EFFECTIVE CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY PEDAGOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

TURNING SOCIAL JUSTICE THEORY INTO PRACTICE

A Dissertation submitted to the faculty of

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In partial fulfillment of

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Doctor of Education

In

Educational Leadership

by

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I certify that I have read Effective Critical Media Literacy Pedagogy in Higher Education: Turning Social Justice Theory into Practice by Nolan Ray Higdon, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at San Francisco State University.

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EFFECTIVE CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY PEDAGOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

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2017

This mixed methods dissertation explores the application of critical media literacy pedagogy in higher education. A review of the scholarly literature found that there are five hypothesized outcomes of a critical media literacy education: student engagement, empowerment, civic engagement, critical awareness of media, and adoption of a social justice agenda. The study then explored whether these outcomes were achieved in eleven classrooms (one community college, four public universities, and two private universities) across the United States. It was found that the outcomes of a critical media literacy pedagogy are likely to be achieved in college classrooms that: (1) have an engaging and inspiring instructor; (2) offer a critical perspective on media; (3) discuss issues of inequality and oppression; (4) provide space for student participation; (5) rely on contemporary content and tools; and (6) cover materials that discuss resistance and activism.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this dissertation.

Chair, Dissertation Committee

Date

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Chapter One: Purpose of The Study

Introduction

Former Federal Communications Commission Chair Nicholas Johnson (2007) wrote, “Whatever is your first priority...your second priority has to be media reform. With it you at least have a chance of accomplishing your first priority. Without it, you don't have a prayer” (p. i). Johnson sought to convince his readers that they would not be able to raise awareness about contemporary problems or offer effective solutions without a deep understanding of media. Johnson’s plea illuminates the powerful role media plays in the 21st century political economy.

Due to the centrality of media in contemporary society, equity is likely to be achieved only if citizens have access to an education that enables students to develop a critical awareness of media. Critical media literacy education is a component of a social justice-based pedagogy that seeks to engage and empower students for the 21st century political economy through developing a critical awareness of media. Critical media literacy scholars argue that a critical approach is important because it can enable students to question issues of power, including who creates and consumes media (Yousman, 2016). Kellner and Share (2007) describe critical media literacy:

Critical media literacy expands the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication and popular culture as well as deepens the potential of education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences,

information and power. It involves cultivating skills in analyzing media codes and conventions, abilities to criticize stereotypes, dominant values, and ideologies, and competencies to interpret the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts.

Critical media literacy can be a component of any course that adopts a critical view of media, literacy, or communication processes. Scholars have suggested that the outcomes of an effective critical media literacy education are increased student engagement (Black, 2009), critical awareness of media (Rodesiler, 2010; Torres & Mercado, 2006), civic engagement (Kellner & Share, 2007), empowerment (Frechette, 2005; Gainer, 2010), and adoption of a social justice agenda (Kellner & Share, 2007).

Due to the centrality of media in contemporary society, access to digital tools is increasingly necessary for equitable participation in the 21st century political economy (Barnes, Marateo, & Ferris, 2007; Brabazon, 2013; Kautiainen, Koivusilta, Lintonen, Virtanen, & Rimpelä, 2005). Consumers in the 21st century, especially college students, increasingly depend upon digital tools and media for their information, perspectives, and evidence. The US education system, however, has not provided students with the skills to navigate, evaluate, and equitably participate in their media saturated society (Kellner & Share, 2007; White & Walker, 2007). This problem is compounded by the digital divide—inequitable access to the Internet and digital tools. In the US, about 50% of Latina/os and African Americans have access to the Internet and digital tools compared to 66% of Whites (Soltan 2016; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010). In terms of

income, only 62% of households earning less than \$30,000 a year used the internet compared to 90% of households who make over \$50,000 (Soltan 2016).

Even those students who do have access to the Internet and digital technologies are not being taught the skills to navigate, evaluate, and equitably participate in the 21st century political economy. The lack of media literacy skills is dangerous because media can act as a hegemonic force (Herman & Chomsky, 2010; Torres & Mercado, 2006). Yet it also has the potential to empower individuals to challenge power structures (Fuchs, 2011). Scholars argue that providing students with a critical media literacy education can lessen the dangers posed by media while offering students the skills to be equal participants in the 21st-century political economy (Kellner & Share, 2007). Critical media education is not widely offered in institutions of higher education. As a result, there are few empirical studies that investigate the extent to which hypothesized critical media literacy learning outcomes are actualized. Scholars therefore do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes effective critical media literacy pedagogy in higher education (Kellner & Share, 2007; White & Walker, 2007).

Purpose of Study

This mixed-methods sequential explanatory study seeks to offer an understanding of an effective critical media literacy education, and a strategy for its implementation by educational leaders in institutions of higher learning. The study has the potential to enable colleges and universities to produce educators, who can in turn educate students to be

equal participants in the 21st century political economy. The study addresses two overarching research questions:

- What constitutes a satisfactory level of “implementation” for critical media literacy pedagogy?
- How are the desired outcomes of effective critical media literacy met in higher education?

Data collection procedures employed in the study included student surveys and interviews, classroom observations, faculty interviews, review of course and campus documents, and mini-ethnographies conducted at participating institutions. The study has equity implications for educational leaders. It seeks to create a plan for recognizing and implementing effective methods for closing achievement and opportunity gaps through a critical media literacy education

Problem Statement

The accuracy, value, and purposes of media messages are heavily impacted by the media that disseminate them. The term *media* has expanded in the last several decades to include messages produced by a range of electronic and digital technologies. Each piece of technology is a “complex sociomaterial phenomenon” resulting from “distinct human and institutional efforts” (Gillespie, Boczkowski, & Foot, 2014, p.1). Each medium disseminates messages constructed especially for that medium in order to best reach media consumers (Elleström, 2014). McLuhan (1965) argued “the medium is the

message,” suggesting that each new technology has a unique way of delivering messages that are conducive to its existence. Television, for example, is a medium dependent upon advertising revenues (Streeter, 1996); thus the messages and values that television disseminates are designed to meet the needs of advertisers (Dávila, 2012). Media messages have the ability to alter power relations via depictions of people and events (Postman & Weingartner, 1969). Postman (1985) warned that the manner in which individuals accept these messages without critical thought enables the messages to act as control mechanisms. Kellner and Share (2007) argued that “It is highly irresponsible in the face of saturation by the Internet and media culture to ignore these forms of socialization and education (p. 4).”

The current college student body is made up largely of the millennial generation, those born between 1982 and 2004. Unlike previous generations, millennials appear to rely largely upon television and the Internet for their information and entertainment, rather than newspapers. As a result, newspaper readership among adults aged 18 to 24 dropped from 64% in 2008 to 54% in 2009 (Higdon, 2014). Postman (1985) argued that this shift is problematic, because while print relies on rational argument, television relies on entertainment. News consumption patterns changed again with the advent of the Internet. A 2013 poll found that three in four 18 to 29 year olds gather their news strictly from the Internet (Higdon, 2014). In the same poll, those over 50 years of age report receiving their news at a scheduled time every day, while millennials seem to “graze” for news throughout the day.

Researchers report that citizens' behaviors and values can be dramatically altered by electronic and digital technologies. In just under two centuries, individuals have altered their behavior and attitudes with each new form of communication, from the telegraph to the tablet (Alvarado, Gutch, & Wollen, 1987; Asselin & Doiron, 2008; Buonanno, 2008; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Grabill & Hicks, 2005; Hobbs, 1998; Hobbs & Jensen, 2009; Moody, 1999; Orndorff, 1921; Postman, 1985; Seattler, 2004; Wehmeyer, 2000). By the late 1990s, researchers were finding that average Americans spent twice as much time watching television as they did talking with family or spending time with their children. Most US citizens watched 70 days of television a year; 25% fell asleep to it and 40% watched television while eating (Silverblatt, 2007). In 2015, Nielsen, a media statistics company, found that US citizens over the age of 18 consume media 11 hours a day on average. This is sobering, considering that the average person is awake 16 to 18 hours a day (Brown, 2015). The use—or over use—of electronic devices has dramatically altered human behavior. The use of electronic devices, in fact, has been linked to the decreasing attention span of US citizens (Barnes, Marateo, & Ferris, 2007), sedentary lifestyle and obesity (Kautiainen, Koivusilta, Lintonen, Virtanen, & Rimpelä, 2005), and desire for instant gratification (Brabazon, 2013).

Dangers. One danger posed by an overdependence on digital technologies is their capacity to undermine the democratic process. It is argued that the strength of a democracy depends upon voters making well-informed decisions (Milner, 2002). Yet researchers suggest that the increased monopolization of media outlets by a small number

of corporate conglomerates has limited the potential for a healthy democracy in the US because many voters only have access to homogenous news stories and perspectives (Thrift, 2014). In the 1980s, 50 corporations owned 90% of television, print, and radio media; today six US-based transnational corporations own and operate those outlets (Lutz, 2012; Bagdikian, 2014; Morrison, 2011). McChesney (2013) found that the Internet's promise of diversifying available perspectives in electronic media appears increasingly unlikely, as the same small number of corporate monopolies dominate the majority of available Internet news sites. The same sites re-post and aggregate articles from the six corporations that own 90% of traditional media (Baker, 2013; Bagdikian, 2014; McChesney, 1999). Pariser (2011) argues that search engines reinforce, rather than challenge, people's beliefs. This is because corporations that operate search engines, like Google, AOL, Facebook, and ABC News, personalize searches based around past search history. Thus, those surfing the web are led to stories that reinforce their pre-existing perspectives (Phillips & Huff, 2010). Collectively, this points to a homogenous media system providing a narrow view of the world.

Some argue that the contemporary media consolidation has resulted in the supremacy of hegemonic, neoliberal discourses that seek to persuade the public to support policy initiatives that privilege corporate profit margins over the common good (Phelan, 2014). Neo-liberal policies seek to extend the control of the private sector in public life through the promotion of "free" trade, open markets, deregulation, and reductions in government spending. Artz (2015) suggests that corporate media are often

mistaken as apolitical, though they contain “cultural values, social norms, and political ideology” (p. 4). Media reflect the interests of the hegemonic culture by implying which social issues, individuals, and groups are important (Bindig, 2008). Researchers report that the hegemony of media results in a media culture that: targets children, among others, with advertisements (Frechette, 2005); limits political coverage to two dominant political parties in a nation of 300 million people (Medina, 2012; Wemple, 2013); and marginalizes and ostracizes the working class, people of color, and women (Falk, 2010: Masterman & Mariet, 1994). Frechette (2005) asserts that the corporate media monopoly has allowed politicians to continue to endorse neo-liberal national policies by manipulating public opinion. The public mistakenly believes that national policies and legislation come about as a result of the democratic process because capitalist policies and neo-liberal values are packaged, disseminated, and legitimized to the public as “mainstream” (Frechette, 2005).

Scholars argue that the hegemonic function of neo-liberal discourses in media is promulgated by a reliance on advertising funds. The Internet and related digital technologies have also developed a more subtle dependence upon advertising than television did in the past. Turow (2007, 2008) suggests that the difference in advertising between the 20th and 21st century is that contemporary advertisers are abandoning global advertising and are focusing on data-driven, individually focused advertising. Internet-based advertising now exploits data and new technologies through segmented appeals that provide consumers with a false feeling of belonging. Blades, Oates, Blumberg, and

Gunter (2014) write that new targeted, Internet-based advertising technologies promote unhealthy items such as fattening foods and unhealthy, violent behavior. Thus, it appears that new Internet technologies have only changed the surface nature—though not the underlying hegemonic function—of media.

Scholars argue that the media's dependence on profits is responsible for its inability to provide useful and accurate information to voters (Herman & Chomsky, 2010; McLeod, Glynn, & McDonald, 1983; Pinkleton, Austin, & Fortman, 1998; Turow, 2007; Tungate, 2007). Some profits are generated by powerful guests on programs, and media outlets are therefore required to maintain strong relationships with individuals in power (Phillips & Huff, 2009). For example, in 2014, MSNBC reporter Chuck Todd, moderator of the influential "Meet The Press" program, admitted that he sometimes avoids posing tough questions to guests (Left of Center, 2014). Todd explained that if he challenges guests too often, they may not return. This could cause his ratings to drop or his show to be cancelled. Todd's admission illuminates how mainstream media reporting may therefore serve—as much as challenge—those in power (Left of Center, 2014). Similarly, researchers argue that corporate media outlets receive heavy investments from the Democratic and Republican Parties in exchange for favorable reporting about their parties and policies (Medina, 2012; Wemple, 2013).

Another danger posed by the media monopoly is its potential to disempower students through portrayals of social justice-oriented movements. For instance, researchers found that mainstream media reporting of the 2011 Occupy movement (*Fair*

and Accuracy in Reporting, 2011; Tady, 2011) and the 2014 Black Lives Matter movement (Huff & Roth, 2015) was generally negative. Negatively framed reporting can disempower students by characterizing mass resistance as futile and socially problematic. Some scholars argue that independent news media can be more empowering for students than corporate media. There are many independent news media outlets, often termed “alternative media,” which operate on foundation and small donor funding (Huff & Roth, 2015). Although not all of the media outlets that are referred to as “alternative media,” perform the same level of fact based reporting, Fuchs (2011) argues that some fact based alternative media can have a more democratizing potential than corporate media.

Education. Other nations outside the US have responded to the dangers posed by new media technologies with changes in their education and curriculum. Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and several Asian countries began offering media education to their own students several decades ago (Cheung, 2009; Hobbs & Frost, 2003). Educators in those countries believed that schools should provide students with the skills and knowledge to navigate the increasingly mediated world. In part, their work has been in response to global media domination of US-controlled conglomerates. In the US, however, media literacy courses are offered on only a scattered basis. Only about 50-60% of US high school students, for instance, are ever taught to critique the trustworthiness of Internet sources. That number is 7-15% for college students (Kahne, Feezell, & Lee, 2012). Less than twenty percent of middle school students can delineate between a news story and sponsored story. Less than one-third can identify the implicit bias in an article

they are reading (Shellenbarger, 2016). A 2015 Pew Research Study found that millennials have levels of trust in television news sources on par with the previous generation (Mitchell, Gottfried & Matsa, 2015). Thus, despite the documented problems posed by media, this knowledge does not appear to be internalized by US citizens. In the US, few millennial college students are taught how to evaluate, create, or critique the media that they rely upon on an ever-increasing basis.

Even the relatively limited media education curriculum that is offered in the US is seen by some critics as problematic, because much of it is created by the same corporations that often control corporate media. A great deal of the US corporate-sponsored media literacy curriculum tends to focus on teaching students how to employ rather than how to critique digital technologies (Kellner & Share, 2007). For example, Sony provides educators with print materials that suggest educators teach students how to use digital tools (Sony, 2009). Similarly, the digital giant Apple has an entire wing of its corporate headquarters called “Apple Distinguished Educators,” which is dedicated to creating and advertising products for media literacy educators (Apple, 2015). Following Apple’s lead, Microsoft founder Bill Gates had The Gates Foundation channel millions of dollars to help shape the media education component of the recently developed US Common Core State Standards (Gewertz, 2013). Yet the strong presence of Microsoft, Sony, and Apple in the classroom does not educate students about the problems of media or help them develop a critical perspective. Instead, this primarily familiarizes students

with corporate media and technology products and makes them more dependent upon the products of those corporations (Bledsoe & Pilgrim, 2014; Postman 1993, 2011).

Yet new technologies do have the potential to empower students to create media content and interfaces that challenge corporate domination (Jenkins, 2006). Creating media without using corporate tools and software can offer the opportunity for such innovation. This is because corporate-made software can limit particular functions because corporations will not pay developer royalties for those functions. In response to corporate limitations, an open-source software movement has evolved, creating free software such as Linux, Apache, and Gnome (Shah, 2006). The open-source software movement is a threat to media corporations because it represents a free alternative to their products. It is therefore often left out of corporate-sponsored media education.

Although critical media literacy education aims to promote a critical awareness of media, undermine the dangers posed by media monopolies, and empower students to address social justice-oriented goals, it is not yet clear how to achieve the goals of such an education in the classroom (Kellner & Share, 2007). Critical media literacy pedagogy is difficult to implement because educators do not have a strong shared understanding of what constitutes an “effective” pedagogy in this discipline. Educators attempting to implement critical media literacy education in colleges and universities are also reported to face barriers that include institutional resistance to expanding the definition of literacy (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000); faculty resistance to shifting pedagogies (Lapp, Wolsey, Fisher, & Frey, 2011); lack of the necessary and expensive resources for teaching critical

media education (Hart & Suss, 2002); absence of a universally accepted definition of “literacy” in the field (Livingstone, 2004); and elitism among academics who see “entertainment media” and popular culture in the classroom as a form of dumbing down education (Silverblatt, 2007). Contemporary US educational policy also focuses on standardization and measurement of success, while media literacy is difficult to measure, and does not always fit easily into contemporary syllabi (Arke & Primack, 2009).

Leadership, Justification and Equity Implications

The study has equity implications in that its findings have the potential to offer responses to opportunity and achievement gaps. As the 21st century political economy relies increasingly on digital tools and technologies, some authors suggest that due to the centrality of media in contemporary society, shrinking the digital divide and providing students with a critical media education will help schools close opportunity and achievement gaps (Irvine, 2010; Noll, Older-Aguilar, Rosston, & Ross, 2000; Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008). The goal of this study is to provide educational leaders with a set of hiring goals that can contribute to lessening the digital divide and the resources to develop educators who can teach a 21st century-relevant education. This goal is addressed by identifying how critical media literacy can provide non-traditional and marginalized students with equitable access to the 21st century political economy (Howard, 2012; Naiditch, 2013; Wilmot, Begoray, & Banister, 2014; White, 2015).

In order to achieve equity, many assert that educational leaders need to act to close achievement and opportunity gaps. The term achievement gap “refers to outputs—

the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results and benefits” (Opportunity Gap, 2013). Although critical, the achievement gap notion is limited, because it focuses on a narrow scope of individual communities’ educational outcomes, while ignoring structural causal factors (Carter & Welner, 2013). Thus, some authors also point out the need to address opportunity gaps. The term opportunity gap refers to “inputs—the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities” (Opportunity Gap, 2013). Educational and intergenerational economic inequalities have high correlations with race, class, ethnicity, and language (Carter & Welner, 2013). The longer that marginalized communities face inequities in opportunity, the more the adverse effects of those inequalities are compounded. It becomes increasingly difficult to rectify these inequalities in future generations (Carter & Welner, 2013).

Although the purpose of a public education, dating back to the education advocate Horace Mann in the 19th century, is said to be to create equitable opportunities for all US citizens, schooling is often identified as a central factor that shapes opportunity gaps, and schools often act to transmit and reinforce inequity. The high school graduation rate for all US students is 78%, yet for African Americans and Latinos it is 66.1% and 71.4% respectively (Carter & Welner, 2013). Similarly, on average, while one in ten students overall will fail a grade in K-12 education, this figure is doubled for African Americans (Carter & Welner, 2013). Thus, K-12 education in the US produces inequitable outcomes that disproportionately impact students of color. These inequitable outcomes also have a negative impact on the national economy. Closing gaps by a third would save \$50 billion

fiscally and \$200 billion from a social perspective (in areas such as reduced incarceration). These savings could be put toward expanding the \$570 billion spent in the US on K-12 education (Carter & Welner, 2013).

The digital divide—inequitable access to digital resources—further contributes to achievement and opportunity gaps (DeWitt, 2007; Irvine, 2010; McChesney, 2013; Noll, Older-Aguilar, Rosston, & Ross, 2000; Stoddard, 2014). By the mid-21st century, without careful strategies to address these gaps, African Americans and Latinos are likely to face fewer opportunities in the political economy than other groups (Carter & Welner, 2013). Some researchers warn that mandating the use of new technologies in schools has the potential to widen the gaps (Goode, 2010; Hendricks, Hendricks, Murnen, Cochran, & Nickoli, 2007) because it could privilege students who are media literate (Duncan, 2013; Hargittai, 2003, 2010; Norris, 2001). As a consequence, students from marginalized communities require not only equitable access to digital tools and the internet, but also a media education.

The digital divide is said to prevent marginalized communities from becoming media literate (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010). A lack of media literacy educators and digital resources can prevent those students who do have access to digital tools from attaining 21st century relevant literacies (Cheung, 2009; Hobbs & Frost, 2003). This is problematic because literacy has long been recognized as a pathway to freedom and equity in the US (Perry, 2003). Literacy in the digital age is a political act that enables students not just to read and write (Freire, 1970;1972;1981; Perry, 2003), but to “re-read

and ultimately re-write the world” (Morrell, Duenas, Garcia, & Lopez, 2013, p. 5). It is a form of praxis for newly literate students to exert their power in the world.

Some researchers have incorrectly assumed that it is simply access to technology that will enable students to exercise agency in the 21st century political economy (Vigdor & Ladd, 2010; Shirky, 2008). Other studies have found that digital technologies may actually worsen the achievement gap because less affluent students are more likely to use digital tools at school for drills and assessment, whereas affluent students are encouraged to be more creative in their use of the tools (Paul, 2014). Thus, classroom access to digital tools alone is unlikely to produce agency. Agency is only exercised when people become literate with new tools. According to Ladson-Billings (2005), the United States established an inextricable link between literacy and power early in its history by outlawing reading and writing for enslaved Africans. She states, “literacy is deeply embedded in our ideas of humanity and citizenship; one must be human to be literate and literate to be a citizen” (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 135). There is a long tradition in African American history of figures such as Frederick Douglass and others identifying the relationship between literacy and freedom (Perry, 2003). It may thus be argued that equitable participation in the 21st century political economy still requires high levels of different types of literacies (Alvermann, 2001; Morrell, Duenas, Garcia, & Lopez, 2013).

Multiple researchers have argued that students need to be media literate in the 21st century in order to challenge the inequalities justified and normalized by the hegemony of corporate media narratives. Rather than discuss the relationship between the corporate

state and the economic and political challenges faced by people of color, television often depicts them as criminals who are unemployed by choice (Castells, 1989; Huff & Roth, 2015; Littlefield, 2008; Page, 1997; Wilson, Guiterres, & Chao, 2003). This pattern, in turn, contributes to shaping a population often uninformed on issues of racism. As evidence of this, recent studies have reported that a majority of millennials no longer see race as a barrier to economic accomplishment (Alexander, 2012; Bouie, 2014; Huff & Roth, 2015). Other researchers report that sexist attitudes derive from television shows, advertising, and music videos (Blades, Oates, Blumberg, & Gunter, 2014; Ward 2003); that media marginalize female politicians by covering them less than their male counterparts (Falk, 2010); and that media narratives broadly reinforce structures of inequality, thus limiting women from being equal participants in society (Meehan & Riordan, 2002). Researchers also indicate that corporate media justify economic inequality through accounts that negatively characterize the poor and working class (Bettie, 1995; Kendall, 2011).

Other researchers have argued that students need to be media literate in the 21st century in order to challenge the labor inequities and human rights abuses justified by the hegemony of corporate media narratives and portrayals. Corporate-sponsored media education that is available in the US normalizes the use of tools made through processes that often exploit workers. Students who use Apple products in the classroom, for instance, are inundated with positive imagery of Apple products. Yet they are not encouraged to develop a critical perspective on the social inequities caused by Apple's

labor practices at manufacturing sites. At Apple's FoxConn subcontractor factory located in China, laborers were so overworked and underpaid that some committed suicide by jumping from the building. FoxConn responded by putting up a net to deter jumpers rather than dealing with underlying workplace issues (Cooper, 2013). Apple is not alone in these human rights abuses; other corporations such as Nintendo and Microsoft also had employees working at FoxConn. Similarly, Sony's student interns at FoxConn had to work overnight shifts making PlayStation 4s in order to graduate from college/high school (Tsukayama, 2013).

This study seeks to identify effective teaching methods to support literacy development among non-traditional and marginalized students for the 21st century political economy. Researchers report that a critical media education can provide an absent component of a media literacy education: culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. A culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy is necessary to engage and empower students for success. Culture encompasses many things, including "values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns" (Gay, 2002). An effective critical media education is informed by critical race theory (CRT) and culturally responsive pedagogies, which have the potential to close the achievement and opportunity gaps by creating opportunities for non-traditional and marginalized students (Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps & Waff, 2007; Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008; Howard, 2012; Naiditch, 2013; Wilmot, Begoray, & Banister, 2014). It

is argued that such an education can intervene to illuminate strategies that counter the media's role in shaping racial inequality (Ladson - Billings, 2009).

Scholars report that a critical media literacy education not only makes students aware of inequities and abuses, but also promotes equity through civic engagement (Kellner & Share, 2007). Just as access to digital tools does not promote equity unless students are literate in those tools, access to democracy does not promote equity unless students are literate in how to operate within a democracy. Currently, fewer than 20% of states in the US mandate that students be assessed in civics before they graduate from high school (Huffington Post, 2012), and few of those tested are students of color (Kahne, & Middaugh, 2008). This study will offer a starting point for building civic engagement among marginalized communities. Civic engagement refers individuals "promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes" (Ehrlich, 2000). When provided with the classroom space to become civically engaged, it is reported that "poor communities in the United States and abroad, utilize agency and self-determination to make healthy choices and participate in civic engagement and sometimes radical and revolutionary change" (Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008, p. 2).

The study also has equity implications for educational leaders. It seeks to move them beyond abstract leadership theories and top-down, standardized educational policies toward adopting a praxis that addresses opportunity and achievement gaps. There are countless books, programs, and studies available on leadership theories and practices, but

little evidence of how to attain leadership effectiveness (Pfeffer, 2015). The study will provide data for educational leaders to use to identify and train educators in a critical media literacy pedagogy that can responsibly lessen the digital divide while reducing opportunity and achievement gaps.

Conclusion

This study seeks to equip educational leaders with a series of methods , mainly focused on hiring practices, for providing students with the skills and knowledge to recognize and challenge the negative influences of mainstream corporate media.

Supporters of critical media literacy education argue that it promotes a critical awareness of media, undermines the dangers posed by media monopolies, and promotes equity through a social justice agenda (Kellner & Share, 2007). Although critical media literacy education articulates theoretical goals for addressing these problems, it remains unclear how to achieve those goals. The study focuses on addressing two overarching research questions:

- What constitutes a satisfactory level of “implementation” for critical media literacy pedagogy?
- How are the desired outcomes of effective critical media literacy met in higher education?

The study examines whether theoretical work on critical media literacy pedagogy can be turned into practice. Critical media literacy education has been difficult to

implement to date because educators do not have a strong shared understanding of what constitutes an effective pedagogy in this discipline. The study attempts to identify curriculum and instruction processes that are related to desired outcomes of critical media literacy education at institutions of higher learning. The study has the potential to provide educational leaders with a series of methods for the implementation of effective critical media literacy pedagogy. The study concludes with recommendations for educational leaders on how to effectively implement critical media literacy pedagogy in higher education.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of the literature related to critical media literacy. The review begins with an examination of scholarly debates concerning the necessity of technological literacy. The next section provides an overview of discussions among educators about the purposes and challenges of blending old and new literacies in a multiliteracy education approach. This is followed by a section explaining how media literacy educators broke from multiliteracy education, arguing that students should be taught how to use digital technologies and protected from influences of media. A subsequent section examines the debate surrounding the emergence of critical media literacy education. Supporters argue that it is different from media education, which is said to be limited in its focus and practice. A final section examines gaps in critical media literacy research, particularly the lack of empirical work that documents effective critical media literacy pedagogy in higher education.

Technology and Literacy

The push to expand the definition of literacy to include media came with the advent of new technologies in the mid-20th century. Yet even in the early 20th century, the invention of moving pictures saw calls from educators to use and discuss media (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009) in classrooms across the US (Seattler, 2004) and Great Britain (Orndorff, 1921). These efforts had failed by the late 1930s due to tensions between the growing power of the movie industry and educators regarding the place of commercialism in schools (Seattler, 2004). Defining literacy as something that went

beyond reading books took shape in the US education system during the 1950s and 1960s as a result of critics such as Marshall McLuhan (1965). McLuhan argued that each new technology had a unique way of delivering messages that was conducive to its existence. Television, for instance, delivered messages to maintain its advertising base because advertisers pay for television to exist. McLuhan said that students should be taught to recognize the embedded interests of each form of media. Heeding McLuhan's plea, educators pushed for teaching students how to understand the "language" of film and television (Alvarado, Gutch, & Wollen, 1987) and how to create films (Moody, 1999). Simultaneously, the field of information literacy emerged, due in large part to the creation of the data-based technologies used by librarians. Educators urged that new skills were needed to sift through and organize the massive data sets made possible by new technologies (Hobbs, 2010).

Media literacy education emerged as a combination of the foregoing elements. In the 1970s, the field of media studies expanded to include a discussion of the impact of media on power relations (Postman & Weingartner, 1969) and depictions of race (Johnson, 1977). Due to the explosion of entertainment in the home via the cable revolution of the 1980s, the discussion expanded to review the impact of media on all facets of US life (Postman, 1985). By the 1990s, a divisive discussion developed about the purpose of media literacy education. This discussion still continues today. Some educators have called for a limited instrumentalist approach to educate people how to use new tools through skills such as saving files or recognizing the difference between

hardware and software. Others advocate an activist approach to challenge and critique potentially harmful influences of media (Hobbs, 1998; Wehmeyer, 2000).

Multi-Literacy Education

As the 21st century dawned, researchers conceptualized what came to be called multi-literacy education, in light of the widespread use of technologies such as cellphones, home computers, and laptops (Asselin & Doiron, 2008; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Grabill & Hicks, 2005). Some claimed that schools were in danger of becoming irrelevant (Larson, 2006) unless they taught about the forms of communication students were using (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011). Others argued that to improve student outcomes, teachers needed to engage in multi-literacies with students daily (Hagood, 2000) because this would illuminate important concepts of media representation (Sankey, 2003), keep students engaged in school (Behrman, 2003; King-Shaver & Hunter, 2009), provide relevant skills (Kist, 2003), teach the utility of technology and software (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Asselin & Doiron, 2008), or prepare students to participate equitably in the global economy (Larson, 2006).

The dichotomy still stands between multi-literacy educators who emphasize the instrumental utility of new technologies and those who emphasize critiquing their social and political impact. Educators focused solely on the technical utility of digital tools claim that such an approach can improve student academic outcomes (Yi, 2008) and develop relevant skills (Albright, Walsh, & Purohit, 2009). Conversely, those who emphasize a critical approach, examining the social and political impact of new

technologies, assert that a multi-literacy approach is only successful when it illuminates the social, cultural, and political uses and intersections of old and new media (Spence, 2009; Lotherington & Chow, 2006). For instance, observational studies have found a positive link between the latter model of multi-literacy education and the capacity of Latino high school freshmen to form social connections and show solidarity (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011). Similarly, Guzzetti and Gamboa (2005) report a positive relationship between organic identity formations in female students and participation in an online journal.

Much of the multi-literacy education research has noted the difficulties associated with its implementation in practice. The inequitable access to expensive digital resources, known as the digital divide, can be one barrier (McChesney, 2013). One study, for instance, found a high school that had only one television for 300 students (Hart & Suss, 2002). Other scholars report that traditionalism can prevent the effective implementation of multi-literacy education. Kitson, Fletcher, and Kearney (2007) suggest that even teachers who champion multi-literacy education still tend to rely on print-based media in the classroom. In response, researchers have called for more expansive teacher training in multi-literacies (Sheridan-Thomas, 2006; Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006), arguing that there is a correlation between teacher and student multi-literacy capabilities (Li & Rao, 2010).

Media Education

By the start of the 21st century, some scholars had abandoned multi-literacy education as a field, proposing media literacy education instead. Media literacy education is heterogeneous in its goals, practices, assignments, and pedagogies (Hart & Suss, 2002). Much of the field seeks to teach students both how to use new technologies and how to protect themselves from media messages (Irving & Berel 2001; Riecken et al., 2006). Fedorov's (2003) study of teachers in ten countries sought to illuminate the purpose of media education. Nearly all of the study's participants agreed that the purpose of media education is to provide students with the skills and understanding of how to use and acquire all types of communication media.

Since Fedorov's (2003) study, however, educators continue to add to and debate the goals and purposes of media education. Issues debated include the skills and knowledge for equitable student civic participation (Hobbs, 2010; Hobbs, Donnelly, Friesem, & Moen, 2013; Kahne, Feezell, & Lee, 2012; Mraz, Heron, & Wood, 2003; Poyntz, 2006); student engagement (Buckingham, 2003; Stack and Kelly, 2006); critical thinking skills (Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009; Scharrer, 2003); and awareness of how the media influences individuals attitudes and behaviors (Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2004; Saye, 2004; Tolson, 2006).

Much of the early media education movement attempted to protect students from the harmful impact of media. Wu and Vietor (2010) argue that the protectionist approach is part of a longer trend they call "The Cycle" in technological innovation. The Cycle is the process by which technological innovations such as radio, television, telephone, and

film evolve from a hobby to an invention. They argue that the traditional cycle of technologies is a shift from a rough tool to slick production, universal utility, monopolized and controlled, after which the tools become obsolete. The Internet currently appears to be in the opening phase of The Cycle, and there are signs that it is closing. Wu and Vietor (2010) report that technological inventions are generally accompanied by an uproar presuming that the invention will change everything, leading to a belief that it will cause youth will be raised in an entirely new environment. Another effect is fear from parents and educators who then seek to protect the children from the unexpected and negative consequences of the new technology.

Early protectionist media education focused on shielding students from the effects of violence in media. Some studies report a relationship between media literacy education focused on violence in media and a reduction in observed violent tendencies in students. Scharrer's (2005) study of 93 sixth graders, for instance, suggests that students who participate in media education focused on the media's portrayal of violence display more critical attitudes toward violence in media. Similarly, Byrne's (2009) study of 156 children asserts that students whose media education includes a cognitive activity are less likely to use aggression after being exposed to violent media when compared to students who have not received media education.

Other media literacy education researchers have focused on a protectionist approach addressing student health. Kline, Stewart, and Murphy (2006) evaluated community-focused media risk-reduction education in four North Vancouver primary

schools. The 178-student study reports that education could make students more critical of the sedentary lifestyle associated with media consumption. A similar study by Austin, Pinkleton, Hust, and Cohen (2005) evaluates the American Legacy Foundation and Washington State Department of Health's joint media literacy pilot study. The researchers used a sample of 119 students, and found that participation in media literacy education decreases false perceptions about tobacco and increased awareness of tobacco advertising. Austin et al. (2005) argue that the study shows promise for media education as a way to reduce tobacco use among youths. Wade, Davidson, and O'Dea's (2003) study of 86 Australian students in four eighth-grade classrooms, found that the school's media literacy and self-esteem programs reduced risk factors associated with eating disorders. Finally, Austin and Johnson's (1997) study of 246 third graders' immediate and delayed decision making for alcohol found that the media literacy education increased understanding of alcohol's effects. The researchers also report signs that media education can have positive delayed effects.

Other media education scholars are less concerned with the protectionist approach, focusing instead on teaching students the technical utility of new technologies. Hobbs and Frost's (2003) seminal empirical study examined seven teachers at New England-area high schools that required media literacy education. These schools were compared to other high schools with similar demographics and no media literacy requirement. Through measurements of comprehension, writing skills, and media analysis skills, Hobbs and Frost conclude that

Students who received media-literacy instruction were more likely to recognize the complex blurring of information, entertainment, and economics that are present in contemporary nonfiction media. Students who received media-literacy instruction appeared to have a more nuanced understanding of interpreting textual evidence in different media formats to identify an author's multiple purposes and intended target audiences (p. 351).

Media literacy pedagogy remains heterogeneous (Hart & Suss, 2002). Many of the educators in the field continue to focus on teaching students how to use new technologies and protect themselves from media messages (Irving & Berel 2001; Riecken, Conibear, Michel, Lyall, Scott, Tanaka, Stewart, Riecken, & Strong-Wilson, 2006). Media literacy scholars have argued that the goals of the field are too narrow (Buckingham, 2007; Gainer, 2007). These scholars propose that educators adopt a critical media literacy pedagogy that encompasses a critical perspective on media and a commitment student's civic engagement and social justice issues (Kellner & Share, 2007).

Critical Media Education

Some researchers argue that the protectionist and utility approach lacks a necessary critical perspective. Critical media literacy scholars argue that a critical approach is important because it allows students to question issues of power such as produces and consumes media (Yousman, 2016). Kellner and Share (2007) describe critical media literacy as:

Critical media literacy expands the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication and popular culture as well as deepens the potential of education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information and power. It involves cultivating skills in analyzing media codes and conventions, abilities to criticize stereotypes, dominant values, and ideologies, and competencies to interpret the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts.

Kellner and Share (2007) and Yousman (2016) collectively argue that a major point of departure from media literacy is that critical media literacy scholars rely on a critical framework such as critical race theory, feminist theory, or queer theory.

Critical media literacy scholars contend that a critical approach is what makes critical media literacy pedagogy the most effective form of media literacy. For example, Kellner and Share (2007) examined the four approaches to media education: protectionist, arts, literacy movement, and critical media literacy. They concluded that the critical approach was the most effective pedagogy of the different approaches. They defined critical media education as recognizing how media in both positive and problematic fashion shapes social thought. Critical media literacy educators suggest that students living in a media-saturated world require a pedagogy that questions the use and function of media—rather than normalizing it (Buckingham, 2007; Gainer, 2007; Kellner, 2013). These scholars call for a more aggressive, social justice-driven purpose for media education (Kellner & Share, 2007). They assert that critical media education should focus on the function and

impact that new technologies have on students and society (McLaren, Hammer, Sholle, & Reilly, 1995; Livingstone, 2004). It has the potential to move media literacy into the realm of cultural studies by shifting from studying and emphasizing consumption to producing counter-narratives to the dominant culture (Kellner, 2005; Kellner & Share, 2007).

Much of the early research on critical media literacy was theoretical and focused on how to add popular media into the classroom (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Tisdell, 2008). Proponents argued that using popular media such as rap music (Paul, 2000), news broadcasts (Morrell, 2002), websites (Frechette, 2002), and film (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Moody, 1999) are valuable and engaging starting points to teach a critical approach to media. Similar studies assert that media in general should not be the focus of a media education, but rather the people and locations it impacts. These educators propose focusing on the hegemonic nature of media (Frechette, 2005) through an examination of the politics of media representation (Gainer, 2010), race in media (Yosso, 2002), and consumer interaction with media (Bing-Canar & Zerkel, 1998). Fuchs (2007) calls for a new theoretical framework around media education. He notes that most critical media literacy theorists employ a Marxist analysis, and he argues that some—but not all—of Marxist theory applies to media in the digital age. Fuchs (2007) recommends that critical media literacy educators strive to help mold the Internet into a global and sustainable information hub that is accessible to everyone.

Much of the research on critical media education pedagogy outcomes has also been theoretical rather than empirical (Kellner & Share, 2005; Kellner & Share, 2007; Luke, 2003). Various student outcomes have been proposed for a critical media literacy classroom, but researchers have yet to develop or test a comprehensive critical media literacy pedagogy that encompasses all of the desired outcomes. The proposed student outcomes of a critical media education move beyond the hypothesized outcomes of media education to embrace a comprehensive social justice-oriented education emphasizing critical awareness of media. Hypothesized outcomes of a critical media pedagogy include student engagement (Kellner & Share, 2005; 2007), student empowerment (Frechette, 2005; Gainer, 2010; Gray, 2005), increased civic engagement (Kellner & Share, 2007), a critical awareness of media, (Jansen, Pooley, & Taub-Pervizpour, 2011), and interest in a social justice agenda (Kellner & Share, 2007; McChesney, 2007).

Since critical media education is offered across multiple disciplines, its outcomes have proven hard to identify and assess (Arke & Primack, 2009; Huff & Roth, 2015). There have been few empirical studies on the pedagogical methods that lead to the desired outcomes of a critical media literacy education. Those studies that have been done have focused on K-12 education (Alvermann, & Hagood, 2000; Bing-Canar & Zerkel, 1998; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Paul, 2000; Tisdell, 2008). There are few if any large-scale empirical studies on critical media literacy in higher education. What follows is a review of the scholarship on each individual desired outcome for

critical media literacy education. The existing research on each outcome area is primarily theoretical—rather than empirical—in nature.

Student engagement. Some researchers have argued that critical media literacy education has a positive relationship with student engagement (Alvermann, 2002; Daniels, 2012; Deal, Flores-Koulish, & Sears, 2010; Garrett & Schmeichel, 2012; Hammer, 2009; Kellner, & Share, 2005; Mathews & Squire, 2009). Student engagement is a term describing the time and effort that students invest in their education (Greene, Marti, & McClenney, 2008). It is suggested that because the content of a critical media literacy course can be familiar to students, they are more likely to be engaged with the classroom activities and exercises (Gray, 2005). Black (2009) found this to be true in an examination of how English Language Learner youth participation in fan fiction impacted their critical media literacy skills. The study reports that participation in media literacy leads to increased student engagement, as measured by student experience and engagement in critical discussions. Similarly, Whelan, Ridgeway, and Yerrick (2015) found a positive relationship between a critical media literacy education and Latina and Black Female student engagement in STEM (Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics) and Health Career programs.

Student empowerment. Other scholars report a relationship between critical media literacy education and empowered students. Student empowerment refers to student capacity to exercise control and influence over choices that impact their lives (Zimmerman, 2000). Researchers argue that critical media literacy education empowers

students through a Freirean model (Frechette, 2002; McDaniel, 2004) that counters hegemonic media messages (Kellner & Share, 2007; Gainer, 2010). Critical media literacy is said to empower students to take action for meaningful change (Fuchs, 2011; Morrell, Duenas, Garcia, & Lopez, 2013). Paul's (2000) study of K-12 students in the Bronx, New York reports that the use of a critical media literacy approach privileging students' voices through hip hop music empowers students. Similarly, Bing-Canar and Zerkel (1998) suggest that critical media literacy workshops on video production and role-playing can empower Arab female students to create media to counter marginalizing narratives.

Increased civic engagement. Some researchers suggest that increased civic engagement is one of the main purposes of critical media education. Civic engagement refers to student "interest in social problems, political participation, trust in government, [and] taking action to help the environment and save energy" (Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012, p. 1). Some researchers have argued that there is a correlation between the digital age and increased collaboration for local solutions among youths (Banaji, Buckingham, van Zoonen, & Hirzalla, 2009). Kellner and Share (2007) assert that critical media literacy is necessary for a "vibrant participatory democracy" (p. 1). Some suggest that critical media literacy leads to civic engagement because it not only critiques structures that weaken democracy, but empowers students to create counter-narratives (Gainer, 2010; Morrell, Duenas, Garcia, & Lopez, 2013). In doing so, students take part in the democratic process by generating counter-narratives.

Critical awareness of media. While it is accepted among scholars that critical media education seeks to provide students with a critical awareness of media, there is as yet no agreement on what it means for students to have a critical awareness of media. Broadly, it is said to refer to student awareness of media representations, identity construction, and hegemonic functions (Silverblatt, Miller, Smith, & Brown, 2014; Tisdell, 2008). Some researchers assert that critical awareness enables students to recognize how media conflates propaganda and entertainment to disseminate hegemonic messages that reinforce structures of inequality (Rodesiler, 2010; Torres & Mercado, 2006). Others argue that effective critical media literacy pedagogy produces a critical awareness when it focuses on the media representations, construction of identity, and hegemonic messaging (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Silverblatt, Miller, Smith, & Brown, 2014; Tisdell, 2008).

Some claim that critical awareness of media involves the capacity to identify how individuals, groups, and events are constructed and represented in media. Studies have found a positive relationship between critical media literacy and students' awareness of representation and identity construction in media. Kellner and Share (2007), for instance, suggest that a key component of critical media literacy education is its focus on the "representation of crucial dimensions of gender, race, class, and sexuality" (p. 8). Similarly, Brooks (2002) states that college classroom discussions on race, gender, and media analysis provide a space for education on representation. In an instance of this, Tisdell's (2008) study of instructors of adult education reports that a critical media

literacy which includes media analysis in unfamiliar ways can effectively illuminate diversity issues.

Other scholars encourage critical media literacy educators to provide students with a critical awareness of the hegemonic functions of media (Frechette, 2005; Herman & Chomsky, 2010; Phillips, 2007; Torres & Mercado, 2006). They propose that critical media literacy education should deconstruct how media shapes public opinion via cumulative messaging, limited perspectives, affective strategies, and embedded values (Phillips & Huff, 2010; Silverblatt, Miller, Smith, & Brown, 2014). Morrell and Duncan-Andrade's (2005) study of high school students reports that critical media pedagogy helps students build awareness to identify the hegemony and ideology embedded in media. Similarly, Orłowski's (2006) study demonstrates that students can acquire knowledge of hegemonic discourse in media through the reframing of political discourse from differing ideological perspectives.

Adoption of a social justice agenda. Finally, there are those who argue that a critical media literacy education results in increased student interest in or adoption of a social justice agenda (Kellner & Share, 2007; McChesney, 2007). Yosso (2002) examined the impact of critical race theory media education on Chicano community college students introduced to negative or over-generalized portrayals of Chicanos. Her interviews show that students are motivated to counter negative media narratives of Chicanos. The students were confronted with a societal problem and, in the tradition of social justice, were empowered and motivated to solve it. Similarly, Daniels (2012)

reports that using a critical media literacy approach to documentaries engaged students in community activism—also a social justice tenet. Daniels (2012) suggests that students who studied documentaries took the lead in creating a community event about the role of YouTube in exposing police brutality. This emphasis on community and activism also reflects a social justice agenda.

Conclusion

Critical media literacy education is offered in multiple disciplines, which makes it challenging to identify and assess as a generalizable curriculum. This may be, in part, why scholars have yet to develop the comprehensive and coherent praxis required for effective critical media literacy pedagogy in higher education. Accordingly, this mixed-methods sequential explanatory study seeks to identify a praxis that operationalizes the theoretical framework of a critical media literacy education. The study identifies the pedagogies that are likely to lead to the desired outcomes of effective critical media literacy education, and how they are implemented.

Chapter Three: Procedures and Methodology

This chapter discusses the study's procedures and methodology, including a review of instrumentation and data analysis. In addition, the chapter reviews the research context of the study, including each participant and participating institution's demographics. Each participating course in the study is given a label,(for example, "Community College Course A"), and that label is consistently used throughout the study for data associated with that course. The chapter also discusses the study's validity and limitations. This mixed-methods sequential explanatory study addresses two related research questions:

- What constitutes a satisfactory level of "implementation" for critical media literacy pedagogy?
- How are the desired outcomes of effective critical media literacy met in higher education?

Researchers have identified five desired outcomes of an effective critical media pedagogy: student engagement (Kellner & Share, 2005; 2007), student empowerment (Gainer, 2010; Gray, 2005), increased civic engagement (Duncan-Andrade, 2006; Kellner & Share, 2007), a critical awareness of media, (Jansen, Pooley, & Taub-Pervizpour, 2011), and adoption of a social justice agenda (McChesney, 2007). However, researchers have not yet identified the pedagogical methods necessary for an effective critical media literacy education or the implementation strategies for critical media literacy pedagogy in higher education. It is therefore the goal of the study to produce a clear portrait of an

effective critical media literacy education for four-year institutions, and a plan for its implementation by educational leaders.

The instrumentation for the study included student surveys and interviews, classroom observations, faculty interviews, and a review of course and campus documents (see Table 1 below for a flow chart depicting study methodology). A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design entails the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in two sequential stages (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The study administered pre- and post-course surveys to students enrolled in courses that study media from a critical perspective. The surveys provided data to indicate whether the classrooms studied were generating any of the desired outcomes of a critical media literacy education. This data was then triangulated with the qualitative data—the observations, student interviews, faculty interviews, and document review—to identify how specific patterns of curriculum and pedagogies related to specific desired outcomes.

Research Design Overview and Framework

This mixed-methods sequential explanatory study sought to develop a clear understanding of an effective critical media literacy education and offer a strategy for its implementation in higher education. The study operated from a social justice conceptual framework which theorizes that increased social justice attitudes among students will lead to their civic engagement, and this will in turn lead to their activism.

A social justice framework acknowledges that inequality exists in society and provides a vision for altering or abolishing the structures that contribute to it. The concept of social justice draws upon scholars as far back as Plato in Ancient Greece (Santas, 2001). The term was first employed by Christian social reformers in the US during the 1840s (Behr, 2012). Social justice concepts were strengthened internationally via the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights in 1948 (Ishay, 2008). Because the definition of social justice evolves as society changes (Bell, 2007), its definition is complex. Some scholars have argued that a social justice agenda is a commitment to justice, fairness, and equality (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Bell, 2007). A social justice agenda is also said to strengthen the democratic process (McChesney, 2007; Mitchell, 2003), community engagement (Harvey, 2010), inclusivity (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007), empowerment (Pizarro, 1998), universal rights (Gauri & Brinks, 2008), and movements that aim to end oppressive practices (Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2007).

Social justice pedagogy seeks to challenge societal structures of inequality that are reinforced through the US education system. The study operated from the assumption that education can never be a neutral practice, and that educators can and should employ social justice-oriented pedagogy to ameliorate the inequities in society (Freire, 1972, 1981; Bell, 2007). Furthermore, because power flows through web-like structures (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1980), educators with a commitment to social justice can empower students to recognize their inherent power to transform society (Shields, 2010). In the spirit of Dewey (1938), who argued the classroom is a laboratory for social

experimentation, Akom (2009) and Yosso (2005) suggest that in order to create transformational outcomes in the classroom, social justice educators provide students with the space to critique the structures, practices, and policies that contribute to inequality.

Scholars report that a critical media literacy education can increase student engagement with a social justice agenda (Kellner & Share, 2007; McChesney, 2007). Yosso (2002) and Daniels' (2012) empirical studies report that critical media education has the ability to engage and empower students to adopt a social justice agenda and create meaningful change. Accordingly, the study will operationalize a social justice philosophy through critical media literacy pedagogies.

Population and Sample

The researcher triangulated data from eight different US higher education institutions in this mixed-methods sequential explanatory study. The eight institutions were chosen because they employ educators committed to teaching students about media from a critical perspective. Furthermore, these educators were some of the leading researchers in the field of critical media literacy. Collectively, they discussed media by addressing inequities in society, especially the diverse inequities of power and influence. Thus, their pedagogy is in line with social justice philosophy which starts by recognizing inequities (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Bell, 2007). At least one class was chosen from each institution, but in some cases more than one. The eleven courses that contributed data to the study were comprised of the following disciplines: Communication,

Community Development and Applied Economics, History, Media Studies, Sociology, and Social Science. In all, eight professors were interviewed and observed. A total of 241 students completed the pre-survey and 177 students completed the post survey. A total of 38 students participated in telephone interviews.

The participants in the study came from institutions of higher education from around the US. These institutions include one community college, five public universities, and two private universities. Three of the participating institutions are located in the state of California: a community college, a public, and a private four year university. On the east coast, four institutions participated in the study; three public and one private four-year university. A public four-year university in the Midwest was also a site for the study.

Since the participating higher education institutions span the US, the context of each school varies. In general, every critical media literacy education classroom is different, especially since the courses are housed under different disciplines. The classrooms selected were located in undergraduate institutions that included private, public, four-year, and community college institutions. The classrooms were chosen based on the course description and the instructor's academic work in critical media literacy.

Profile of Institutions

Observational and survey data revealed important demographic trends among the participants. With the exception of one course (Private University Course B), students who identify as White made up the majority of the students enrolled in each course. The

majority of students enrolled in critical media literacy courses at four-year universities were paying for college with student loans. The critical media literacy educators in the study were overwhelmingly White, and most were between the age of 40 and 50 years old. With few exceptions, the number of students who took the pre and post-surveys remained consistent in each class (see Table 1). The following is a brief description of each institution and the participants in the study.

Table 1. Overview of Institutions Participating in The study

	Community College			Public University				Private University			
Course	A	B	C	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B
Location	CA	CA	CA	NE	NE	CA	NY	MI	NY	NE	CA
# of Students Who Completed the Pre, Post-survey	29,16	28,21	33,20	20,17	29,29	41,38	45,30	27,20	9,3	26,25	19,18
% of the class that identify as White	69%	56%	59%	75%	89%	65%	60%	96%	88%	92%	31%
# of students who identify as Male, Female, undeclared	16,10,3	16,11,1	13,20,0	13,6,1	11,17,1	19,21,1	14,22,9	10,16,1	4,4,1	10,15,1	5,14,0
% of students with student loans	1%	1%	18%	50%	40%	50%	72%	60%	62%	64%	31%
Educator	44/W/	44/W/	44/W/	44/W/	49/W/	67/W/	58/W/	38/W/	58/W/	54/W/	62/W/

Age, Race, Gender	M	M	M	F	M	M	M	F	M	M	F
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Community College Course A. Located in a suburban setting in Northern California, Community College A was the same location where Community College Courses B and C were taught. The campus had very little open space because there were many large buildings constructed close to one another on the relatively small campus. However, the campus was aligned with trees and a pond near its south side where students were frequently seen reading and conversing. The campus enrolled over 20,000 students. Community College Courses A, B, and C were all taught by the same instructor. Community College Course A was a History course entitled “Critical Thinking in History.” It met in the late morning twice a week. A total of 29 students who were enrolled in the course took the pre-survey, and out of those 29 students, 16 were still enrolled and took the post-survey. The instructor was a 44-year-old White male. Out of the 29 students, 16 students identified as male, 10 as female, and 3 did not state their gender identity. White students comprised 16 of the 23 (69%) students who reported their race. Less than 1 percent of the students enrolled in the course (2 students) were paying for college with student loans. Out of the 27 students who reported their age, about 77% were 24 years of age or younger.

Community College Course B. Community College Course B is the same critical thinking in history course taught by the instructor of Community College Course A, but it met in the early afternoon twice a week. A total of 28 students who were

enrolled in the course took the pre-survey, and out of those 28 students, 21 of them were still enrolled and took the post-survey. Sixteen of the students identified as male, 11 as female, and 1 as unstated. White students comprised 13 of the 23 students (56%) who reported their race. Just over 1 percent of the students enrolled in the course (3 students) had student loans to pay for college. Out of the 28 students who reported their age, about 75% were 24 years of age or younger.

Community College Course C. Community College Course C was a Social Science course entitled “Money, Power, and Politics.” A total of 33 students who were enrolled in the course took the pre-survey, and out of those 33 students, 20 of them were still enrolled and took the post-survey. The course met once a week in the evening. Out of the 33-person course, 13 of the students identified as male and 20 as female. White students comprised 16 (59%) and Latin@s 7 (25%) of the 27 students who conveyed their race. About 18 percent of the students enrolled in the course have taken out student loans. Out of the 33 students who reported their age, about 79% were 24 years of age or younger.

Public University Course A. Located in a suburban New England neighborhood, Public University A was a beautiful modern campus adorned with sculptures and brick style buildings. Directly off the campus sat restaurants, bars, and parks that had an upscale appearance. However, on the outskirts of the city were closed businesses, faded signs, and numerous homeless people. Public University A enrolled over 6,200 undergraduates annually. The class was a Communications course titled “Media

Criticism Online.” A total of 20 students who were enrolled in the course took the pre-survey and out of those 20 students, 17 stayed enrolled and took the post-survey. The instructor was a 44-year-old White female. The course met twice a week in the afternoon. Thirteen of the students identified as male, 6 as female, and 1 refused to state gender identity. White students comprised 15 (75%) of the students enrolled in the course. Exactly 50 percent of the students enrolled in the course had taken out student loans. Out of the 20 students who reported their age, about 85% were 24 years of age or younger.

Public University Course B. Also located in New England a few hundred miles North of Public University A was Public University B. Public University B was surrounded by rural landscapes with huge trees and rolling hills. The campus itself had large open grass fields and trees that surrounded the brick buildings and small roadways. The campus enrolled about 11,000 undergraduates annually. Public University Course B was a Community Development and Applied Economics (CDAE) course entitled “From Critical Theory to Professional Practice.” A total of 29 students who were enrolled in the course took both the pre and post-survey. The instructor was a 49-year-old White male. The course met twice a week in the afternoon. Eleven of the students identified as male, and 17 as female, while 1 did not declare gender identity. White students comprised 26 (89%) of the enrollment in the course. About 40 percent of the students enrolled in the course had student loans. Every student was aged 24 years or younger.

Public University Course C. In an affluent Northern California city sat Public University C. The campus was far from any congested city, but was surrounded by a

large and spread out population. The campus appears elegant with expensive modern looking buildings and art work. One instructor said the campus looked more like a “country club” than a college. There were open grass fields and luxury student housing. The campus enrolled about 8,500 undergraduates annually. Public University Course C was a Sociology course entitled “Sociology of Media.” A total of 41 students who were enrolled in the course took the pre-survey; out of those students, 38 were still enrolled and took the post-survey. The instructor was a 67-year-old White male. The course met once a week in the evening. Nineteen of the students identified as male, 21 as female, and 1 did not state gender identity. White students comprised 25 of the 38 students (65%) who provided their racial identity. Exactly 50 percent of the students enrolled in the course had student loans. Out of the 40 students who reported their age, about 80% were 24 years of age or younger and 17% were 25 to 29 years old.

Public University Course D. Public University Courses D and F were offered on the same campus. They were located in a large city in Northern New York State. Public University D is a massive rust-belt city suffering from poverty. Despite the frigid cold that is common throughout the area, people were walking in the winter mist and urban landscape that surrounded the campus. The campus was modern looking, broadly spaced out with brick buildings, new student housing, and large open fields. The campus enrolled about 19,000 undergraduates annually. Public University Course D was a Communications course titled “Visual Communication.” A total of 45 students who were enrolled in the course took the pre-survey, and out of those 45 students, 30 were still

enrolled in the course and took the post-survey. The instructor was a 58-year-old self-identified “Jewish American male.” The course met twice a week in the late morning. Fourteen of the students identified as male, 22 as female, and 9 did not state their gender identity. White students comprised about 60% and Blacks about 25% of the 32 students who stated their racial identity. Public University D suffered from low participation rate among students of color. During the observation there 65 students in the course, but only 45 of those students completed the pre-survey. Collectively, the demographics, poor participation, and mixed outcomes of the survey data point to stereotype threat and a high probability of unreliable data. About 72% percent of the students enrolled in the course had student loans. Of the 37 students who reported their age, about 91% were 24 years of age or younger.

Public University Course E. Public University E was located in an affluent suburban Michigan neighborhood. Despite being surrounded by a dense population, the campus was spread out with new buildings reflecting modern architecture. The campus was surrounded by a massive parking lot full of cars. The campus enrolled about 16,000 undergraduates annually. Public University Course E was a Communication course entitled “Mass Media and Communication Theory.” A total of 27 students who were enrolled in the course took the pre-survey and out of those 27 students, 20 were still enrolled and took the post-survey. The instructor was a 38-year-old White female. The course met twice a week in the morning. Ten of the students identified as male, 16 as female, and 1 did not state. White students comprised 26 of the students (96%) enrolled

in the course. There was one student who identified as African American enrolled in the course. As a result, Public University Course E is not included in the analysis of race in the study. About 60 percent of the students enrolled in the course had student loans. Every student in the course was 24 years of age or younger.

Public University Course F. Public University Courses D and F were located in a large city in northern New York State and have the same instructor. Course F had the smallest enrollment of all courses surveyed. A total of nine students enrolled in the course took the pre-survey and out of those students, three were still enrolled in the course and took the post-survey. Public University Course F was a Communication course titled “Media and Society.” The course met once a week in the late afternoon. Four of the students identified as male, four as female, and one refused to state their gender identity. The course had eight White students (88%) and one Black student enrolled. As a result of the low number of people of color in the course, Public University Course F is not listed included in the study’s analysis of race. About 62% percent of the students enrolled in the course had borrowed loans. Out of the nine students who reported their age, about 88% were aged 24 years or younger.

Private University Course A. Private University A was a beautiful and elegant campus in the southern part of New England. The campus had modern looking glass buildings named after moguls in the entertainment and business world. It proudly advertised its chic student housing and campus cafeteria. It was surrounded by huge homes in a suburban setting. The campus enrolled about 5000 undergraduates annually.

Private University Course A was a Communication course entitled “Media Literacy.” A total of 26 students who were enrolled in the course took the pre-survey, and out of those 26 students, 25 were still enrolled and took the post-survey. The instructor was a 54-year-old White male. His was the only office door in his building, shared by the Communications and Business Department, decorated with stickers, articles, and announcements. The course met twice a week in the late afternoon. Ten of the students identify as male, 15 as female, and 1 did not state gender identity. White students comprised 24 of the 26 students (92%) who stated their racial identity. About 64% percent of the students enrolled in the course had borrowed student loans. Out of the 26 students who reported their age, about 96% were 24 years of age or younger.

Private University Course B. Private University B was located in a large metropolitan Northern California City, but the campus surrounded its buildings with parks and parking lots. The architecture was Gothic and Romanesque style, but inside there were modern facilities. The campus enrolled about 7,000 undergraduates annually. Private University Course B was a Media Studies course titled “Civic Media.” A total of 19 students who were enrolled in the course took the pre-survey and out of those 19 students, 18 were still enrolled and took the post-survey. The instructor was a 62-year-old self-identified “White female lesbian.” The course met three times a week in the early morning. Five of the students identified as male and 14 as female. The course was the most racially diverse in the study sample: there were 5 White (31%), 1 Black (.5%), 1 Native American(.5%), 4 Asian (21%), and 5 Latin@ students (31%). Compared to any

other four-year university course in the study, the course also had the lowest proportion of students on student loans (31%). Out of the 19 students who reported their age, all were 24 years of age or younger.

Data Collection

The data for the study stems from surveys, interviews, observations, and document review. Students in each of the participating classes took a survey at the beginning and end of the term. Approximately five students per classroom were chosen on a voluntary basis for an interview subsequent to the initial completion of the survey. All participating faculty provided the researcher with their syllabi for review. This allowed the researcher to identify course objectives, assignments, and readings. Faculty were also interviewed about the implementation of critical media literacy education. The researcher analyzed all data at the classroom level, and then synthesized and triangulated the data from the eight different US higher education institutions for a broader cross-site analysis. Figure 1 that follows summarizes the methodology of the study.

Figure 1. Flow Chart of The Study's Methodology

Surveys. Students completed the pre-survey during the first month of the course, and the post-survey during the last two weeks of course. Both surveys used a five-point Likert scale design. The scale assessed students' attitudes on a range from one (completely disagree) to five (completely agree). In order to ensure that the survey remained non-reactive, participants were assured that all of their data would remain

confidential, and that the survey is part of a dissertation on education. The 47-question survey had four areas of focus: student level of civic engagement; social justice attitudes; critical awareness of media; and demographics. The demographics section was placed at the end, in order to avoid stereotype threat and reactivity. The three sections on critical awareness of media, social justice, and civic engagement were previously developed and tested for their validity and accuracy by the Critical Media Project, Rutgers University, and Doolittle and Faul (2013), respectively. This supported a claim of concurrent validity. The full student survey instrument can be found in Appendix A.

The social justice section of the survey assessed student attitudes towards social justice. This instrument was based upon a tool developed at the School of Social Work at Rutgers University. It was developed from an online survey given to 87 students who had just completed a Diversity & Oppression course. The survey sought to measure the effectiveness of social justice-oriented courses at “improving students’ understanding of diversity and oppression” (Overview, p. x). The instrument was tested for social desirability bias, predictive validity, construct validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The survey reflected the policies and standards of the Council on Social Work, a non-profit association of educators and social work experts. The Rutgers University survey was selected as the basis for the social justice portion of the pre-post survey due to its focus on social justice and diversity. It has 25 questions, six of which were omitted because they applied directly to counseling and social work, neither of which are a focus of the study. When given in the test, re-test sequence, the full survey

instrument will assess changes in students' social justice attitudes and understandings of representation and identity. This is because a major component of effective critical media literacy education is said to be increased student awareness of identity formation and representation in media, which is an essential component of diversity (Kellner, 2003; Wilson II, Gutierrez, & Chao, 2003).

The civic engagement portion of the survey was developed by Doolittle and Faul (2013). The 14-question instrument was developed to investigate the behaviors and attitudes of students toward civic participation after participating in service learning pedagogy. Doolittle and Faul validated their instrument in an educational setting using 513 students. The study only employed those eight questions from the instrument that apply to student attitudes toward civic engagement. The other six questions pertaining to student behavior will not be used.

The Doolittle and Faul survey used a seven-point Likert scale, and the responses range from one (completely disagree) to seven (completely agree). The survey responses were shifted to a five point Likert scale for the purposes of this study to conform with the scale design of the other sections on the instrument used in the study. This avoided participant confusion and will make data analysis in all sections of the survey congruent.

The critical awareness portion of the survey included statements from University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication's Critical Media Project. The items come from The Critical Media Project's stated key concepts for teaching about media relationships with consumer understandings of issues regarding race, ethnicity,

class, gender, and the LGBTQ (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer) community. That portion of the survey sought to gauge students' critical awareness of the hegemonic functions of media. Those questions tested for a critical awareness of media propaganda, cumulative messaging, limited perspectives, affective strategies, and embedded values (Herman & Chomsky, 2010; Phillips, 2007; Phillips & Huff, 2010; Rodesiler, 2010; Silverblatt, 2007; Torres & Mercado, 2006). All responses used a five-point Likert scale that conformed to the first two sections of the instrument, for the reasons stated earlier.

The final portion of the survey instrument obtained demographic information from the students. That data included age, race/ethnicity, gender identification, and major in college. It sought to create a portrait of the similarities and differences in the demographic makeup of a critical media classroom. It will also provided data to assess the equity implications of critical media literacy pedagogies.

Classroom observations. In the time between the pre- and post-surveys, the researcher observed each classroom and recruited students for in-person and phone interviews. The researcher observed each participating class once during the term. The observation provided insight into pedagogy, as well as student roles and reactions to the pedagogy. The observations provided a context for survey and interview results.

Student interviews. Students were selected for interviews on a voluntary basis during the latter phase of the observation period of the course. Any students willing to participate were interviewed. Student interviews were completed either in person or via

phone during the same week in which the classroom observations occurred; both modes (phone or face-to-face) were conducted using the same interview protocol.

The interview questions employed collected data to assess student perceptions of the course pedagogy and their level of engagement and empowerment. The interview questions concerning course pedagogy were developed by this researcher. The questions about student engagement were adapted into interview form from The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The questions regarding student empowerment were adapted from the surveys developed by McShane and Von Glinow (2008) from a study on student empowerment. The questions were piloted and adjusted as needed. Data gathered through the interviews was examined with data from the surveys to address the study's research questions. The interview data was triangulated with data from observations. See Appendix B for the student interview protocol.

Faculty interviews. Faculty interviews were performed both in person and on the phone; both modes employed the same interview protocol (See Appendix C). These interviews provided a window into the process of implementing critical media literacy education at each institution, and the types of curriculum and instruction used in the classroom. The interview protocol was developed by the researcher, and focused on identifying teaching philosophy and the process by which a critical media literacy education was implemented. The interview questions inquired about the barriers to the implementation of critical media literacy courses reported by prior researchers: elitism (Silverblatt, 2007); lack of resources (Hart & Suss, 2002); campus resistance to

expanding the definition of literacy (Livingstone, 2004); and lack of accepted measurements of student outcomes (Arke & Primack, 2009). Taken together, the faculty interviews and campus documents illuminated the barriers to teaching critical media literacy education, as well as the nature of successful pedagogy and strategies for implementation. See Appendix C for the faculty interview protocol.

Course document analysis. To better understand the logic and implementation of a critical media literacy education each course's pedagogy, syllabi, campus descriptions and expectations, lecture notes, assignments, and other relevant documents were analyzed. This enabled the gathering of objective details regarding the pedagogy, and the investigation of how effective assignments and activities for a critical media literacy classroom are designed. Syllabi, campus descriptions, and expectations for courses were valuable to the study because they contained learning outcomes and goals for each course. Taken together with the faculty interviews, student interviews, classroom observations, the syllabi and accompanying assignments, these documents helped address the study's research questions.

Statement of ethical considerations. Loss of privacy is a potential risk in this type of study. The study's potential for compromising privacy is decreased, however, because no records of students' names or campus information were retained by the researcher. To ensure student privacy, all interview questions were vetted by the researcher's research advisor, Dr. David Hemphill.

Interview data was collected using a password-protected audio recording device. During the interviews, participants did reveal their names. Once an interview was recorded, it was downloaded within the hour of the interview onto a personal computer (also password protected) and saved using labels that are coded through pseudonyms. Recordings were only be heard by the researcher and the dissertation chair, Dr. David Hemphill. The study complied with the data storage policy of California State University, which requires data to be kept for a three-year period following the study's publication. After the three-year point, all recordings will be deleted.

Validity

Internal validity. Because the study employed a mixed methods approach rather than a single-method approach, there are minimal threats to internal validity. The study's student participants were the same for both the quantitative and qualitative analysis, which should remove substantial threats to internal validity. Student responses revealed data concerning the interworking of the classroom and the potential existence of a positive relationship between pedagogy and desired critical media literacy outcomes. The triangulation of interviews, surveys, observations, document reviews, and the campus ethnographies further diminished serious threats to internal validity. Furthermore, the use of existing, previously validated instrumentation in the development of the pre-post survey as well as the interview protocols adds to a claim of internal validity for the study.

External validity. Given that the study includes eight different higher education campuses spread throughout different regions the US, external validity should be

relatively strong. Furthermore, the questions used in the interviews and surveys have been used and tested elsewhere strengthening their validity and generalizability (Doolittle and Faul, 2013; Critical Media Project; McShane and Von Glinow, 2008; NSSE; Rutgers University). The use of demographics taken into account with regional bias and campus ethnographies further limited threats to external validity. As a result the study produced generalizable findings.

Data Analysis Procedures

This mixed-methods sequential explanatory study compared quantitative and qualitative data with a focus on the relationship between classroom practices and outcomes. Survey data from one term informed the researcher regarding whether or not a particular classroom saw an increase in student critical awareness of media, levels of civic engagement, or interest in a social justice agenda. Surveys were triangulated with qualitative data drawn from classroom observations, faculty interviews, student interviews, and document analysis to identify which specific curriculum and instruction events appear to be related to outcome patterns demonstrated in the surveys. Student interviews illuminated student views concerning how the course contributed, if at all, to their sense of empowerment and engagement. Interview responses were further compared to other qualitative data from classroom observations and document analysis to identify the extent to which specific curriculum and instruction resulted in positive changes described in interviews. The faculty interviews and campus documents were also be

triangulated to identify strategic mechanisms needed to implement critical media education in higher education.

The first part of the data analysis documented those classrooms that appeared to demonstrate the desired effective critical media literacy pedagogy outcomes. The desired outcomes tested in the survey included an increase in student's critical awareness of media, levels of civic engagement, and commitment to social justice ideals. The pre-post survey will be quantified to determine which changes students have experienced from the start to the end of the course. The remaining two desired outcomes, student engagement and empowerment, were investigated via the student interviews.

Those classrooms that gave evidence of an increase in one or more desired outcome had their classroom observation, documents, and interviews data analyzed in order to identify what appeared to contribute to the desired outcome. The identification of the curriculum and instruction that appeared to contribute to an individual desired outcome aided in developing a comprehensive picture of an effective critical media literacy education. The study also tested whether student demographics play a role in producing an effective critical media literacy education.

The last phase of data analysis addressed what is necessary to effectively implement a critical media literacy education. Once effective a critical media literacy pedagogy was identified, the researcher examined how it is implemented on that campus. This analysis included a review of the barriers that were overcome, and those that still exist. This was performed via an analysis of faculty interviews and campus

ethnographies. Interviews with faculty were used to identify implementation policies of the institutional and faculty culture in establishing effective critical media literacy education offerings on campus.

Limitations

In some of the classrooms studied, the quality of quantitative data gathered had poor response rates—particularly for the post-survey. The quantitative data gathered reflects only the demographics and responses of students who participated in the surveys, and not all students enrolled in the courses. Due to privacy concerns, the researcher did not have access to all aspects of enrollment data. In about half of the courses, Non-White students had the largest drop in participation between the pre- and post-survey. This raises the possibility of stereotype threat, a construct which “maintains that the pressure to disconfirm and to avoid being judged by negative and potentially degrading stereotypes interferes with the processing of information (Davis & Silver, 2003). Non-White students have been shown in some cases to answer incorrectly or not at all, for instance, when a survey proctor is White (Davis & Silver, 2003). All of the surveys for this study were distributed by a White instructor, and the students also met the researcher, who is also White, prior to taking the post-survey. This may have generated a stereotype threat that could have resulted in a low number of responses among students of color.

The survey demographics revealed a potential lack of enrollment in critical media literacy courses among students of color. The percent of Non-White students enrolled in critical media literacy courses, according to the survey data, was proportionately less than

the enrollment on every campus except one: Private University B (See Table 1 & 2). The actual number of Non-White students enrolled in a particular critical media literacy course may be more than what is shown in Figure 1 and 2, but the study did not have access to the actual demographics for all students enrolled. Considering that critical media literacy educators seek to empower and provide space for marginalized and oppressed communities, such as communities of color, the potential low enrollment of Non-White students in the courses sampled illuminates the need for additional studies on and how effective critical media literacy programs are at recruiting Non-White students.

Table 2. Comparison of the Racial Demographics of Critical Media Literacy Courses and Institutions of Higher Learning

Community College				Public University				Private University			
Course	A	B	C	A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B
Location	CA	CA	CA	NE	NE	CA	NY	MI	NY	NE	CA
% of School Population that identify as White	39%	39%	39%	70%	81%	49%	59%	75%	59%	70%	31%
% of the class that identify as White	69%	56%	59%	75%	89%	65%	60%	96%	88%	92%	31%

Demographic data from the courses observed in the study suggest relatively consistent enrollment trends in critical media literacy courses. The students enrolled in critical media literacy courses tend to be overwhelmingly White. In one case, there was only one student of color enrolled. The instructors in the study were also all White. Out of the eleven courses, women were the majority in seven other courses and equal to men to men in one other course (See Table 1). Students in the four-year university critical

media literacy courses, like the majority of students in contemporary institutions of higher education, were paying for their education via student loans.

Conclusion

This mixed-methods sequential explanatory sought to develop a clear understanding of an effective critical media literacy education and offer a strategy for its implementation in higher education. The instrumentation for the study included student surveys and interviews, classroom observations, faculty interviews, and a review of course and campus documents. In the study, the researcher triangulated data from eight different US higher education institutions in this mixed-methods sequential explanatory study. The higher education institutions were chosen because they employ educators committed to teaching students about media from a critical perspective.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter reviews the study's findings by introducing the six main themes generated from the data: (1) Engaging and Inspiring Instructor; (2) A Critical Perspective; (3) Inequality And Oppression; (4) Student Participation; (5) Contemporary Content and Tools; and (6) Resistance And Activism. The chapter ends with a review of the relationship between critical media literacy educators' goals and methods and student outcomes.

The study found the presence of outcomes of effective critical media literacy pedagogy that mirror those proposed in the literature. Those outcomes included: increased student engagement (Black, 2009); critical awareness of media (Rodesiler, 2010; Torres & Mercado, 2006); civic engagement (Kellner & Share, 2007); empowerment (Frechette, 2005; Gainer, 2010); and adoption of a social justice agenda (Kellner & Share, 2007). The data also generated findings regarding issues of equity. Female students exhibited an increase in their level of critical awareness toward media and social justice attitudes. Students of color showed increased levels of civic engagement, critical awareness toward media, and social justice attitudes. Last, the study suggests that a market-focused media education comes at the expense of students' critical awareness of media and increased social justice attitudes.

Themes

An analysis of data in this mixed methods study illuminated six themes: (1) Engaging and Inspiring Instructor; (2) A Critical Perspective; (3) Inequality and

Oppression; (4) Student Participation; (5) Contemporary Content and Tools; and (6) Resistance and Activism. These six themes describe the goals of critical media literacy educators, the methods they employ to achieve those classroom goals, and the impact their pedagogy has on student outcomes. Figure 2 displays the six themes the study found to be associated with a critical media literacy pedagogy. Three of the themes (Engaging and Inspiring Instructor, Student Participation, and Contemporary Tools and Content) reflected effective contemporary pedagogy, regardless of the discipline. The remaining three themes, *Critical Perspective*, *Resistance and Activism and Inequality and Oppression*, appeared to be unique to critical media literacy pedagogy.

Figure 2. The Six Themes Associated With Effective Critical Media Literacy Pedagogy

Theme 1: Engaging and Inspiring Instructors

The study revealed the centrality of the instructor to an engaging critical media literacy classroom. The qualitative data pointed to a positive relationship between an engaging classroom and instructors' teaching styles and personalities. This confirmed previous study's assertion that there was a positive relationship between student engagement and critical media literacy (Alvermann, 2002; Daniels, 2012; Deal, Flores-Koulis, & Sears, 2010; Garrett & Schmeichel, 2012; Hammer, 2009; Kellner, & Share, 2005; Mathews & Squire, 2009). The type of teaching style that engaged students most consistently involved an instructor who was mobile during the class meeting, invoked

humor, and exhibited compassion. Similarly, students found their instructors' relaxed and authentic personalities to be engaging. Students were engaged in courses as a result of the comfortable and inviting classroom environment and the instructors' authenticity, compassion, and humor. The educator interviews revealed that their effectiveness is due in part to overcoming campus resistance to their course content and pedagogical methods. They noted that despite their effective teaching style they had met resistance on campus for teaching critical media literacy.

Teaching style. The study found that an effective, engaging teaching style is characteristic of instructors who are compassionate, humorous, and mobile in the classroom. Many of the instructors walked back and forth throughout the class while they were lecturing, or answering and asking questions. The educators frequently sat down, in consistently changing locations, while students spoke with them. Students' heads often followed professors as they walked back and forth from the front to the back of the room. This seemed to demonstrate that students were engaged in the discussions. One student remarked, "If he [the instructor] sees someone who is not paying attention he tries to get them involved in class. He walks around in class to make sure people were paying attention."

Critical media literacy educators displayed evident compassion for their students. Students saw the professors' movement to keep them engaged as a sign of concern for them. One student remarked:

He's not afraid to kinda get in your face, but not in a bad way, like, to make sure you learn it, and if you mess around, he'll call you out for it, but, like, he just cares about everyone...

Similarly, a student from a public university felt that her professor was dedicated to helping students earn a passing grade in the course because of the professor's experience as a parent. She noted that "she [the instructor] definitely wants us all to, like, pass the class," and "she [the instructor] knows each of the students, and their strengths," and "she's [the instructor] a mom, so she understands she has kids that were also college students so she's—I think—I think she's a great teacher." Instructor concern for students was further exhibited when professors answered life and employment questions.

Humor was also a reoccurring theme in critical media literacy classrooms. In every classroom visited, both students and faculty invoked humorous comments or images. A few of the instructors arrived to the classroom early and joked with their students. Numerous students found value in educators and students taking part in humorous discussions. One student noted how her instructor "understands the jokes that we throw out to her sometimes and uh, she knows when we're goofin' around and she knows—she's just a wonderful teacher. Very good." Some of the instructors wrote humorous titles and descriptions for their assignments and readings. For example, one instructor assigned "Project #4: Final Paper – SM @ REVOLUTIONARY/BULLSHIT: To what extent were social media revolutionary, and to what extent were social media "bullshit"?" Profanity was a dimension of the classroom humor invoked by several of the

instructors. For example, when one instructor walked in and found his students already in a circle discussing the readings, he said “these mother fuckers started the class without me?”

Educator personality. In addition to employing an engaging teaching style, critical media literacy instructors also shared some personality traits. Students perceived their instructors as authentic, with relaxed attitudes. Students noted their appreciation for authenticity and relaxed demeanor in their instructors. They felt that this led to an inviting and comfortable classroom.

Several students valued what they perceived as authentic and relaxed instructors. They overwhelmingly noted their appreciation for “honest” or “real” instructors. They argued that this characteristic allows discussions to take on an organic feel. One student appreciated “the honesty part [of class]...it doesn’t feel scripted.” Other students described their professors as “down to earth,” “real,” and “doesn’t really, like, beat around the bush.” One of the instructors said that he tried “to bring theories to life by tying it in to some real life experience that I can talk about, the students get engrossed in the story and remember the theory, and also remember all aspects.” A number of students also noted their appreciation for how their instructors were “laid back” or “very relaxed.” One student remarked that his instructor was “just very relaxed and understanding with us but he’s also like—like you have to do what he asks in order for you to pass his class. But it’s like a laidback mandatory class.”

Some students lauded how their instructor created an inviting and comfortable classroom. One student noted that he was comfortable in the course because the instructor “makes it a pretty good environment to learn and retain information in.” Similarly, a high level of comfort was exhibited by a student who stated that he felt comfortable because his instructor made classmates feel like “you were allowed to go to his office, he is inviting.” Another student noted, “You know normally what you expect from a lecture is teacher talk or student to student. He advises students to contribute and help challenge him, and ask questions that kind of thing. So that’s what I like about him.”

One of the factors that made for a comfortable classroom was approachability of instructors. A community college student noted that her instructor was “somebody that you can actually, like, talk to, like you can relate to him regardless of whether he is your professor or not, you can still have a very normal conversation with him outside of class.” In numerous cases, students cited their instructors as being approachable. Instructors seemed approachable because they went out of their way to chat with students on campus, kept regular office hours, solicited email and phone call appointments in class regularly, and discussed and helped students with their outside-of-class concerns. One student said of her instructor that “she’s very open, she’s very willing to work with us, to help us.”

The educator interviews revealed that their effectiveness is due in part to overcoming campus resistance to their course content and pedagogical methods. The educators in this study noted that throughout their career, just as Alvermann and Hagood, (2000)

explained, they have met campus resistance to critical media literacy pedagogy. One instructor claimed that he met resistance from the Communication and journalism department because the “corporate heroes” in their department were being “villainized” in the critical media literacy classroom. Nearly all of the educators in the study admitted that their critiques of corporate media have resulted in them meeting forms of resistance on campus. For example, one instructor claimed that the faculty on campus does not protest her pedagogy which is critical of corporate media, but they do “marginalize it.” Similarly, another instructor noted that the first marketing content her created for his program was rebuked and edited by administrators because they deemed it too “controversial.”

Student engagement. Students reported that they were engaged with their courses because of the comfortable and inviting classroom cultivated by their instructors’ authenticity, compassion, and humor. Students observed that a comfortable and inviting classroom as well as an instructor who is humorous, authentic, and compassionate made them feel engaged in class. Educators similarly reported using these methods to keep students engaged.

Contemporary students do not appear to be engaged by a critical media literacy education that relies on a traditional lecture and exam style. One community college student, in discussing his professor’s teaching, stated, “I think that this is the type of teaching style that this generation needs. We’re not really the captive generation to sit and read a book, or just read a bunch of assigned readings, we actually engage in

interaction.” Another student in the course observed that “...his teaching is kinda different from the usual style.” Students described not only their appreciation for the critical media literacy educators’ approach, but their dislike of traditional education models of lecture and exam. One student at a west coast private university remarked that her critical media literacy course:

makes me pay attention. Whenever I have classes that were just, like, reading from the book or running through slideshows the whole time, never asking questions, or, you know, just going through whatever questions were on the, on the textbook.... it’s boring, I totally zone out, I won’t be there, and then I’ll have to, like, read afterwards.

Another student at an east coast public university said his only complaint about his critical media literacy course is that “I wish it was 20 to 30 minutes longer...the time just flew by...” Another student in the class emphasized that the critical media literacy course provides value which is not available in other courses: “I like that we can actually go and take pictures and, like, get in the field and do stuff that we’re gonna use.”

The instructors cited student engagement as a necessary component of their teaching. The male professor from Public University D stated that focusing primarily on under-achieving students can distract from the engagement of achieving students. He said that if the high achieving students were not engaged, they would fail and “we lose the best students, you know, the, the students who were getting the most out of the class...we lose the students who were most prepared and most engaged.” As a solution, the

instructor walks around and tries to keep all students engaged. For example, during the observation, one African American male student in the third row of a large six-row lecture hall was playing on his mobile phone during lecture. The professor had been lecturing on “small televisions” and picked up the student’s phone while the student was clicking on the screen. The instructor began incorporating the digital device into his lecture, while sitting on the students’ table. The insinuation from the professor was that the student’s addiction to his phone was problematic. The instructor then stood up, set down the digital device next to the student, and kept walking around. About two minutes later, the same student began watching the device again. The professor walked over to the student and sat down on the student’s table while lecturing. The professor in a kind and soothing voice said “take it outside...I won’t sit on your desk, I won’t bother you.” The student put the device away and kept looking at the instructor toward the front of the classroom for the remaining forty minutes of the class. The interaction demonstrated how the instructor worked to engage students. However, the professor’s willingness to single out a student of color may explain why this classroom had a low participation rate on the surveys among students of color.

Various students cited their instructor’s humor, authenticity, and mobility as factors that keep them engaged with their class. A student at a four-year university on the east coast stated that the instructor’s humor was an engaging force in the classroom; “He is very humorous throughout his teaching, and I think he definitely does a good job of keeping people engaged and awake during class.” A student at another university on the

east coast discussed his female instructor's authenticity as he described her "real" teaching style, which prevented him from "spacing off or focusing on something else, um, I'm feeling engaged about everything she has to say. I really enjoy the style."

Another student cited the professor's mobility in the classroom as being engaging:

He's always moving around the room so we know we were following him with our eyes. It's 3:30 afternoon, I'm always paying attention, I just want to learn in that class because he makes it so interesting. I also have a big passion for it and it makes me want to learn it more.

Similarly, a community college student stated, "... it's entertaining... he keeps me awake during a night class, you know, so... I actually pay attention. I do learn a lot."

Conclusion. The study reports the centrality of the instructor to creating an engaging critical media literacy classroom. The data point to a positive relationship between an engaging classroom and an instructor's teaching style and personality. Students were engaged by a teaching style in which the instructor was mobile during class, invoked humor, and exhibited concern. Instructors' relaxed and authentic personalities also engaged students. Students felt engaged in the courses because of comfortable and inviting classrooms and instructor authenticity, compassion, and humor.

Theme 2: Critical Perspective

A second theme emerging from the data was the critical perspective of instructors. The study found that critical media literacy instructors are dedicated to providing students with a critical perspective through a critical thinking-based pedagogy that emphasizes

debate, controversy, argumentation, and challenging students' views and beliefs. Survey results showed a particular shift in critical attitudes toward media among students of color and females enrolled in critical media education courses. However, given the mixed results and varying participation rates the study concludes that the survey instrument lacks the ability to fully capture students' critical attitudes toward media

Students reported that enrollment in the critical media literacy course led them to be more cautious in how they consume media. Some students advocated for critical media education to be mandatory in schools. Students who enrolled in a critical media course were generally concerned about the current state of corporate media, and accordingly tended to consume independent media instead. This confirmed scholars contention that critical media literacy education results in students altering their media consumption patterns (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Rodesiler, 2010; Silverblatt, Miller, Smith, & Brown, 2014; Tisdell, 2008; Torres & Mercado, 2006).

Critical student perspective. Critical media literacy educators emphasized their commitment to supporting students to adopt a critical perspective on media. One instructor asserted that it is important to provide a critical perspective on media in the classroom because “our work online is being co-opted for branding purposes...I think a lot of students don't know that.” Many of the instructors list a critical perspective on media as a theme in course syllabi. One course syllabus stated: “The purpose of the course is to encourage us to ask some basic question about the media, to criticize their content, and to become more discriminating and critical viewers, listeners, and readers.”

Nearly every critical media literacy instructor stressed the centrality of critical thinking to a critical media literacy education. One instructor described her teaching style as “focused on critical thinking and getting students to make connections between more abstract theoretical concepts and everyday life.” Another instructor noted that “I am very interested in them learning critical reading, critical listening, critical writing as well as critical thinking.” Many of the instructors’ course syllabi list “critical thinking” as a learning outcome. One instructor’s syllabus listed this course goal: “development of critical thinking analysis skills regarding corporate-propaganda media in support of democracy and citizen awareness of important socio-economic issues in the world.”

Much of the critical media educators and students’ critiques about media focused on public relations, advertisers, and news media industries. For example, one instructor noted that media literacy educators teach students that:

advertising is essentially propaganda, public relations is propaganda for the status quo, and all the things that we teach, you know, were all causing students to go look critically at public relations and advertising and people...So, the heroes in the PR classes would be the villains in the, you know, critical media literacy classes...

Similarly, another instructor noted, “I want them to understand how media constructs messages, and how ownership, advertising, flak, and ideology were all afoot in media messaging.” One course syllabi includes the following: “Advertising as propaganda.

Viral communication. Selling cynicism. The iconography of branding. The global consumer.”

Critical media instructors stressed the importance of critical thinking to a functioning democracy while offering a critical perspective on the media’s role in a democracy. Instructors underscored that democracy depends upon a vibrant and diverse media system. One course syllabus argued that the US does not have a democratic media system, adding that throughout the course, students would come to understand “how structural censorship occurs in the United States.” Similarly, in another course, the classroom discussion focused on how news media do not communicate to viewers as voters, but as consumers. Classroom discussion emphasized the value of civic participation and diversity of media.

In addition to emphasizing the democratic process, critical media literacy instructors offered students a critical perspective on the political economy of media. Instructors argued in their syllabi, lectures, readings, and assignments that the limited ownership of media content results in a media system that poorly informs the public. One instructor explained:

most Americans, most students do not know who owns our media systems...So, I design a lot of my early part of the course to help the students map out the six large transnational global corporations that own the media. From there, I then want the students to do narrative analyses to look at how—what kinds of stories were actually uh, dominant and how to cultivate so we use cultivation theory.

Similarly, one course syllabus listed the following learning outcome: “Students will understand the concept of Truth Emergency inside the corporate media managed news systems.” The outcome demonstrates that the instructor will provide students with a critical view that will focus on critiquing the political economy of media.

Critical media literacy instructors believe that a pedagogy introducing a critical perspective must challenge students’ long-held beliefs. One instructor noted that sometimes students “do not like to have their long-held, normative beliefs challenged...I’m trying to ask them to think outside of their own opinions” Another instructor noted, “[I] like to engage conflict wherever possible, again, keep the classroom slightly uncomfortable.” He told his students in the first class meeting that “the class is designed to offend and challenge.” Similarly, another instructor’s course syllabus stated “Learning is fun, yet can be painful for some in various ways! Be prepared to shed any conditioning and reexamine beliefs and thoughts once seen in different light.” Critical media literacy educators employed argument and debate to challenge students’ beliefs. For example, a community college student noted that the course often involved “heated discussion, heated debate about things.” Another student explained, “there were times when students who were knowledgeable about what we’re debating, who add their own opinions or what they’ve found. It’s a very open-ended debate.” Instructors cited “trust” between students and the instructor as being essential for an fruitful classroom debate. One student remarked that his instructor is “very conversational and at the same time you can tell he knows what he’s talking about.”

Impact on students. Students enrolled in a critical media course appeared to increase their awareness of the dangers posed by media consumption. This was found in the qualitative data. However, the critical awareness pre and post-survey given to students demonstrated mixed results regarding students' critical attitudes toward media. The survey results were analyzed on an overall classroom on a scale totaling 100%. For example, a 0% meant no student in the classroom had any critical awareness of media and a 100% meant that every student had a complete critical awareness of media. Survey data for the entire course population of all courses studies showed mixed results (Figure 3). However the data for students of color and women showed increases in student's level of critical awareness toward media (Figures 4 & 5).

Some courses saw an increase in students' levels of critical awareness of media, and some saw a decrease. The positive shifts in students' levels of critical awareness toward media in Community College B, Public University A, C, and F, were not substantial (see Figure 3). This may be because the students had little to no room for growth on the survey instrument due to their pre-existing critical awareness of media. The pre-survey results indicated that the critical media literacy courses were somewhat self-selective, considering that in every classroom 50 to 65% of students already held a critical attitude toward media (see Figure 3). Thus, there was not a lot of possibility to increase those numbers. The decreases in student critical awareness toward media may have resulted from problematic instrument choice, students dropping the course, or being disinterested in completing the survey.

There were two extreme declines in students' critical awareness toward media: Community College A and Public University B (See Figure 3). The decline in Community College Course A may result from the fact that nearly 50% of the students who took the pre-survey did not take the post-survey. This produced conflicting results. Public University B may have displayed a steep decline because it was the only course that had a market driven purpose for studying digital tools. In fact, it was an economics course where students were taught how to "brand" and advertise themselves with the tools. The market focused pedagogy of digital tools may have produced a reliance and appreciation for media among students which came at the expense or lessening of students' critical awareness of media.

Figure 3. Changes in Students' Critical Awareness of Media

The majority of students of color enrolled in a critical media literacy course experienced a significant shift in their critical awareness toward media. In the courses where the proportion of students of color completing the pre-surveys remained consistent with the proportion of students completing the post-surveys, students of color saw an increase in their level of critical awareness toward media. In Community College Course A, Public University Course B, and Private University A there was a decline in the level

of critical awareness toward media for all students (see Figure 3), but an increase among students of color (see Figure 4). The outcomes point to a potentially positive relationship between critical media literacy courses and increased critical awareness of media among students of color. However, this finding needs to be balanced against relatively low levels of enrollment among students of color.

In the courses where there was a disparity between the proportion of students completing the pre-survey and post-survey, students of color saw a decline in their level of critical awareness of media. This may simply be explained by the existence of stereotype threat which produced useless results. Other potential explanations for why the survey data in these courses resulted in a decrease in the levels of critical awareness of media among students of color was unique in each course. Some of the mixed results concerning the critical awareness of media among students of color may have caused the low participation in the post-survey. Another factor that may have resulted in the survey data recording a decline in the level of critical awareness toward media among students of color could be that Community College Course C and Public University Course C (see Figure 4) were the only evening courses in the study. An evening course could be a potential environmental factor negatively impacting the learning outcomes for students of color in a critical media classroom. Evening classes were more likely to enroll students who have jobs or have been taking classes all day and thus were more likely to be tired when taking a survey. Lastly, the mixed results may result from a poor instrument choice that did not accurately capture students' critical attitudes toward media.

Overall, students of color enrolled in critical media literacy courses showed an increase in their critical awareness of media. Students of color in community colleges, public universities, and private universities showed increases as high as 11% in their level of critical awareness toward media according to the pre and post-survey results (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Changes in Critical Awareness of Media among Students of Color

In the courses where the proportion of female students completing the pre-surveys remained consistent with the proportion of students completing the post-surveys, female students showed an increase in their level of critical awareness toward media (see Figure 5). This was the case in Public University Course C and Private University Courses A and B. These findings point to the potential positive relationship between female students' levels of critical awareness toward media and enrollment in a critical media literacy course. The reason that Public University Course D's stable numbers do not undermine this finding is because that course had poor participation overall on the surveys (see Public University D in the Profile of Institutions section). Given some mixed results the study concludes that the survey instrument probably lacks the capacity to quantify students' critical attitudes toward media

In the remaining courses with unstable pre and post-survey data there were mixed outcomes in terms of female students' levels of critical awareness toward media. The mixed outcomes for female students' levels of critical awareness of media may have resulted from the decline in the numbers of students who took the post-survey. There were big gains in Community College Course A, Public University Course A, and Public University Course F, yet in every one of those courses half of the female respondents who completed the pre-survey did not complete the post-survey (see Figure 5). Similarly, about 25% to 50% of pre-survey female respondents were lost in the post-surveys in Community College Course C and Public University E, all of which showed declines in participation.

Figure 5. Changes in Levels of Critical Awareness of Media among Female Students.

The qualitative data indicated that students of all demographic backgrounds believed they had adopted an enhanced critical perspective on media as a result of taking the courses. Students from every course reported that their instructors' critical perspectives on media had made them more cautious and skeptical about their media consumption patterns. For example, one student remarked that after taking the course "you start thinking a lot about like everything I see a lot more and just like realizing why

the media portrays things a certain way.” A student from another course remarked that “[the course] impacted how I view media regularly and how susceptible I am to just taking what things mean...” Similarly, another student described how the course “helped me to become a little bit more conscious when I’m reading articles or listening to the radio.” When asked how the course impacted him, one student stated that “it impacted me in the sense that I’ve definitely learned more about the news,” and as a result, “I don’t really trust mainstream news.” Another student stated that the class made him constantly examine conversations about media whether it is on “my phone” or “eating dinner with my parents,” and he thinks about the “different tricks that the media uses, to get us to buy things or manipulate the truth.”

Some students were convinced that a critical media education changed their media consumption patterns. Many students noted that the course caused them to consume independent media instead of corporate media. A student observed that before the course, “I didn’t know to look to for news outside of what’s on, like mainstream news, and other sites like that. So I found that really interesting.” Another student stated that the course “got me to look more at independent sources.” Other students explained that the critical media course trained them not to be passive consumers. One student noted that as a result of the course, “I started looking at commercial and print ads critically...” The same student explained that when

I started watching television with my friends, you know, watching football or whatever, and kind of, you know, assessing these in real-life situations, and

sometimes it's gotten to the point where my friends were saying, 'alright, can we just watch this commercial without you picking it apart?'

A few students found so much value in a critical media literacy course that they thought such courses should be mandatory for all students. Students described the value they gained via the course. One student said that after taking the class, he felt he could see "the bigger picture...I think it's made me a lot wiser." Similarly, numerous students in multiple courses stated that the course had "opened my eyes." Many of them agreed that a critical media course should be mandatory for all students. As one student indicated "I think everyone should take the class similar to this...it's a topic that affects everyone." Similarly, another student said that the course:

allowed me to realize that I need to do further research, a lot of not of just what goes around on in life, but what we were being taught in at school. Because in school, this class taught me what we're being taught at in school is, I'm trying to think of a PG way of saying BS. Its pretty ridiculous.

Conclusion. Critical media literacy educators generally employed a critical perspective in their classrooms, championing critical thinking and democracy. Their pedagogy emphasized debate, controversy, argumentation, and challenging students' views and beliefs. Many students found value in critical media literacy pedagogy and echoed researchers by arguing that it should be a required course for students (Buckingham, 2007; Gainer, 2007; Kellner , 2013). A key impact of critical media literacy pedagogy appears to be that students changed their media consumption patterns

because they became more reflective about how they consumed media. The shift in their critical awareness toward media was most significant among women and students of color.

Theme 3: Inequity and Oppression

The third theme of the study is inequity and oppression. Critical media literacy educators introduced issues of social justice to the classroom by emphasizing the existence of inequities and oppression in society. The educators connected issues of social justice to media in their course discussions and content. Instructors generally had a passion for social justice issues, which they shared orally and visually via stickers, pictures, and signs. Because they presume that a majority of their students come from backgrounds of privilege, instructors aim to include the perspectives of oppressed and marginalized groups through classroom-based discussions of theory and content such as independent news media stories. Educators also created space for students from marginalized and oppressed backgrounds to discuss their experiences of inequity and oppression. Quantitative and qualitative data indicated congruency with Kellner and Share's (2007) claim that critical media literacy pedagogy influences students to adopt social justice attitudes (See Figure 6,7, & 8).

Inequity and oppression. In the classroom, critical media literacy instructors emphasized the existence of oppression in society. One of the instructors explained that his class focused on inequities and oppression by looking at “the root causes of major social justice issues, racism, war, environmental catastrophes.” Many instructors spread

awareness about oppression and inequity by covering their office doors with signs and stickers about social justice issues. One professor had a giant sticker that read “Respect Human Rights” on his door. Critical media literacy instructors also introduced classroom content that discusses issues of inequity and oppression. For example, one professor led a discussion on how the marketing of sex has led to the oppression of women. He cited pornography as a leading form of media content oppressing women. He noted that in recent years there has been a spike in the consumption of pornographic media that objectifies women. He warned that the children who grow up consuming pornographic media could be unable to empathize with women because they have been wired to see them as objects “like a pen or a can of soda.” As a result, women were surrounded by a culture of consumers who were unable to empathize with them or view them as anything more than an object.

Critical media educators sought to insert the perspectives of marginalized and oppressed groups into the classroom. For example, one instructor explained “we spend a lot of time in my class talking about...race and class and gender... I want students to be aware of the role of media as the central storytellers of our culture and that the stories that they tell were often incomplete or distorted.” Similarly, another instructor lectured on how one’s position in the society influences their interpretation of media content. He connected it to a discussion about how 9/11 gave rise to Islamophobia. Thus, Muslim communities have a different interpretation of the media discourse on 9/11 than other groups. Instructors also sought to create space for marginalized and oppressed

backgrounds through discussion and engagement. For example, in Private University Course B, the instructor aims to teach to the oppressed. Her classroom was demographically comprised of students from marginalized and oppressed sectors of society. The classroom was made up of 19 students included 14 females and 12 students of color. However, the university was an expensive private school. It is not clear if these students come from privileged or poor backgrounds. She explained that she teaches to the students as the oppressed through “a modified Freirean philosophy where I try and engage with the students and find out what questions or contradictions they bring in about a particular subject...” Her pedagogical theory mirrors Frechette (2002) and McDaniel’s (2004) argument that effective critical media literacy education should be based on a Freirean model.

Most of the critical media literacy instructors stressed the connection between inequities in society and media. For example, one instructor noted, “I prefer my students to understand...that the media is a very unequal platform, that it’s dominated by class, race, sex, and sexuality inequalities.” Critical media literacy educators underscored that media cannot be perceived as equal because not everyone has the same level of access to consumer and create media. For example, one instructor said she is concerned that as we move toward a digital society there were “those who do not have funds, marginalized groups, who were left out via the digital divide.” That same instructor led a classroom discussion around the questions: *Who were our cultural producers? Who were our consumers?* The discussion centered on how for most of television history programming

was created by old, straight, White, wealthy, males, but the consuming audience was mostly middle class young to old White males. As a result, the narrative on television is that Blacks serve Whites, and women were in secondary roles. In contemporary television, the audience has diversified, but the producers and their messages have not. That same instructor described her teaching philosophy as “everyone, every student, is a learner who deserves the best pedagogical models that honor inclusiveness, that honor diversity of perspective.”

Impact on students. A critical media literacy pedagogy focusing on inequities and oppression appears to be related to enhanced social justice attitudes among students. The study defines social justice attitudes as recognizing societal inequities and oppression and feeling of obligated to ameliorate them. The survey data revealed movement in most students’ social justice attitudes after completing a critical media literacy course (see Figure 6, 7, & 8). Qualitative and quantitative data show an increase in student awareness of societal inequities and oppression, and a sense of obligation to address social problems. The shift in social justice attitudes was biggest among students of color (see Figure 7).

There was a positive connection between critical media literacy course content and increased student awareness of societal oppression and inequity. One student explained that the course “opened me up to the idea that things were a lot worse than they really are, and it is time to make a change.” Students also reported valuing how the

course introduced them to the varying perspectives that were different from their own.

For example, a student explained that in the course it feels like:

I'm kind of getting a broader picture of what's going on in the world and its helping me think...it's kind of giving me a different perspective on some of the issues that I feel strongly about... feeling a little *more* strongly about them.

A few students displayed an enhanced capacity to empathize with different perspectives.

For example, a student explained that because of taking the course "I'm more open-minded to different views." This was supported by the social justice portion of the pre and post-survey that focused on student's awareness of inequities and oppression in society and their personal feeling of obligation ameliorate them (see Figure 6).

Students enrolled in critical media literacy courses demonstrated an acute interest in issues of inequity and oppression. For example, four of the courses required students to search out independent newsworthy stories ignored by the corporate press. In those courses, students were allowed to choose news stories on any topic, and nearly all of the students chose stories that focused on inequity and oppression. The students focused on stories about inequities and oppression such as "Untested Rape Kits," "Police Practices For Slamming People To The Ground," "Civil Liberties Lost Since 9/11," "Monsanto Is Poisoning Us," "Half Of World's Corporations were Blocking Climate Change Regulation," "Dumping Tephlon In The Ohio River," "Campus Sexual Assaults Impacting Enrollment," "ALEC Opposing Women Rights And Wage Increases," "Section 8 Homeowners On Lockdown," and "US Taking Less Syrian Refugees Than

They Can.” In a related finding, the students found these stories in independent press outlets such as *Truthout*, *Common Dreams*, and *The Intercept*, which speaks to McChesney’s (2007) argument that the independent press can be a tool for raising issues of social justice into the classroom.

Students enrolled in the critical media literacy courses revealed social justice attitudes such as acknowledging oppression and inequity and having a sense of obligation to address them. Out of the nine courses surveyed, six of the courses showed an overall classroom increase in social justice attitudes. Those increases were found in about 6 to 11 percent of the overall class population (see Figure 6). The range of social justice attitudes for each classroom in the pre-survey was 47% to 61%. Public University Course C, which saw the biggest shift in social justice attitudes, an 11% shift, had a pre-survey score of 47%. Thus, that classroom appeared to have more possibility than other classrooms for increases in student social justice attitudes. The survey data support Kellner & Share’s (2007) conclusion that there is a positive relationship between enrollment in a critical media literacy course and enhanced social justice attitudes.

Some courses did show a decline in students’ level of social justice attitudes. Community College Course C was one of these. It is an evening course that lost just over one third of the pre-survey participants for the post-survey. The low participation rate may be an explanation for the decline in social justice attitudes among enrolled students. Public University Course B also showed a decline, but it had stable numbers and was a late afternoon class. One possible explanation for the decline in social justice attitudes in

Public University Course B is that the course was not very social justice-oriented. In fact, this was the only course in the study that had an economics component and offered a market driven purpose for studying digital tools. The syllabus stated that the course will examine “social media from both theoretical and professional practical perspectives.” The students had assignments focused on how they could best “brand” themselves. The survey data point to a potential conflict between a pedagogy simultaneously focused on the marketization of media tools and social justice attitudes.

Figure 6. Changes in Social Justice Attitudes for Students Enrolled in Critical Media Literacy Courses

There was a positive relationship between critical media literacy pedagogy and social justice attitudes among students of color (see Figure 7). Public University Courses E and F did not have reliable data for people of color because there was between one and zero students of color enrolled in those courses. The remaining eight courses were split

between increases and decreases in social justice attitudes. Four of the courses showed a decrease in social justice attitudes. Potential explanations for a decrease in outcomes were unique to each course. One potential explanation for the decline was the drop in student participation between the pre and post-survey. Community College Course B and Private University Course A, lost 50% and 75% of the Non-White student participants respectively between the pre and post-surveys. These students could have refused to take the post-survey because of a perceived stereotype threat or they may have dropped the courses because they were not engaged or had competing priorities. Another explanation is the course was not social justice oriented, such as Public University Course B, which was the only course that focused on professional development and marketization. There was a low participation rate among students of color in Public University Course D, which contributed to the survey registering a decline (see Public University Course D in the Profile of Institutions section in Chapter Three).

Four of the critical media literacy courses did show an increase in social justice attitudes among students of color, although it was less than the general class population. Community College Course A and Public University Course C both saw about a 10% overall increase in social justice attitudes among students of color (see Figure 7). Meanwhile Private University Course A and Public University Course A saw about a five percent overall increase in social just attitudes among students of color (see Figure 7). Because of their increase in social justice attitudes and consistent participation numbers, the survey data illuminate a positive relationship between critical media literacy courses

and increased social justice attitudes among students' of color. However, that increase is less than the increase in social justice attitudes for the general course population. The campus with the biggest shift in social justice attitudes among students of color was Community College Course A.

Figure 7. Changes in Social Justice Attitudes for Students of Color Enrolled in Critical Media Literacy Courses

Female students' social justice attitudes also showed mixed results in the survey data. The pre and post-survey participation numbers remained stable and showed increases in female social justice attitudes in Community College Course B, Public

University Course C, and Private University Course B. The increases ranged from 2% to 10%. These small increases demonstrate some positive connection between critical media literacy education and increased social justice attitudes among female students. Yet despite all having consistent participation, there was basically no change in the social justice attitudes among female students in Public University Courses B and D and Private University Course A. Inconsistent participation in the pre and post-survey resulted in increased outcomes in female students' social justice attitudes in Community College Course A and Public University Course A and E and a decline in those attitudes in Community College Course C and Public University Course F.

Figure 8. Changes in Social Justice Attitudes for Female Students Enrolled in Critical Media Literacy Courses

Conclusion. The study found that critical media literacy educators were vocal supporters of inclusivity and diversity, emphasizing in their classrooms the existence of inequalities and oppression in society. A critical media classroom potentially provided space to discuss societal inequities and oppression through the perspectives of marginalized and oppressed groups and the consumption of independent media. The

qualitative and quantitative data both showed an increase in social justice attitudes among all students enrolled in critical media literacy courses, though these increases were less pronounced among people of color and equal or more pronounced among women than in the sample as a whole.

Theme 4: Student Participation

A fourth theme that emerged in the study was the centrality of student participation. Critical media literacy instructors required students to participate in the course via presentations, discussions, hands-on exercises, and service learning assignments. Students reported that the classroom was comfortable, the discussion was valuable, and they felt obligated to participate in the course. Finally, students generally reported feeling validated by their experience in a critical media literacy classroom.

Student Participation. Critical media literacy instructors often required students to participate in the course by presenting on student-generated content. For example, one instructor required students to create a news product and present it to the class. The assignment required students to “work in teams to create a news media product (eg. radio program, blog, website, or zine).” Similarly, another course required students to present on a social media platform and relate it to two chapters of the course textbook. The presentation required a minimum of 22 presentation slides, and a video from YouTube that exemplified the chapter topics. One group of students presented on the topic of social and liberal theories as they relate to social media and surveillance. They discussed and played videos about the whistleblower group Wikileaks. The students in the class seemed

engaged by the presentation because they were all looking forward, moving their heads in a yes or no movement when questions were asked, asking questions, and making comments.

Critical media literacy educators also encouraged student participation through classroom discussions. Instructors noted the connection between participation and discussion in their syllabi. For example, one professor listed under the course requirements:

Participation: Active participation in discussions is an immeasurably important aspect of this course (and in life)...I expect every student to contribute to the discussion at every class meeting. In other words, just showing up is necessary but not sufficient for earning a high participation grade in this class.

Instructors also designed the classroom assignments to spark student-led discussions. For example, one instructor required an assignment entitled “Group Discussion Teams.” The assignment description read, “the class will be divided into four discussion teams. Each week a different discussion team will lead the class dialogue...for 30-40 minutes each week.” Students also participated in discussions digitally with online discussion boards that required them to write a response to course content and other students. Instructors reminded the students that it was a discussion, and not a lecture, by repeatedly mentioning “in our discussion” or “we will discuss.”

Critical media literacy instructors frequently sought to design and re-arrange the classroom to be more conducive to discussion. For example, some of the instructors re-

arranged the desks into a U or circle shape for discussion. One instructor said that before he arrives in the classroom “students set up the room, students begin the discussion, I come in and facilitate the discussion.” Many of the instructors arrived early and talked to the students about their lives or general interests as a way to create a comfortable classroom before the class officially began. The discussions included sports, news articles, and complaints about other courses offered on campus. Students were aware that the courses were designed to be discussion-oriented. One student explained that when class begins “we sit down, and uh, she basically starts going through what we would be doing, what we would be covering for the day,” after that “the entire class time, we’re discussing. There’s a lot of classmate discussion on the varying topics that we’re discussing during the day.”

In addition to discussion, critical media literacy instructors required student participation in the form of hands-on assignments. Examples of hands-on group assignments in a critical media literacy classroom included “social media weekly marketing teams” that monitor and report to the class on news stories, visiting and volunteering for non-profit media groups, and taking pictures for visual communications about the local community. One of the students referred to the course as “pretty hands on.” Some instructors were even hands-on in the grading process. One professor invites students into his office to challenge grades. The instructors believed that by having students perform hands-on tasks for credit, they will be able to master those same activities or duties as non-students. For example, one syllabus noted that “The overall

goal is for students to develop the critical thinking, knowledge, skill sets and values to participate as active and informed information producers, curators, critics, editors, audience members and disseminators; as smart, engaged citizens.”

Critical media literacy instructors also required student participation through small group service learning assignments. In fact, one of the instructors explained that her goal is to have students “engaged with service learning and also to think about working for nonprofits as well.” Required service learning group assignments included students visiting non-profit news media producers and creating news content and analysis for public consumption. One instructor explained that some of her students “are making videos, some of them were making a news website, and they’re taking issues that have been concerned about in class and writing news stories.” Similarly, Community College Course A, B, and C as well Public University Course B and C allowed students to have their classroom work published online and in annual book. The students were also given opportunities to present on their work at public events.

Impact on Students. Students reacted positively to a critical media literacy pedagogy that encouraged their participation. Indeed, students enrolled in critical media literacy courses reported feeling obligated to participate in the classroom and finding value in that participation. They conveyed feeling comfortable in sharing their views and opinions in the classroom and validated. Students appeared to be confident because they often corrected or disagreed with the instructor and engaged in dialogue about their varying perspectives.

Students in critical media literacy courses felt obligated to participate in the classroom discussions and found that participation to be valuable. Students enrolled in a critical media literacy course reported feeling obligated to participate in the class. For example, a student remarked that her instructor “expects us to have input in whatever she [instructor] has to say or whatever is going on in the class. She’ll leave awkward silences just because she wants us to interact with her and other students.” Students reported finding value in their class participation. For example, a student in another course credited the class with promoting critical thinking because the course had

open dialogue discussion, and I think that’s one of the better ways to promote critical thinking...Critical thinking—you break down subjects, you, you know, perhaps there’s...you know, would you have thought, and now you have to reshape your thinking, I think that’s really healthy in terms of particular subjects that he teaches.

Many of the students remarked that discussion was “definitely the best way to learn.” Students reported feeling comfortable in sharing their views and opinions in the classroom. For example, one student explained that the instructor “doesn’t pressure you to have to talk, but he makes it very open and comfortable to talk and throw ideas out....” Another student remarked that “we hear a range of different opinions, but everyone can say their opinion and express themselves and it’s nice because we’ve all gotten to know each other throughout the semester and so we feel more comfortable.” Students reported viewing the discussion as an opportunity to share their views and engage in debate. One

student described the discussion as being when “a lot of people get involved in it, and throw out their opinions and two sense after, which is great...so it’s a discussion class...” Students also gave evidence that they felt the discussion invited them to share their views because they thought the classroom was “very loose” and that they controlled the conversation when they talked, the conversation would begin with:

the [text]book that we were studying at the current moment and then we just kind of like bounce around with what people were doing in their lives pertaining to public communications and social media.

One factor contributing to an inviting critical media literacy classroom was educators remembering their students’ names. Each of the instructors seemed to be very familiar with their student’s names. For example, one instructor from at took roll daily. He did this in the orally in the 28-person classroom by calling out each students’ name. In the case of nearly every name, the instructor was able to answer “here” for the students before the student could respond to their name being called. This demonstrated that the instructor knew each student by name.

The critical media literacy classrooms observed often validated students. Students appeared to be validated because they often corrected or disagreed with the instructor and engaged in dialogue about their varying perspectives. This demonstrated that they felt confident that their perspectives were valued. For example, one of the instructors validated students by announcing the names of top five student scores on assignments as she handed them back. One of her students explained that:

my professor's great. She likes to explain what we're doing kinda [inaudible] and then she asks us to say what we feel about it or what we thought and then sometimes she'll ask us to, like, elaborate, and nothing is ever wrong. She's never like, no that's not, wrong, which is really nice....she respects everyone's opinion which is really nice.

Similarly, students cited their appreciation for how their instructors never "belittle a student," always "listen to what they [students] have to say," spend time discussing student issues, were genuinely concerned about students' lives, and were accommodating with office hours.

Conclusion. Critical media literacy educators' course work and grading stressed the centrality of student participation. The instructors required students to participate in the course via presentations, discussions, hands-on exercises, and service learning assignments. Students generally reacted positively to this dimension of critical media literacy pedagogy. They reported feeling obligated to participate in the classroom, finding value in that participation, and feeling comfortable in sharing their views and opinions in the classroom. Collectively, the data showed that students appeared to be validated by the course because when they spoke up in class and did not avoid controversy or debate.

Theme 5: Contemporary Content and Tools

A fifth theme found in the study was the use of contemporary content and tools. Critical media literacy educators used contemporary content and tools to engage students in learning course content. However, the educators reported mixed feelings about the

impact and purpose of technology in the classroom. Nearly all of the instructors utilized digital tools and content to varying degrees. Students found contemporary topics, content, and tools to be valuable, engaging, and useful for explaining course content.

Contemporary Tools and Content. Critical media educators used digital tools such as blogs and webpages like YouTube to enhance the classroom, but remained ambivalent about the impact of digital technologies on the classroom. For example, one instructor explained that technology is a mixed bag because it is “a distraction for students...but I think it’s really good in other ways...I don’t even know how I could teach my class without YouTube.” Similarly, another instructor expressed the conflict over utilizing technology in the classroom by noting, “technology has definitely placed a lot of things at our finger tips, but at the same time we still do not operate outside the Propaganda Model.” Numerous critical media literacy educators denounced the corporate influence on media, but admitted that they find that the corporate (Google)-sponsored YouTube positively enhances the classroom. Critical media literacy instructors argued that technology in the classroom is an “advantage” because it can enable students and faculty to access almost any material within seconds. For example, one instructor said technology is “definitely helpful especially in teaching media literacy education because you can quickly conjure up whatever it is you’re trying to show as a current contemporary example...”

One critical media literacy instructor avoids digital tools altogether in the classroom. He teaches at Public University D. He does not allow students to have their

digital tools such as cellphones and laptops visible during the class meeting unless they are taking notes. He explained that:

for many of the same reasons that they're [students] not engaged in activism, and then also in the activism front...[its that] they've lost so much time just staring at the palm computers, so they're all looking at little screens all the time and just spending, you know, so many hours a day engaged in their screen addictions, and the screen addictions rewire their minds so they were feeling less and less connected to the real world around them...

The instructor joked, "I've found that the best technology for the classroom would be the light bulb, so you can actually light up the room and everybody can see each other, and movable chairs so you can everybody in the front row, everybody is participating on the front row level." His specific avoidance of digital tools and content in the classroom was, however, an outlier in the study.

Critical media literacy instructors made assignments that required students to use digital tools and software in their courses. Digital tool requirements ranged from submitting essays via email in certain digital forms to using multiple platforms and content for assignments. Students used—and in some cases were required to use—image slides and videos in the classroom. Other instructors required students to use the Internet to locate and collect digital news articles. The most common contemporary tools used in the classroom were discussion boards and blogs. For example, one instructor based 20% of the grade on blogging. The blogging requirement in this class was articulated in this

way: “All students will create a blog where they will post several times during the semester. These posts may include text, images, videos, and/or podcasts. More details of this assignment will be handed out in class.” Another course assigned blogging by informing students: “You will need to go to blogger.com or wordpress.com.” Instructors then incorporated blog responses into the classroom discussion. For example, one instructor begins the class by displaying a student’s blog response and linking it to the course theme for the day.

Critical media literacy instructors not only incorporate contemporary tools, but contemporary content as well. For example, instructors discussed news and entertainment content such as the National Security Administration’s domestic spying, Wikipedia, net neutrality, international trade deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the attacks on September 11, 2001, the 2003 Invasion of Iraq, and television shows such as *Game of Thrones*. One student described the class as focused on “current events that were still happening.” Critical media literacy instructors introduced the course content via webpages, television, music, and film clips. They also required students to consume and research contemporary content. One course assignment entitled “Media Analysis Working Papers” was “designed to bring together contemporary independent news with theory and analysis from the readings.”

Impact on Students. Critical media literacy educators’ use of contemporary content and tools appeared to engage students with course content. Students reported that the course content and tools added value to the course because they were relevant to

modern society. Similarly, students reported that the course content and tools were engaging and useful for understanding course concepts. These findings supported the claims of scholars that who argued that digital tools engage students with the contemporary classroom and content (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Behrman, 2003; Frechette, 2002; King-Shaver & Hunter, 2009; Moody, 1999; Morrell, 2002; Paul, 2000;).

Students reported that contemporary content and tools made course content valuable because they viewed the content and tools as vital for modern existence. One student said of the course, “I like that we spend more time discussing things that were actually influencing what’s going on in our country. Or things that actually matter.” Similarly, another student described course topics as “real issues.” Students found the use of contemporary tools and content to be valuable because they already used them in contemporary society. For example, a student described the information in the course as “actually learning something that’s important that can actually affect your day-to-day life as opposed to learning something that’s just kind of abstract...like taking a philosophy class or something like that...” Another student described the course as “time discussing things that were actually influencing what’s going on in our country. Or things that actually matter. There were a lot of real world applications to what we’re talking about in class.”

Students noted that critical media literacy course content and tools were not only applicable to students’ lives, but engaging and useful for understanding course concepts.

For example, a student argued that the instructor's use of television and music clips made students' "engage" with the class. Similarly, a student in another course explained that the instructor used "multiple examples...we could easily relate to..." Besides being relatable and engaging, students also argued that the course content and tools helped them understand the course concepts. One student argued that the contemporary content and topics were discussed in class in a way that "makes sense to our generation." Another student found the course relevant because the instructor used "colloquial terms."

Conclusion. Critical media literacy educators were ambivalent about the place and impact of contemporary content and tools. Yet nearly all of them utilized digital tools and content to varying degrees. Students found the use of contemporary course content and tools valuable because of their applicability in contemporary society. Students also found the contemporary tools and content engaging and useful for understanding course concepts. Critical media literacy educators' use of contemporary content and tools engaged students to learn course content.

Theme 6: Resistance and Activism

The sixth and final theme of critical media literacy pedagogy is resistance and activism. Every critical media literacy instructor in the study had participated in civic and activist movements. Their course content often covered themes and stories of activism, activist movements, and resistance. The study found that critical media instructors often encouraged resistance on the part of students through civic engagement. Students generally found their instructors' passion and enthusiasm for resistance and activism to

be inspiring. As a result, students enrolled in critical media literacy courses displayed increased levels of civic engagement, community engagement, and empowerment. The finding confirms scholar's assertion that there is a positive link between critical media literacy education and increased levels of student empowerment and civic engagement (Banaji, Buckingham, van Zoonen, & Hirzalla, 2009; Gainer, 2010; Frechette, 2002; McDaniel, 2004; Morrell, Duenas, Garcia, & Lopez, 2013; Kellner & Share, 2007). All students showed an increase in their level of civic engagement after completing the critical media literacy course, especially when that course had a service learning component (see Figure 9, 10, & 11). More than any other demographic, students of color saw largest shift in their level of civic engagement. In an interesting finding, only in a critical media literacy course where men were in the minority did female students' levels of civic engagement increase.

Activism and resistance. Critical media literacy course content emphasized resistance. Some instructors, in particular, encourage resistance to media narratives. For example, one instructor discussed how "Media Literacy says we were not beholden to media." He informed the students that once an audience is literate in media, it can negotiate the impact of media content. Similarly, another instructor sought to teach her students how to resist entertainment media messages that champion normative behavior and consumerism. She titled her lecture "The Queer Theory: Reading as Resistance." In this class, students discussed how marginalized groups such as the LGBTQI community engaged in resistance through fan fiction and creating alternative storylines while they

watch a film. She used the example of *Top Gun*, where viewers practice queer resistance by viewing the male friendship in the film as actually being a subtle romantic relationship. The instructor explains that queer resistance undermines hetero-normativity, influences the broader contexts and discourse about sexuality, and engages in pleasurable entertainment without succumbing to dominant discourse.

Critical media literacy educators celebrated activism on and off campus and in the classroom. They celebrated activism by covering their offices with activist-oriented stickers. The stickers on one instructor's door included; "9/11 was an inside job," "War is peace" on a picture of Obama, "Stop the oligarchy," "I Do Not Trust The Corporate Media," "American Hero" on a Chelsea Manning picture, and "The World Can't Wait: Drive out The Bush Regime." Another professor had his door covered by activist stickers that read "Dissent is Patriotic," "Regime Change Starts at Home," and "Non-Violence: Anti-Terrorism That Works." Another way critical media literacy educators celebrated activism was by sharing their participation in activist movements with students. For example, one instructor hung photos in his office of himself and his students at protests. One of the photos showed the instructor being slammed into a car and handcuffed by a police officer. Another way critical media literacy educators celebrated activism was by advocating for activism in the classroom. For example, one instructor discussed how he has been an advocate for lowering tuition. He then encouraged students to look at parking lot and the administrators who have expensive cars paid by student tuition.

Critical media literacy educators intertwined course content with information on activist resistance movements. For example, as one instructor explained:

from my perspective you need to combine political economic analysis which basically unpacks the messages that people were getting and you also need to combine a social movement analysis that provides students with opportunities to see how people around the world were making change through media and with media.

The course included discussions about activism and resistance centered on resisting media. For example, in one of the courses, the students discussed the hegemony of telecommunication companies like Comcast. One student in the course, who previously worked for a local branch of NBC, explained how NBC censored a story about a widow who could not get her dead husband's name off of her Comcast bill because NBC and Comcast were a shared company. The class discussed how they could practice resistance by supporting community-run media and finding alternatives to Comcast.

Community and civic engagement. Critical media literacy instructors encouraged community and civic engagement. Critical media educators often championed civic participation among their students. One instructor's syllabus included a Thomas Jefferson quote "informed citizenry is at the heart of a dynamic democracy." Another instructor's syllabus stated that the "class will evaluate the importance of a free press for the maintenance of democratic institutions in society." Critical media literacy course assignments frequently required students to engage with civic minded groups and

content. For example, one instructor required students to visit “civic media groups” and return to class to discuss how that the work of the civic media group relates to topics in the course. In class, the students explained to the class their experience working with and studying activist media groups in their communities.

Student impact. The qualitative and quantitative data showed a positive relationship between enrollment in a critical media literacy course and increased levels of civic engagement and empowerment among students (see Figure 9,10, & 11). Students report being inspired by critical media literacy educators’ passion and enthusiasm for democracy and activism. Many students reported that a critical media literacy education empowered them to speak out against societal ills and resist oppression. This was especially true for students of color.

Similar to Banaji, Buckingham, van Zoonen, and Hirzalla (2009), the study found that students enrolled in critical media literacy classrooms showed increased levels of civic engagement. Nearly all of the courses in the study saw a small to moderate increase in students’ levels of civic engagement. Community College Course A and Public University Course D, however, showed a decline in students’ level of civic engagement, but both courses experienced a dramatic decrease in the number of students who took the pre and post-survey. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, Public University Course D suffered from low participation rate among students of color. The remaining courses, whether consistent or inconsistent numbers, showed an increase in students’ level of civic

engagement. The biggest increases in students' level of civic engagement were between seven and nine percent (see Figure 9).

This survey data points to a positive relationship between student levels of civic engagement and critical media literacy courses that have a service learning component. The course with the most consistent participation numbers and biggest shift in students' level of civic engagement, Private University Course A, required students to work on projects with civic groups outside of campus (see Figure 9). That course was entitled "Civic Media." Its course goals included having students become "information producers" and "engaged citizens" (see Figure 9). The Civic Media course stood out from others because it required students to visit, work with, and document the work of civic media groups. (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Level of Civic Engagement for Students

In a related finding, students of color showed levels of civic engagement above the course average reported by all students. Four of the courses showed substantial increases in levels of civic engagement of students of color, four others exhibited declines, and one course showed no shift at all. Community College Course A and C, Public University A, and Private University B had relatively consistent pre and post-survey participation among students of color, and showed increases in level of civic

engagement. The increases for these courses ranged from eight to eighteen percent. In these courses, students of color reported larger shifts in levels of civic engagement than the course average (see Figure 10). This suggests a potential relationship between a critical media literacy course and increased levels of civic engagement among students of color. However, other courses in the study showed a decline in the level of civic engagement among students of color. These declines may have resulted from waning participation among students of color between the pre and post-survey (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Changes to The Level of Civic Engagement Among Students of Color

The level of civic engagement among female students also showed mixed results in the survey data. Community College Course B, Public University Course B, C, and D and Private University Course A and B had consistent participation numbers among their female students in the pre and post-survey. With the exception of Private University

Course B, each of those courses showed a small increase or decline neither of which was substantial. Private University Course B, which saw a 13% increase in female students' level of civic engagement, is the course with the highest proportion of women to men (60%) of any of the courses in the study. The gender demographics point to a positive relationship between an overwhelming majority of students enrolled in a critical media literacy course identifying as females and an increase in female students' level of civic engagement. Furthermore, Private University Course B was the course that had a service learning component which also was responsible for the increase levels of civic engagement among students, in a way that as not as evident in other courses. The rest of the course data was either inconsistent or showed no substantive relationship between a critical media literacy course and female students' level of civic engagement.

Figure 11. Changes in Level of Civic Engagement Among Female Students

A majority of students reported that their critical media literacy instructors'

passion and enthusiasm for democracy and activism was inspiring. Students repeatedly described their instructors as "enthusiastic," "passionate," and "excited" about the course content. Students found their instructors' passion and enthusiasm intoxicating. Students consistently described their critical media literacy instructors as "inspiring." One student described his instructor as "very passionate about the topics that he covers. He's very

informed and enthusiastic, and makes it very easy to get excited or passionate about the topics as well.”

Critical media literacy instructors’ passion and enthusiasm appeared to inspire students to consider participating in activist movements. For example, one student said that her instructor “kind of made me think a lot more about things and it made me want to be more involved with things and get into things like, ... a lot more political...I didn’t before this course.” Another student described how a critical media literacy education helped to “find my passion for what I really want to do with my life.” Students in critical media literacy courses showed signs of adopting activism by speaking out against social issues. For example, one student explained that after a course discussion about “women in media. I was on a rant for a whole week at my apartment and every- all my roommates were sick of listening to me talk about it...”

The study’s findings support the arguments of Fuchs (2011) and Morrell, Duenas, Garcia, and Lopez (2013) that a critical media literacy education appeared to empower students to resist oppression. Some students showed signs of empowerment by displaying the confidence to examine and comment on societal issues. A student explained that the course “makes me feel like I’m actually going out and finding things on my own...” This demonstrates the students’ confidence to seek out issues on their own. Similarly, another student said that the instructor “gives you the ability to find things yourself... gather your own opinion versus telling you that “hey, this is the only source you can get information from.” Numerous students gave evidence of empowerment by stating that the course

made them recognize the existence and power of their “voice.” One student explained that “people were sitting around looking at what’s happening with the world and they’re just being like oh, well, there’s nothing I can do about it? He [the instructor] makes you feel like, like you can actually make a difference in what’s happening.” Students provided evidence of their empowerment by describing growing confidence in their intellectual abilities. For example, one student remarked that when she encounters a conversation in or outside of class “I can definitely give my input...I feel like I can actually talk about them intelligently...”

Students reported that a critical media education led to them being engaged with their communities. Critical media literacy educators often inform students about how and where they can get involved in their communities. For example, a student remarked that the instructor is “happy to give information” about where to get involved and “he’s more than happy to have you get involved.” In fact, the instructor for that course explained that:

Even the people who may not be extrovert activists when they get there [to the course], after they have a class or two, some of them really were activists, some of them become activists, and others at least start to understand what activism is and why it is important. It’s kind of heartening...

Students reported getting involved with their communities because of the information and opportunities provided by their critical media literacy instructors. For example, a student explained that his teacher makes daily announcements about the “communications club

[and asks if] you wanna join or just making you be aware that you can join, ‘you know, you can still get involved.’” Other students explained that they became interested in engaging with their community because their instructors were involved in community activities. These activities’ included non-profit service learning programs that saw students and educators collaborate to produce media content and acting as faculty advisers for community engagement student clubs such as the Social Justice Club.

Conclusion. Critical media literacy educators frequently advocate for and offer strategies for resistance and activism to their students. All of the instructors had participated in civic and activist movements. Students reported being inspired by their instructors’ passion and enthusiasm for resistance and activism. Many of the students enrolled in critical media literacy courses appeared to display increased levels of civic engagement, community engagement, and empowerment. All students showed an increase in their level of civic engagement after completing the critical media literacy course. Service learning appeared to have played a role in the increased level of students’ civic engagement. Students of color exhibited higher levels of civic engagement above all other students enrolled in critical media literacy courses, although the picture was still mixed. Lastly, a critical media literacy course where women were enrolled in proportionally greater numbers appeared to show an increase in female students’ level of civic engagement.

Findings Conclusion

The study identified the presence of the outcomes associated with effective critical media literacy pedagogies. Those outcomes were increased student engagement (Black, 2009), critical awareness of media (Rodesiler, 2010; Torres & Mercado, 2006), civic engagement (Kellner & Share, 2007), empowerment (Frechette, 2005; Gainer, 2010), and adoption of a social justice agenda (Kellner & Share, 2007). Figure 12 displays the study's findings concerning critical media literacy educators' methodologies for achieving critical media literacy education student outcomes.

Figure 12. The Methods Employed By Critical Media Literacy Educators And The Outcomes They Produce For Students.

The study found six key themes associated with effective critical media literacy pedagogy in higher education and equity implications for educational leaders at those institutions. Three of the themes, *Engaging and Inspiring Instructor*, *Student Participation*, and *Contemporary Tools and Content*, were associated with a

contemporary pedagogies frequently associated with instructional effectiveness in a broad range of disciplines. The remaining three themes, *Critical Perspective*, *Resistance and Activism*, and *Inequality and Oppression*, appeared to be unique to critical media literacy pedagogy.

The data also pointed out perplexing demographic trends in critical media literacy courses. The students enrolled in the critical media literacy courses surveyed were overwhelmingly White. In one case, there was only one student of color enrolled in the course. The instructors in the study were also all White. The data pointed up other findings regarding issues of equity. Female students showed greater level of critical awareness toward media and social justice attitudes than did the total population studied. When the overwhelming majority of the students in a critical media literacy classroom identify as females there is an increase in female students' level of civic engagement. Students of color showed greater levels of civic engagement, critical awareness toward media and social justice attitudes than the population as a whole. Lastly, the study showed that a market-focused curriculum when integrated into a critical media education course was likely undercut students' critical awareness of media and increased social justice attitudes.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the study's conclusions and recommendations. The Conclusions section discusses the main findings from each of the study's six themes: (1) Engaging and Inspiring Instructor; (2) A Critical Perspective; (3) Inequality and Oppression; (4) Student Participation; (5) Contemporary Content and Tools; and (6) Resistance and Activism. The Recommendations section presents the implications of the study for policy makers, researchers, and educational leaders.

Conclusions

Scholars have suggested that the outcomes of an effective critical media literacy education are increased student engagement (Black, 2009), critical awareness of media (Rodesiler, 2010; Torres & Mercado, 2006), civic engagement (Kellner & Share, 2007), empowerment (Frechette, 2005; Gainer, 2010), and adoption of a social justice agenda (Kellner & Share, 2007). Analysis of data in this mixed methods study illuminates six themes that contribute to those outcomes (See Figure 13): (1) Engaging and Inspiring Instructor; (2) A Critical Perspective; (3) Inequality and Oppression; (4) Student Participation; (5) Contemporary Content and Tools; and (6) Resistance and Activism.

The six themes collectively describe the goals of critical media literacy educators, the methods they employ to achieve those classroom goals, and the impact their pedagogy has on student outcomes. Figure 13 displays the six themes the study found to be associated with a critical media literacy pedagogy. Three of the themes (Engaging and Inspiring Instructor, Student Participation, and Contemporary Tools and Content) could

be said to reflect effective contemporary pedagogy, regardless of discipline. The remaining three themes (*Critical Perspective*, *Resistance and Activism*, and *Inequality and Oppression*) appear to be unique to critical media literacy pedagogy. The first three themes suggest that effective critical media literacy educators generally employ contemporary best pedagogical practice to build critical consciousness among their students. The pedagogy of effective critical media literacy, as noted in the second three themes, applies a critical perspective to issues of inequality and oppression, and seeks to generate resistance and activism.

Figure 13. The Six Themes Associated With Effective Critical Media Literacy Pedagogy

Theme 1: Engaging and Inspiring Instructors

The study identifies the centrality of the instructor to an engaging critical media literacy classroom. Data point to a positive relationship between an engaging classroom and instructors' teaching styles and personalities. The teaching style that engaged students most consistently involved instructors who were mobile in class, invoked humor, and exhibited compassion. The instructors cited student engagement as a necessary component of their teaching. Students found instructors' relaxed and authentic personalities to be engaging. Students were engaged in courses as a result of a comfortable and inviting classroom environment and instructors' authenticity, compassion, and humor. The educator interviews revealed that their effectiveness is due in part to overcoming campus resistance to their course content and pedagogical methods. They noted that despite their effective teaching style they had still met resistance on campus for teaching critical media literacy.

Critical media literacy educators displayed evident compassion for their students. Students saw the professors' efforts to keep them engaged as a sign of concern for them. Several students valued what they perceived as authentic and relaxed instructors. They overwhelmingly noted their appreciation for "honest" or "real" instructors. Collectively, this theme revealed the centrality of the instructor to an effective critical media literacy classroom.

Theme 2: Critical Perspective

Critical media literacy instructors appear to be dedicated to providing students with a critical perspective, which is articulated through a critical thinking-based pedagogy that emphasizes debate, controversy, argumentation, and challenging students' views and beliefs. Students reported that enrollment in critical media literacy courses led them to be more cautious in how they consume media. Some students advocated for critical media education to be mandatory in schools. Survey results showed a particular shift in critical attitudes toward media among students of color and females enrolled in critical media education courses. Students who enrolled in a critical media course were also concerned about the current state of corporate media, and instead tended to consume independent media.

Critical media literacy educators emphasized their commitment to supporting students to adopt critical perspectives on media. Nearly every instructor stressed the centrality of critical thinking to a critical media literacy education. Much of the instructors' and students' critiques about media focused on public relations, advertisers, and news media industries. Instructors stressed the importance of maintaining democracy, while offering a critique of the media's role in that democracy. In addition to emphasizing the democratic processes, instructors offered students a critical perspective on the political economy of media.

Students enrolled in critical media courses appeared to have increased their awareness of the dangers posed by media consumption. Some courses reflected an increase in students' levels of critical awareness of media, while others saw a decrease

(See Figure 3 in Chapter 4). The majority of students of color enrolled in critical media literacy courses experienced a significant shift in their critical awareness toward media (see Figure 4 in Chapter 4). Study outcomes point to a potentially positive relationship between critical media literacy courses and increased critical awareness of media among students of color. Female students enrolled in critical media literacy courses also showed an increase in their level of critical awareness toward media in the courses where pre- and post-survey participation remained consistent. The qualitative data indicated that students of all demographic backgrounds reported adopting an enhanced critical perspective on media as a result of taking the courses. Some students stated that a critical media education had changed their media consumption patterns. A few students thought such courses should be mandatory for all students.

Theme 3: Inequity and Oppression

Critical media literacy educators introduce issues of social justice into the classroom by emphasizing the existence of inequity and oppression in society. Educators connect issues of social justice to media in their course discussions and content. Instructors generally display a passion for social justice issues, which they share via symbols such as stickers, pictures, and signs. Because they presume that a majority of their students come from backgrounds of privilege, instructors aim to include the perspectives of oppressed and marginalized groups through classroom-based discussions of theory and content, such as independent news media stories. Educators also create space for students from marginalized and oppressed backgrounds to discuss their

experiences of inequity and oppression. Quantitative and qualitative data reflect congruency with Kellner and Share's (2007) claim that critical media literacy pedagogy influences students to adopt social justice attitudes.

A critical media literacy pedagogy focusing on inequities and oppression appears to be related to enhanced social justice attitudes among students. Qualitative and quantitative data show an increase in student awareness of societal inequities and oppression, and a sense of obligation to address social problems. The shift in social justice attitudes was biggest among students of color. The study also showed that when a market-focused curriculum was integrated into a critical media education course, it was likely to undercut social justice pedagogy.

Students enrolled in critical media literacy courses demonstrated an acute interest in issues of inequity and oppression. Student data surfaced social justice attitudes such as acknowledging oppression and inequity, and an accompanying sense of obligation to address them. There was also a positive relationship shown between critical media literacy pedagogy and social justice attitudes among students of color, while female students' social justice attitudes showed mixed results in the survey data.

The study found that critical media literacy educators were vocal advocates of inclusivity and diversity, emphasizing the existence of inequalities and oppression in society. A critical media classroom was said to provide space to discuss societal inequities and oppression through the perspectives of marginalized and oppressed groups and the consumption of independent media. The qualitative and quantitative data

indicated an increase in social justice attitudes among all students enrolled in critical media literacy courses.

Theme 4: Student Participation

Centrality of student participation is reflected in instructors' requirements for students to participate via presentations, discussions, hands-on exercises, and service learning assignments. Students reported that the classroom was comfortable, the discussion was valuable, and they felt obligated to participate in the course. Students generally reported feeling validated by their experience in critical media literacy classrooms.

Instructors also required students to participate by presenting on student-generated content, and through classroom discussions. Instructors also designed the classroom assignments to spark student-led discussions. Instructors sought to arrange classrooms to be conducive to discussion. In addition to discussion, instructors required student participation via hands-on assignments. Instructors also required student participation through small group service learning assignments.

Students reacted positively to a critical media literacy pedagogy that encouraged participation. They felt obligated to participate in classroom discussions, and found that participation to be valuable. Students reported feeling comfortable in sharing their views and opinions in the classroom. The classrooms observed were seen to validate students, as they often corrected or disagreed with instructors and engaged in dialogue reflecting varying perspectives.

Theme 5: Contemporary Content and Tools

Instructors used contemporary content and tools to engage students in learning course content. While some educators reported mixed feelings about the impact and purpose of technology in the classroom, nearly all of them used digital tools and content to varying degrees. Students found contemporary topics, content, and tools to be valuable, engaging, and useful for explaining course content.

Critical media educators used digital tools such as blogs and webpages, such as YouTube, to enhance the classroom, but they remained ambivalent about the impact of those technologies. One instructor avoids digital tools altogether in the classroom. Instructors often made assignments that required students to use digital tools and software.

Critical media literacy educators' uses of contemporary content and tools appeared to engage students with course content. Students reported that contemporary content and tools made course content valuable because they viewed such content and tools as vital for modern existence. Students noted that critical media literacy course content and tools were not only applicable to students' lives, but engaging and useful for understanding course concepts.

Theme 6: Resistance and Activism

Every instructor in the study had a history of participating in civic and activist movements. Accordingly, their course content often covered themes of activism, activist movements, and resistance. The study found that instructors often encouraged resistance

on the part of students through civic engagement. Students generally saw their instructors' passion and enthusiasm for resistance and activism as inspiring. As a result, students generally displayed increased levels of civic engagement, community engagement, and empowerment. All students showed an increase in their level of civic engagement after completing the critical media literacy course. Service learning appeared to play a role in that increase. The largest shifts in students' level of civic engagement came among students of color. In an interesting finding, a critical media literacy course where men were in the minority appeared to show the most pronounced increase in female students' levels of civic engagement.

Course content frequently emphasized resistance. Some instructors, in particular, encouraged resistance to media narratives. Instructors celebrated activism on and off campus, and in the classroom. They intertwined course content with information on activist resistance movements, while encouraging community and civic engagement.

Qualitative and quantitative data showed a positive relationship between enrollment in a critical media literacy course and increased levels of civic engagement and empowerment among students. Nearly all of the courses in the study saw a small to moderate increase in students' levels of civic engagement. The biggest increases in students' level of civic engagement were between seven and nine percent. These data point to a positive relationship between student levels of civic engagement and critical media literacy courses that have a service learning requirement.

In a related finding, students of color showed growth in levels of civic engagement that exceeded the course average reported by all students. A majority of students reported that their instructors' passion and enthusiasm for democracy and activism was inspiring, encouraging them to consider participating in activist movements. The study's findings support the arguments of Fuchs (2011) and Morrell, Duenas, Garcia, and Lopez (2013) that a critical media literacy education can empower students to resist oppression. Students reported that a critical media education led to them being engaged with their communities.

Summary of Key Findings

The study found six key themes associated with effective critical media literacy pedagogy in higher education and equity implications for educational leaders at those institutions. Three of the themes, *Engaging and Inspiring Instructor*, *Student Participation*, and *Contemporary Tools and Content*, were associated with a contemporary pedagogies frequently associated with instructional effectiveness in a broad range of disciplines. The remaining three themes, *Critical Perspective*, *Resistance and Activism*, and *Inequality and Oppression*, appeared to be unique to critical media literacy pedagogy.

The data also pointed to a perplexing demographic trend in critical media literacy courses: the students enrolled in critical media literacy courses were overwhelmingly White. In one case, there was only one student of color enrolled in the course. The instructors in the study were also all White. The data pointed out other findings regarding

issues of equity. Female students showed greater level of critical awareness toward media and social justice attitudes than did the total population studied. Students of color showed greater levels of civic engagement, critical awareness toward media and social justice attitudes than the population as a whole.

Recommendations

This section examines the implications of this study for researchers, educational leaders, and policy makers. Future research is needed to test for the long-term impact of social justice pedagogy on students and explore why critical media literacy classrooms are disproportionately White. It is recommended that educational leaders seek out and hire activist-minded faculty to build critical media literacy. They should be mindful of how contemporary structures in education, including conventional wisdom, can act as barriers to effective critical media literacy pedagogy. Lastly, it is recommended that policymakers consider providing access to resources for students and faculty to use in the classroom. Technological innovation moves quickly and too often schools are too far behind in gaining access to the same technological tools their students are using.

Research Recommendations

The study found increased social justice attitudes among students enrolled in critical media literacy courses, and that the students enrolled in those courses were disproportionately White. These findings suggests the desirability of future research to determine why it is that more White students than students of color are disproportionately discussing ameliorating inequity and oppression in critical media literacy classrooms. In

addition, the study only investigated students' changed social justice attitudes over one term of a college course. Future research would be useful to determine the extent to which students continue to hold such changed attitudes longitudinally.

Research needs to determine the long term impact of enrollment in a critical media literacy course on students' social justice attitudes. The demographics of this study found that critical media literacy courses are disproportionately training Whites to recognize inequities and serve their community when compared to students of color. Researchers need to determine if the students have applied their social justice attitudes in real world situation to see if increased social justice attitudes can contribute to civic engagement, and if this in turn leads to direct action. For example, researchers could examine students' social justice attitudes and advocacy and activist work a year after they complete a critical media literacy course.

Researchers also need to answer: *Why are non-whites minimally represented in critical media literacy courses?* The survey demographics revealed a potential lack of enrollment in critical media literacy courses among students of color. The percent of non-White students enrolled in critical media literacy courses, according to the survey data, was proportionately less than their enrollment on every campus except one. The number of non-White students enrolled in the critical media literacy may be more than what is shown in Figure 1 in Chapter 3, but the actual numbers of student enrollment, due to privacy concerns, were not available for this study. Considering that critical media literacy courses strive to provide voices to marginalized and oppressed communities,

such as communities of color, this finding illuminates the need for additional studies on how effective critical media literacy programs are at recruiting students of color students into their courses. There are several potential explanations for the low enrollment among students of color in critical media literacy courses. Perhaps it has to do with the digital divide, perhaps studying media as a subject is viewed by students of color as less pressing than other issues facing their communities of color, or maybe it is just poor advertising of the courses. It is recommended that future research is done on the racial demographics of critical media literacy classrooms. Research could also be done at historically black colleges and universities to explore how the outcomes might differ when the proportion of students who identify as White is minimal or non-existent.

Educational Leadership Recommendations

The educators in this study noted that throughout their careers they met campus resistance to critical media literacy pedagogy. Yet the study revealed the centrality of the innovative and motivated instructor to an effective critical media literacy classroom—and that those instructors engaged in controversial topics often had activist proclivities. Educational leaders who are interested in an effective critical media literacy curriculum should therefore consider supporting educators and students who engage in activism and embrace controversy. The study found that critical media literacy educators are sometimes silenced by narrow conceptions of purposes and methodologies.

Educational leaders must do their part, though they cannot alone do everything, to encourage re-conceptualizations of campus curricula to foster effective critical media

literacy pedagogy. Although critical questions of power and control raised in media literacy classrooms could lead challenges to authority both in the classroom and beyond, if the educational leaders' commitment is to providing effective social justice pedagogy, then they need to allow space for critical media literacy educators and students to confront critical issues. This means being open to hiring activist faculty, supporting theirs and students' rights to challenge power structures and engage in civil disobedience, and re-conceptualizing the classroom to include the community and digital sphere.

Policy Recommendations

The data point to some potential policies for community colleges and universities to consider for fostering effective critical media literacy pedagogy. It is recommended that these institutions pursue policies that incentivize critical thinking curricula and social justice pedagogy in higher education. Such a perspective would focus on a definition of literacy that is broader than traditional interpretations. Literacy should include digital, broadcast, social, and other domains to reflect a more rich understanding of language, symbols, power, society, and media. It is recommended that both faculty and administrators explore avenues to expand the commitment to critical thinking, social justice and equity, and broadened concepts of literacy. These policies would provide a much richer environment for critical media literacy educators to do thrive.

Conclusion

The work of critical media literacy educators should be understood by researchers and educational leaders, not just as improving classroom outcomes for

students, but as giving them tools to transform society. Too often, educators, educational leaders, policy makers, and researchers narrowly focus on campus-based issues and outcomes, while larger problems face nearby communities and our global society. This behavior can lead to students from struggling communities being encouraged to use education as a means to “escape” their community rather than transform it.

Critical media literacy educators, with their dedication to social justice, understand that inequities exist and societal problems are not solved without action. Media can be a starting point for making students aware of contemporary problems and potential solutions. Critical media literacy pedagogy in itself is part of the solution in that it teaches students how to recognize and resist propaganda. Furthermore, it equips students with the skills to recognize and produce fact-based information and perspectives that can raise consciousness. As activist Yuri Kochiyama points out, “consciousness is power,” and solutions cannot be recognized or carried out without a change in consciousness.

Critical media literacy education is an important vehicle for promoting equity and social justice in the 21st century political economy. It is not based on what Ralph Nader (2016) described as the “memorization, regurgitation, vegetation” model of education. Instead, it empowers students with the skills and perspectives to transform our collective society. Critical media literacy pedagogy has strong potential to achieve meaningful leaps toward social justice. The study has shown that when it comes to critical media literacy,

society needs it, students are yearning for it, educators can teach it, and institutions of higher learning can provide it.

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Appendix A: Student Survey

MEDIA SURVEY – Section I

Instructions: In Section I of this survey, please record your responses by filling in a bubble on the scantron provided to you.

- 1) Use only #2 pencil.
- 2) Do not put any identifying information on the scantron.
- 3) Do not make random marks anywhere on the scantron.
- 4) Do not “X” out unwanted answers. Erase all unwanted answers.
- 5) Do not leave any statements blank. Please respond to each statement on the scantron.

Rank how much you agree with each statement using the following ranking system:

<i>If you:</i>	Completely Disagree	Disagree Slightly	Are Neutral	Agree Slightly	Completely Agree
Bubble in:	1	2	3	4	5

Please respond to each of the following statements:

1. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of the needs, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions of people with disabilities.
2. Because we live in the US, everyone should speak or at least try to learn English.
3. It is my responsibility to support and advocate for policies and procedures that ensure diversity.
4. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of African American and African history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
5. In the U.S., some people are often verbally attacked because of their minority status.
6. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Middle Eastern history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expression.
7. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of women’s history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
8. I believe that illegal immigrants should be deported to their home countries.

9. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
10. Membership in a minority group significantly increases risk factors for exposure to discrimination, economic deprivation, and oppression.
11. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Jewish history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
12. I believe that I am aware about ways in which institutional oppression and the misuse of power constrain human and legal rights of individuals and groups within American society.
13. I believe that it is important to financially support charitable organizations.

Rank how much you agree with each statement using the following ranking system:

<i>If you:</i>	Completely Disagree	Disagree Slightly	Are Neutral	Agree Slightly	Completely Agree
<i>Bubble in:</i>	1	2	3	4	5

14. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Native American history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
15. I feel responsible for my community.
16. In the U.S. some people are often physically attacked because of their minority status.
17. I have knowledge to critique and apply culturally competent and social justice approaches to influence assessment, planning, access of resources, intervention, and research.
18. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Latina/o and Chicana/o history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
19. I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions.
20. I believe I should make a difference in my community.
21. I believe that I have a responsibility to help the poor and the hungry.
22. I am committed to serve in my community.
23. I believe being lesbian, bisexual, or gay is a choice.
24. I believe citizens have a responsibility to their community.
25. I believe that it is important to be informed of community issues.
26. All people have equal opportunities in the U.S.
27. I believe that it is important to volunteer.
28. I believe the American dream is real for anyone willing to work hard to achieve it.

Rank how much you agree with each statement using the following ranking system:

<i>If you:</i>	Completely Disagree	Disagree Slightly	Are Neutral	Agree Slightly	Completely Agree
<i>Bubble in:</i>	1	2	3	4	5

29. I believe every news channel has a bias, so if you watch all of them you can find the truth.
30. Media plays an influential role in shaping how we think about race in our everyday lives.
31. I believe media messages have little impact on the public, no matter how many times they are repeated.
32. Every film, television show, documentary, or news or radio broadcast delivers a constructed message.
33. There are major differences in how Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN deliver news.
34. Our society has made progress in dealing with racial discrimination, but inequality and injustice still remain, and the media is a key site where these ideas persist.
35. I believe that all Internet news sites are more informative than television news.
36. I believe that it does not matter who tells it to you, the news is the news.
37. The repetition of gendered narratives and images in media has helped to shape these cultural norms around what it means to be a man or a woman, masculine or feminine.
38. I believe that there are news outlets with no bias.
39. I believe the US media does a good job of informing people about the problems in our society.
40. Historically, many societies have been intolerant of homosexual, bisexual, and transgender individuals. Media has played a role in both perpetuating and resisting this state of affairs.
41. I believe the Internet makes all of the information citizens need easily accessible.
42. There has been an increase in LGBTQ representation in the media since the late 1990s in film and television, but there are still very few prominent LGBTQ characters in the mainstream media.
43. From the way characters in media presentations speak, to where they live, what they wear, and what they drive, many of the messages that we receive about socio-economic class come to us through the media.
44. I believe the media spends too much time on worthless stories and not enough on things that actually matter.
45. I believe something needs to be done about the way media impacts our society.
46. I believe the media in the US disseminates propaganda for those in power.

47. I believe the media may be wrong sometimes, but it usually just gives the facts and lets the people decide.

MEDIA SURVEY – Section II

Instructions: In Section II of this survey, please record your responses by writing on this piece of paper.

- 1) How old are you?**
- 2) How many years ago did you start college?**
- 3) What is your college major?**
- 4) How do you define yourself racially or ethnically?**
- 5) How do you define your gender?**
- 6) Is your college being paid for either in part or fully by someone you know personally?**
- 7) Did you take a student loan to pay for college?**
- 8) I get my news from (circle all that apply):**
 - social media
 - radio
 - television
 - conversation
 - Internet websites
 - newspapers
 - other (please specify):

Appendix B: Protocol For Student Interviews

Campus Culture

- 1) Describe your campus in terms of its physical appearance.
- 2) Describe your campus in terms of its social aspects.

Curriculum and Instruction

- 3) How would you describe the routine for a typical class period in this course?
- 4) How would you describe instructor's teaching style?
- 5) Do you like the instructors teaching style?
- 6) How would you describe your instructor's relationship with the students?
- 7) Do you think the assignments for this course have been valuable?

Desired Outcomes

- 8) Do you like this course?
- 9) How would you say this course impacted you?
- 10) What changes if any would you make to this course?
- 11) Did you attend this class most days?
- 12) Did you do most of the required work for this course?

Student Background

- 13) Why did you decide to take this course?
- 14) How long had you been at this college when you added this course?
- 15) Were you familiar with the information in the course previously?
- 16) What are some of your interests and hobbies?
- 17) What is your major?
- 18) How old are you?
- 19) How do you define yourself racially or ethnically?
- 20) How do you define yourself in terms of gender?

Appendix C: Protocol For Educator Interviews

Faculty Background

- 1) How long have you been a college instructor?
- 2) Are you a full time or part time instructor on this campus?
- 3) How long have you been at this college?
- 4) How would you describe your teaching philosophy?
- 5) How long have you been using concepts related to critical media literacy in the classroom?
- 6) How do you determine a students' learning needs?

Campus Culture

- 7) How would you describe the culture of your campus?
- 8) Do you feel there is a strong activist presence on this campus?
- 9) Have you faced any resistance from anyone on campus because of the way you teach about media?
- 10) What response have you received from colleagues concerning the way you teach about media on campus?

Instructor's Philosophy

- 11) Do you think technology has had a negative/positive impact on education?
- 12) How important is having accesses to technological resources to teaching critical media literacy effectively?
 - a. Does your school have a healthy amount of resources accessible for teaching critical media literacy?
- 13) How do you use digital and electronic tools in the classroom?
- 14) What learning outcomes do you prefer for students leaving your classroom?

The Course I Observed

- 15) How would you describe the routine of a typical day in your course?
- 16) How do you choose assignments for your course?

Demographics

- 17) How old are you?
- 18) How do you define yourself racially or ethnically?
- 19) How do you define your gender?