable, could you share how, if at all, you have adapted your critical media literacy practices during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., as shaped by shifting to the remote context as well as to account for the ongoing pursuit of social, racial, and environmental justice)? *Note: If the teacher feels discomfort discussing this context, use the following optional probing question below.

    i. Optional probing question: Could you discuss how your critical media literacy practices, curricular, and pedagogical design have evolved over time? Are there any examples that you feel demonstrate this that you would like to share?

h. Optional probing question: Are there any ways that you adapt your critical media literacy practices with students' age-ranges, cultural backgrounds, and/or sociopolitical experiences in mind? If so, how?

i. Optional probing question: Were there any guiding frameworks or question sets you used with students to guide critical media analysis or production? If so, what/how?

13. Are there any areas of the lesson or exercise that you just walked us through that you feel went particularly well to deepen students' critical media literacy understanding and skills? If so, what/why/how?

14. Are there any expansions that you would like to make to this critical media literacy lesson or exercise? If so, what/why/how?

15. What sustains you as a critical media literacy practitioner?

16. What, if any, barriers do you face as a critical media literacy practitioner? What do you think could be most beneficial to help reduce some of these challenges?

17. What recommendations do you have for teachers who are newcomers to critical media literacy or for folks who have been implementing critical media literacy for a while in their classrooms?

18. What support do you think would be beneficial for you and the students you teach as you continue to use critical media literacy in the classroom? Are there any district-level or nationwide strategies that you think could be useful at the policy-level or in terms of professional development for yourself as a critical media literacy practitioner and/or more broadly for other current or future critical media literacy pedagogues? If so, what/why/how?

19. What do you hope for the future of critical media literacy in terms of research/practice? What work do you feel has yet to be done?

20. Is there anything else you would like to share?

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