

handing in any homework, the grades haven't changed, and there are no demonstrable gains in academic achievement or skill development? It is from physics that we learn that an object at rest remains at rest until some equal or greater force acts upon it. When we consider the forces that we work against as critical educators, it becomes obvious that we must be forceful and passionate ourselves. It doesn't necessarily mean that we become authoritarian, but it definitely does not excuse us from playing powerful and explicit roles in the lives of young adults, many of whom have been cheated out of an education long enough. A critical pedagogy can bring love, discipline, self-respect, and academic rigor all at the same time. No one said it would be easy, but the revolution of adolescent pedagogy will require no less.

By now, we hope that it is obvious that we believe that critical pedagogy certainly can and should exist within urban secondary schools. We do not believe that critical educators need to think of making choices between academic excellence and critical consciousness; indeed, we promote a critical praxis that subsumes academic competencies, navigational strategies, critical sensibilities, and collaborative action toward social change. Such critical praxis, we argue, can lead to academic achievement, economic empowerment, and self and social transformation among populations currently being alienated within America's public schools.

### Notes

1. The summer seminar is addressed in further detail in Chapter 6. It is important to distinguish the initial seminar (1999), which featured only students from South City High School, from the 2000 seminar, which comprised the incoming seniors of the South City Futures project along with students from inner-city schools of Greater Los Angeles. After the graduation of the students in the South City Futures project, the seminar expanded to include students from throughout Greater Los Angeles.
2. Democracy Live! 2000 was a special cable television show developed to show how young people were participating in the political process during the Democratic National Convention. Our seminar students were invited to participate as audience members during one taping of this show.

## 6 Youth Participatory Action Research as Critical Pedagogy

For some time there has been excitement about the possibilities for critical pedagogy to inform practice in urban education. However, very little empirical work has been done that theorizes the possible translation of principles of critical pedagogy into practices, and even less work has been done that evaluates the outcomes of these practices in pushing forward the development of grounded theories of practice. The central premise of this book is that we need to examine critical pedagogy with urban youth. Erroneously, people have looked to theory to build theory instead of understanding that critical pedagogy began with practice to build theory. As a field, our attempts to develop theory from theory have left us essentially with a house built on sand. We need to develop sound theories of practice that can be implemented and evaluated through the use of critical lenses. That, essentially, has been our project over the past dozen years; as authors and educators we have endeavored to generate theories of praxis and to develop practices from these theories that inform greater theory and practice. We have labeled this project the development of grounded theories of praxis in critical pedagogy in urban contexts.

We have so far examined three instantiations of this grounded theory: critically teaching popular culture in English classrooms, using sport as a metaphor for personal and social development, and merging critical social theory and college access to create structures for academic achievement and collective action for educational justice. An additional manifestation of this theory concerns the positioning of urban youth as critical researchers and transformative intellectuals. In the next chapter we explore the connections between critical pedagogy and a pan-ethnic studies curriculum. We look at a program where young people were apprenticed as youth participatory action researchers. We begin with an examination of the foundations of youth participatory action research and principles common to youth participatory action research and critical pedagogy. The second portion of the chapter examines our summer seminar, a six-year intervention where youth attending urban schools become critical action researchers, and the outcomes of the seminar as they relate to academic skill development and action for social and educational justice. The final portion of the chapter draws upon these experiences with the summer seminar as we further our articulation of a grounded theory of critical pedagogy in urban contexts.

Critical pedagogy is often associated with the development of an intellectual identity, but the parameters of this identity are rarely discussed. Certainly, much-cited critical theorists such as Antonio Gramsci, Carter G. Woodson, and Paulo Freire have championed pedagogies that develop intellectuals among marginalized and oppressed classes of people, who have been largely positioned as passive knowledge consumers instead of empowered knowledge producers. For each population, however, the question of intellectual identity has to be re-addressed. What, for instance, does it mean for a young woman or man attending an urban secondary school to become an intellectual? Outside of academic performance indicators, how is this intellectualism measured? How is it manifested? We asked ourselves each of these questions as we designed our summer program for youth attending urban schools.

We surmised that one way to think about positioning urban youth as intellectuals was to place them front and center in the research process. When we think about the commentary of critical pedagogy (and critical theory writ large) on the process of inquiry, an implicit critique emerges concerning the "who" and the "why" of the research process. When we honor the principles of critical pedagogy while thinking about youth development and urban school reform, we are challenged to create ways to work with youth as collaborators in the research process. Instead of just doing research "on" young people, which makes them the objects of our research gaze, critical research holds the potential to reposition these young people as the subjects of their own research, research that matters to them and larger empirical questions that require their important, but often missing, perspective.

When we consider the problems we face in urban education, this process serves a two-fold need. First, we need more engaging pedagogies that draw upon youth experiences and perspectives to develop literacies of power. Second, we also need to include the voices and lenses of youth to help us further understand and intervene in the structural and cultural causes of urban educational failure. As educators and as advocates for educational justice, we must understand that youth are much-needed collaborators with valuable experiences and energy to add to our movements. We firmly believe that youth participatory action research can ultimately develop the academic capabilities of students and, equally important, that youth-initiated research can help adult researchers and advocates better to confront the seemingly intractable problems of urban education.

We began this program of apprenticing youth attending urban schools as participatory action researchers with three important research questions:

What are the overlaps between the principles of participatory action research and critical pedagogy? How might youth participatory action research push forward conversations about applications of critical pedagogy with urban youth?

What is youth participatory action research? How is it practiced? How is it taught? How can it function as a critical pedagogy when employed with adolescents attending urban schools?

What are the multiple outcomes associated with youth participatory action research as a critical pedagogical strategy with urban youth? Particularly, what are the outcomes associated with academic and critical literacy development? What are the outcomes associated with the development of empowered academic/intellectual identities? What are the outcomes associated with advocacy and action for social and educational justice?

It is clear that each of these questions ties back to our three major goals for critical pedagogy: academic achievement, empowered identity development, and action for social change. These three questions also tie back into our meta-question in that we are interested in the translation from critical pedagogical theory to urban educational practice. The examination of the intersections between youth participatory action research and critical pedagogy provides yet another example of what critical pedagogy might "look like" in urban educational practice. With that in mind we offer a brief background on the burgeoning movement known as participatory action research, especially as it pertains to the role of youth in the process of inquiry for social change.

### What Is Participatory Action Research?

According to McIntyre (2000) three principles guide most participatory action research projects. The first is the collective investigation of a problem. This is significant because the focus of traditional research is often on individual scholarship. Although teams of university scholars may conduct research, it becomes important to distinguish an Albert Einstein or a James

Coleman from the pack. Indeed, when we academicians submit our works to be published, editors want a clear chain of authorship. Who is the *first* author on this piece, they want to know. Participatory action research, on the other hand, is from the outset a collective enterprise that involves participants who are generally excluded from the research process. Given its genesis or its desired outcomes, it is difficult to imagine how an isolated and distanced individual could conduct critical participatory action research. This leads into McIntyre's second principle: participatory action research relies on indigenous knowledge to understand and examine the problems that are of greatest concern to indigenous researchers.

In traditional research, indigenous populations, to the extent that they are involved at all, are generally positioned as the *objects* of research. They may be interviewed, videotaped, followed around, observed, examined, or tested. Their role is to provide information to experts who can then figure out how best to help them (or even understand them). Participatory action research involves these populations as *subjects* and partners in the research process. Within the framework of youth participatory action research, it is perfectly logical (even mandatory) that parents, teachers, students, and community members be positioned as researchers and valuable contributors toward the collective intellectual enterprise. While the focus of this chapter is on students as researchers, it is important to consider that the larger goal of participatory action research is to include multiple populations that are often excluded from the formal research process. In that vein, this work itself exists as an example of participatory action research. Both authors began this work as classroom teachers who felt they had something to share about the pedagogical practices in their classrooms. At that time neither of us had any formal credentials or any official "business" conducting research in our classrooms and sharing that work with professionals. However, we were ideally positioned to do the work because we were in the classroom every day. Participatory action research is valuable because it brings in populations that are often alienated within the traditional research paradigm, but it is also important because these populations often have the best vantage point and the greatest vested interest in the work itself.

McIntyre's third principle is that participatory action research involves the desire to take individual or collective action to deal with the stated problem. Indeed, some may say that "action" is the operative word that really distinguishes participatory action research from other paradigms of inquiry.

While most traditional researchers would claim that all research is conducted to make the world a better place, the process of traditional research is often separated from action in the world at large. Generally, the research process ends when the last pieces of data are analyzed and published in scholarly journals or books. If an award-winning sociologist, for example, articulates the causes of urban poverty, no one expects that sociologist to actually wipe out urban poverty. That is someone else's job. With participatory action research, on the other hand, the collective action is a part of the process. This is not just research intended to understand problems; it is a research process designed to intervene in problems, to make them go away. Given the positionality of the researchers, again, this makes sense. Researchers who are daily experiencing injustice are highly motivated to end that injustice, and, to the extent that participatory action research can help in this regard, they become motivated researchers as well.

Participants in the action research process become researchers about their daily lives in hopes of developing realistic solutions for dealing with the problems that they believe need to be addressed. In the project discussed in this chapter, for example, students worked to develop realistic solutions to the structural and cultural barriers to academic achievement in the urban schools they attended. By assuming active and full participation in the research process, people have the opportunity to collect and analyze meaningful data themselves; even more, they possess the ability to utilize the information they collect and analyze to mobilize, organize, and implement individual or collective action.

Clearly there are critics of participatory action research in the educational field. Purists claim that action research is biased, that the "lay" researchers are untrained, and that the methods of participatory research are unsound. As conservative forces seek to eliminate all qualitative educational research (National Research Council, 2005), participatory action research is lumped together with a whole array of "soft" and unsound methodological approaches that only hinder educational progress in our country. For these reasons participatory action research is not prevalent in our leading journals, it is rarely taught in our leading postsecondary institutions, and it is rarely cited in conversations about educational policy that are supposedly informed by the latest research.

Despite these obstacles, some of us are foolish enough to believe that we can and should engage in research that changes the world and that we should involve citizens in this process (Denzin, 1997). We draw upon Latin Ameri-

can movements in critical social science research (Morrow & Torres, 1995) as we design studies and interventions that allow us to confront directly many of the challenges we now face in new-century urban schools. As authors and as committed action researchers, we also saw a direct connection between this burgeoning movement and our practice of critical pedagogy. Thus, we worked to develop a practice of participatory action research with urban youth as part of our critical pedagogical project.

This chapter now transitions to the examination of critical pedagogy in a summer research seminar where urban teens, teachers, and parents were apprenticed as critical participatory action researchers of urban and educational inequality. Much of the philosophy of pedagogy and initial practice builds on the principles and practices of the South City High School Futures project. Indeed, there was a great deal of initial overlap between the Futures project and the then fledgling summer seminar. The first cohort of the summer seminar (which convened in 1999) was composed entirely of students from the Futures project, and in the second seminar nearly half of the students were also members of the South City High Futures project. Moreover, the leaders of the seminar (including Morrell, who co-directed the project for its entire six years, and Duncan-Andrade, who worked with the seminar for three years) were also participants in the Futures project. Even though there was significant overlap in leadership, initial student-participants, and initial conceptual framing, the seminar has always existed as a separate and independent entity.

One reason the pedagogy was different is because it came largely after the completion of the South City High School Futures project, allowing us to translate our learning from that program into the continual development and redevelopment of the seminar space. Part of this development included wresting ourselves away from the time and logistical constraints of the K-12 classroom, which is not conducive at all to the research process. Even more, however, we needed to wrest ourselves away from the ideological constraints placed on us as lifelong educators who had also been students in the K-12 school system. In past projects we had pushed the boundaries of curriculum and sought to empower students through the texts that they read and the way they talked about those texts. The critical research process, however, challenged everything we thought we knew about the relationships between teachers and students and between students and their social worlds. As we began to learn about the possibilities of participatory action research, we also

began to rethink the ways that teachers and students could work together in a pedagogic space. We wanted to brainstorm ways that this could work in the classroom, but to do that we felt we needed to create a separate space to carry out the critical research projects. With that purpose, we created what became known simply as the "summer seminar."

The summer seminar exists literally and ideologically outside of the space of schools, which allows for a different (and more empowering) set of relations between teachers and students, between students and texts, and between students and their world, since the seminar largely centers around critical research in local community contexts. We instituted features in our design that were more in line with our developing sense of learning theory and with our theories of pedagogy. We had students working together in small research teams with the assistance of group leaders, who were usually teachers from the local schools. We developed a progression in the curriculum that moved from exposure to concepts, to the design of a research study, to the actual research process itself. We mixed the learning spaces of the seminar to include large-group lectures, small-group planning sessions, field work, and other forms of data collection, and we brought in leaders from local community-based organizations and parents to work with the students.

The work of the seminar is problem posing in every respect. The central activity entails students posing problems from their real world and using critical research skills to investigate and then intervene in those problems. In this vein, the seminar project serves as an exemplar of Freirean praxis—that is, the students are learning to combine the intellectual nature of the research process with real action upon and against the dominant world that threatens to constrain their existence. This model for instruction also draws heavily upon Freire's (1998) conceptions of popular cultural notebooks, in which he and other educators made direct references to the lived experiences of the people they were teaching as they were trying to develop both their traditional literacies and their critical sensibilities. It is important that we expand our notion of popular culture as a set of lived experiences and local cultural practices that can be used to acquire dominant literacies and thus to contest hegemony (Morrell, 2004b). Popular culture does not just inhere in films, music CDs, and television shows; popular culture really occurs in the people's everyday experiences as they navigate the postindustrial world. Often these experiences are co-opted by culture industries into products such as films and television shows, but the actual popular cultural production occurs before this co-optation, or, at the very least, the spaces of production are more contested

than it seems when we simply look toward the products sponsored by the culture industries (Storey, 1998). This is important when considering the applications of a pedagogy of popular culture to critical work with urban youth. It is within this larger framework of popular cultural production that we situate our participatory action research with urban youth.

We now explain in more detail the conception, substance, and history of the summer research seminar. We then analyze the philosophy and praxis of pedagogy across a variety of activity settings, including large-group discussions, reading pedagogy, research skills development, the pedagogy of the field, data analysis and write-up, and the pedagogy of presentation and distribution. The heart of the chapter situates the work of the summer seminar within a larger context of participatory action research. From this vantage point we examine the work of the students and their personal transformations as they become critical researchers. We conclude the chapter with consideration of how youth participatory action research informs a grounded theory of urban critical pedagogy along with consideration of what needs to happen in our field to increase the proliferation of youth participatory action research as a sanctioned educational practice.

### Six Summers of Critical Research

In 1999, several colleagues at UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA), including Morrell, developed a summer seminar at the University of California, Los Angeles. The seminar brought together students, teachers, and parents from urban schools and communities to design and carry out critical participatory action research projects pertaining to issues of immediate concern to these schools and communities. As part of the format of each seminar, the students worked together in groups of four or five in research teams led by teachers from local schools. They read important works in social theory, critical pedagogy, the history of urban education, the sociology of education, and methods of critical educational research; they developed research questions, read relevant scholarly literature, collected qualitative and quantitative data, analyzed data, and created research reports; and they presented these reports to multiple audiences consisting of university faculty, policymakers, and, on occasion to regional and national conferences of educational researchers and practitioners. Students also wrote individual papers in which they contemplated the practical applications of their research to the issues in their own schools and communities.

The seminar had multiple goals, but two emerge as primary. We wanted to use the seminar space to help students acquire the language and tools they need to function within the academy, what we have called "academic literacy" (Morrell, 2004a). Traditionally, the student populations that we worked with had not been well represented within colleges and universities throughout the state. In fact, we deliberately selected students who attended some of the lowest-performing high schools in the state. We wanted to demonstrate to the schools and universities that dismissed these students that the students were indeed capable of college-level work. At the same time, we wanted to use the context of critical, community-based research to help the students gain the literacy tools they would need to be successful at these universities. As advocates for social and educational justice, we believed firmly that all of our interventions needed to develop students' academic competencies. As we have argued repeatedly throughout this text, there is no educational justice without the development of strong academic skills among populations that have been historically underserved by our educational system.

A second goal of the seminar relates to the research itself. We held the sincere belief that teachers, students, and parents were the most legitimate collaborators in the kind of community-based praxis-oriented research that we ourselves were interested in. In other words, the research studies were not merely a context for literacy learning; the products themselves were important to the struggle for educational justice within the teacher education program, with the local districts and the greater metropolitan area, and even statewide. The student-participants and their work would influence policy and practice across all of these settings.

During the six consecutive summers between 1999 and 2004, the research seminar convened at UCLA. The thirty or so student-participants (all incoming high school seniors and all drawn from local Los Angeles-area high schools) attended all-day sessions for five weeks and, as a result of their participation and successful completion of the course requirements, earned four quarter credits of university coursework. As a part of the seminar curricula, students were exposed to critical theory, cultural studies, educational sociology, legal history, social theory, and critical qualitative research methodology as they designed and conducted research projects that investigated issues of equity and access in urban schools and communities. In this way, the seminar sought to address these issues of access in terms of both course content and desired outcomes for its students. That is, the seminar research worked to expose and intervene in structures that prevented equity

and access as the seminar itself worked to develop skills and provide credit that would lead to increased access for the students who participated. Over the six years of the seminar, for instance, the overwhelming majority of our students did seek postsecondary educational opportunities, and several returned to the seminar as university undergraduates to mentor subsequent cohorts. We now offer a summary of the content of the six summer sessions.

Our inaugural seminar, held in the summer of 1999, focused on the themes of "Language, Youth Culture, and Transformational Resistance in Urban Schools." The twenty students who participated were divided into four research groups that investigated the positive and negative impacts of hip-hop music and culture on urban teens and the potential of hip-hop music and culture to transform high school literacy curricula; the different (transformational and self-defeating) manifestations of student resistance in urban schools; the correlation between teachers' attitudes toward students' home languages and student academic achievement; and the differences between home and school attitudes toward what constitutes a well-educated citizen in the African American and Latino communities.

Given that Los Angeles hosted the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in 2000, and given that a major goal of the seminars is to develop critical civic engagement, our 2000 summer seminar focused on "Youth Access and the Democratic National Convention." As seminar directors we were able to obtain limited access to the convention activities, providing the opportunity for the students to participate in the event as researchers and as interested community citizens. In their dual roles, the students attended formal meetings associated with the DNC, spoke with delegates and media personnel, listened to progressive elements of the party who were critical of the convention, interviewed local community residents, visited the headquarters of convention protesters, met with elected officials, and participated in organized protests. In response to the seminar theme, we probed the DNC to explore provocative political, social, and educational issues around which students formulated research questions, collected and analyzed data, and presented their findings to a panel of university faculty and community activists. In the context of the DNC, we were concerned with urban youth access to the political process, but we were also concerned with the relationship between educational equity and political access. Given these interests and concerns, the research teams investigated youth access across five domains: the

media, a livable wage, community learning resources, learning resources in schools, and civic engagement.

In the run-up to our third seminar in the summer of 2001, a series of legal actions filed against the State of California for educational inequities encouraged discussions between legal advocates, community-based organizations, and university researchers. Within these discussions, the various constituents became concerned with a fundamental question: What does every student in the State of California deserve in his/her educational experience? This questioning led to the development of a draft document entitled the *Educational Bill of Rights*, which became the chosen theme for the summer of 2001. In addition to the concerns reflected in the legal actions and conversations with local constituencies, recent polls had shown that education remained the number one priority for most Californians. Regardless of political affiliation and belief, most citizens recognized the importance of a quality education to social, economic, and political empowerment. That being said, most citizens, particularly those affiliated with the urban poor, realized that not all children in California have fair and equal access to a quality education. As educators and researchers, we clearly understood that educational access is often determined by one's race, class, and geography, and, as a result, great disparities can exist within a "public" school system that unfairly disadvantages the poor, those located in urban or rural environments, and those attending schools where the majority of students hail from racially marginalized groups. Our reading of the allocation of educational resources and the educational achievement data confirmed this hypothesis. To examine and challenge these inequities, the seminar convened to articulate an *Educational Bill of Rights* that outlines the basic entitlements of all students in California. The students selected for this seminar, along with university faculty and community leaders, developed research projects that examined these rights in the context of urban schools across Los Angeles. The seminar sought to answer the following questions:

What does every student in California deserve?

What inequalities arise in the experiences of California's students?

Why do these inequalities arise? (What is our explanation for the inequality?)

What can youth do? How can they use research to play a part in legal advocacy?

The 2002 summer seminar focused on "Equity and Access in California's Public Schools." The central question was how students (and parents) could contribute information about school conditions to the state-mandated School Accountability Report Cards (SARCs)?<sup>1</sup> This question embodies three sub-questions: What are the conditions of learning in urban schools across Los Angeles? How can students access and contribute information about these conditions? How can students, working in conjunction with parents and community advocates, pressure their schools and districts to include student-generated data in the official SARCs?

The seminar divided students into four student research teams, each focused on one core condition of schooling—quality teachers, a rigorous curriculum, adequate learning materials, and a positive physical and social environment. Under the guidance of teachers, the research teams conducted field research in several Los Angeles-area schools. The students explored various research and pedagogic tools for gathering and representing these data (GIS mapping, audiotape recording, video and still digital photography, and theatre of the oppressed). The research teams were asked to report both results and methods so that their example might guide other students and teachers. Throughout the five-week seminar, the students also interviewed and met with educational researchers, community organizers, parent advocates, school administrators, civil rights attorneys, and elected officials to investigate how student research might become a standard part of the SARC process. On the final day of the seminar, the research teams presented their findings, methods, and analysis of the politics of implementation to a public audience of UCLA faculty, civil rights attorneys, educators, community advocates, and parents.

In the summer of 2003 the seminar focused on "Oral Histories of the Educational Experiences in Post-*Brown* Los Angeles from 1954 to 2003." Young people who attend substandard schools for many years generally understand that they have been given a raw deal. They know that teachers are supposed to be well prepared and care for their students. They know that water fountains should work and bathrooms should be open and safe. They know that they should receive their textbooks when the semester begins. And they know that none of these conditions exists at their schools. Yet, because

these students have not been educated about how such conditions came into being, they do not have a language to explain why their schools are the way they are and how they might be different.

We felt that students attending under-performing schools needed a sense of history to understand that the present is not inevitable and the future is open to creation. Toward this end, we decided to create a space for young people to learn about the educational history in their city through apprenticing as critical public historians. Young people forge their deepest understandings through practice. When students make public history—conducting interviews, examining historical records, analyzing census data—they see what it means to construct a historical narrative. The process lets them look at how people's lived experience is shaped by and in turn shapes structural conditions in the economy and legal system. As young people place themselves and their families in this historical narrative, they forge a deeper understanding of who they are and the society they live in. And when this history calls on them to study people like themselves who have joined the struggle for education on equal terms, they begin to imagine an identity as historical agents. By writing public history, young people, we felt, would come to see themselves as *authors* of the future. Each research team focused on one of the post-*Brown* decades in Los Angeles and collected oral history interviews from participants in Los Angeles schools. They juxtaposed these interviews with census data, educational achievement data, media artifacts, and high school yearbook analyses to paint a portrait of life for students of color in Los Angeles schools over the past half-century.

In the summer of 2004, the seminar focused on "Urban Youth, Political Participation, and Educational Reform." Students explored what it means for urban youth to participate powerfully in civic life, how urban youth can learn to participate in such ways, and what civic lessons young people now learn in and outside of urban schools. The students, who were placed into small research teams, talked with youth, educators, community leaders, and elected officials about issues facing young people in the local community, how young people should participate in civic life, and what skills are needed for such participation. Each team conducted research at a high school site and a community center in a local neighborhood. The teams also developed research tools for examining civic education in a school, including survey instruments, interview and focus group questions (or protocols), and rubrics for examining books and curricula.

In each seminar students produced individual texts and group texts. These texts ranged from standard written documents to iMovies and PowerPoint presentations. Individually, students produced 1,500–2,000-word essays dealing with their journeys to becoming critical researchers and the implications of their seminar work for engagement in their schools and communities. Student research teams produced PowerPoint presentations, research reports, and a public presentation, which showcased the tools that they developed along with their research findings. The students also produced iMovie documentaries (in the summers of 2003 and 2004) and materials for an electronic journal targeted toward urban teachers and parents. Student-participants presented their research from the seminar to university faculty, local and state politicians, teachers, community members, and parents and at regional and national conferences such as the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the Sociology of Education Association, and the California Association of Teachers of English.

Now we move to an analysis of the seminar's underlying pedagogical principles and its academic and social outcomes. First, we discuss the importance of positioning urban youth as critical sociologists and public intellectuals. Next, we talk about the city as a context for teaching learning focusing on the seminar's explicit pedagogy of the city. We also address the explicit pedagogy of distribution. That is, we did not focus only on the production of research artifacts; an important component of the critical pedagogy was to find or create meaningful opportunities for the students to distribute their work products. We then discuss the role of participatory action research in developing academic and critical literacies and young people with strong activist/intellectual identities, and we examine the role of participatory action research in bringing about social and educational change.

### Becoming Critical Sociologists

Our initial goals in the seminar included orienting the students to the world of social science research, explicating a critical perspective on social science research, and positioning the students as critical social science researchers. It became necessary, then, to create a context where urban adolescents could become proficient and prolific readers of complex social science texts. For example, the initial two weeks of the seminar involved reading seminal texts in urban sociology and the sociology of education such as Jean Anyon's

(1981) "Social Class and School Knowledge," Jeannie Oakes's (1985) *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality*, the reproduction theory of Bourdieu (1990) and MacLeod (1987), and the critical social theory of Paulo Freire (1970), to name a few (Table 6.1).

#### 1. Introduction to Social Theory

- Sanchez, Sonia. (2004). Poem for July 4, 1994. In D. Menkart, A.D. Murray, & J. L. View (Eds.), *Putting the movement back into civil rights teaching*. Washington, DC: Teaching for Change.
- Freire, P. (1997). First letter: Reading the word/reading the world. In *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare to teach* (pp. 17–26). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Oakes, J., & M. Lipton. (1999). *Teaching to change the world*. Boston: McGraw-Hill. Chapter 1, pp. 3–33.
- MacLeod, J. (1987). Social reproduction in theoretical perspective. In *Ain't no making it: Aspirations and attainment in a low-income neighborhood*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Finn, P. (1999). *Literacy with an attitude: Educating working class children in their own self interest*. New York: SUNY Press. Pp. 53–56, Finn presents MacLeod; pp. 9–26, Finn presents Anyon.
- Anyon, J. (1981). Social class and school knowledge. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 1, 3–4.
- Sólorzano, D., & D. Bernal. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban Education*, 36 (3), 308–342.
- Noguera, P., & A. Akom. (2000). Disparities demystified. *The Nation*, June 5, 29–31.
- Morrell, E. (2004). *Linking literacy and popular culture*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon. Pp. 91–101.

Table 6.1. Reading List from 2004 Summer Seminar

The practices of the seminar included basic reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and the synthesis of ideas. We developed activities where we explored "how" to read, even as we were learning the "what" of critical sociology (Table 6.2). As one might expect to find in a postsecondary seminar, we learned how to break down a piece, how to engage a text actively, and how to wrestle with meaning when terms seem obscure or difficult to access. Students began to interrogate and ultimately appropriate terms such as "social reproduction," "praxis," "ideology," and "structural inequality." They developed the language and instincts of critical sociologists as they

gained confidence as competent readers and writers of academic texts in general.

*What Will Be Asked of You as a Participant?*

- **Participation in seminar.** Students will be asked to read legal briefs, educational research, and social theory. Instructors will call upon students to discuss the relationship between these readings and ongoing research projects.
- **Participation in research study team.** Each student will participate in a five-member student research team examining the methods of assessment and the politics of implementation related to one educational right. Students will be responsible for defining a research question, surveying related literature, developing a research design, collecting and analyzing data, writing a group report, and making a public presentation of the research.
- **Preparation of critical texts.** One of the goals of the seminar is to increase the production of critical texts, that is, texts that serve to inform common citizens in their struggles against inequities in dominant institutions such as schools. Toward this end, all seminar participants will write daily about issues related to critical research, social justice, access to quality urban schools, and youth civic engagement. The course instructors will lead a series of exercises that will culminate in the completion of an individual critical text in addition to a group research project. Following are some examples of critical texts:
  - o an article for IDEA's online journal Teaching to Change LA
  - o a letter to the editor of a local newspaper
  - o a letter to the principal, faculty member, or school board member addressing critical issues relating to urban schools
  - o a letter to a member of a community service organization
  - o a brochure, pamphlet, or Web page related to social justice
- **Preparation of critical research tools.** As part of the research process, you will develop interview protocols, surveys, maps, guidelines for textual analysis, and observational protocols. We will ask you to share these tools with educational researchers, policymakers, teachers, and other students who are interested in conducting research on youth civic engagement.
- **Preparation and presentation of final research project.** Student research teams will produce a final project that will be presented to a UCLA faculty panel. These projects will synthesize the group's findings, offer policy recommendations, and lay out a plan for future research. Each member of the student research team will be responsible for a substantial piece of the group's written project.
- **Preparation of PowerPoint presentation.** Student research teams will create a PowerPoint presentation to accompany the research report. The PowerPoint presentations will be presented on August 6 in the faculty center.

Table 6.2. Description of Seminar Activities

Through the initial seminar discussion and activities the students learned to read the world through the lens of critical sociology as they applied this language to their explanations of the contemporary conditions in their schools and communities. Even more, however, they learned to see themselves as legitimate critical researchers. An important component of critical sociology is to do critical sociology. Where a university undergraduate course would be satisfied with students grasping the difficult content of the discipline, this served only as our launching point for students to engage in designing and conducting their own original research projects.

We did not want students only to be exposed to critical social science research and theory; we also wanted them to become critical social science theorists and researchers. This meant that the students needed to conduct their own research. Becoming critical sociologists means that one needs to do the work of critical sociology. This seems logical until one examines the current structure of secondary schooling. Rarely does enrolling in a social science course translate into developing proficiency at doing social science *per se*. Students enrolled in history courses, for example, rarely engage in any historical research. We felt that the best strategy for generating active involvement among the students included allowing them to participate in the process of activist research. This process, we felt, would foster the development of core academic competencies as well as a different set of relationships between the students, their schools, and their communities. It would also change the students' relationship to the research process and the products of academic research. Toward these ends, the seminar led up to the designing of local, community-based research projects that included methods used by social scientists (participant observation, interviews, surveys, database analysis, visual sociology, oral history).

Part of helping students to become readers of the word and world in the Freirean sense entailed using the language and tools of critical sociology to give them lenses through which to read their world. This is important in moving forward from folk sociologies and deficit theories of social reproduction toward informed analyses both of the sophisticated mechanisms of social reproduction and of the grounded theories of critical praxis. Students read complex works by Freire, Oakes, Anyon, MacLeod, and others (readings of the word). It is important to mention the overlaps between academic literacies involved in reading traditional texts and the Freirean principles of reading the world. Of course, there are other texts (non-academic and non-print ones) that a critical sociologist must read, which would include a reading of

the world. Supplementary to critical reading is a critical re-writing of the world that involves designing research projects and collecting and analyzing data. Preparation for this process included introducing the students to the tradition of social science research from a critical perspective. Our critical pedagogy of youth participatory action research involved conceptual reading and the development of critical methodological tools.

### The Pedagogy of the City

A significant portion of seminar time involved fieldwork in neighborhoods and schools around the city of Los Angeles. The fieldwork was a prerequisite for completing the projects that the students developed; youth participatory action research is necessarily going to entail having young people out and about in their schools and communities. It is simply not possible to conduct transformative participatory action research projects *solely* within the four walls of the classroom. We knew from the outset that we wanted students to spend significant portions of the seminar learning about the various neighborhoods and communities that comprised "inner-city" Los Angeles. We were thus deliberate about introducing students to new neighborhoods in a segmented and often fragmented city. Los Angeles, we felt, held a geographical and political coherence only to politicians and mapmakers. The real Los Angeles that we knew consisted of a patchwork of self-contained neighborhoods, frequently divided by race and class. Students inhabiting the Eastside neighborhoods, for instance, might have very little experience in the neighborhoods of South Central or Watts. Equally, students from the largely African American neighborhoods of South Central LA would not often travel east of the Los Angeles River toward neighborhoods that are almost exclusively Latino. Very few of the students from South or East Los Angeles would have spent any significant time on the Westside or in the San Fernando Valley. To give students a broader perspective of their city and a sense of ownership over their city, we deliberately created activities that would take each student into several different neighborhoods in addition to their own. We also divided up the student-researchers in such a way that each team would include a representative level of residential and racial/ethnic diversity (all would have been classified as coming from poor or working-class families).

As seminar educators, we were also interested in changing the nature of the relationship between students and members of the city infrastructure (su-

perintendents, police, local media personalities, parents, alumni of local schools). Usually students experience their schools and communities in passive ways: they are the recipients of schooling and community services, they are protected and served or punished by police, and they are written about in local media outlets. We wanted the students to develop respectful and agentic relationships with the adults in their city—both those who held traditional leadership positions and those who were directly or indirectly associated with knowledge production in or about the communities and neighborhoods. An important component of the pedagogy of the city entailed putting young people in touch with onsite and district-level administrators, practicing teachers, prominent members of community-based organizations, civil servants (police, judges, attorneys), citizens, and members of the local and regional media. We intentionally scheduled field trips to public parks, malls, libraries, schools, law offices, and public events that would be heavily attended by police and members of the media.

Each of these activities served a larger purpose of changing the way that students looked at the city and participated in civil life in Los Angeles. We wanted the students to understand the plurality and diversity of their city, but we also wanted them to gain an understanding of the similarities of experiences among citizens who might be classified differently or might be seen initially not to have much in common. For example, students attending a predominantly African American school in South Central LA would ideally be able to identify with the struggles of their peers attending schools in Boyle Heights and unincorporated East Los Angeles.

In addition, we wanted students to develop a vested interest in advocating on behalf of all the marginalized groups in the city. Students came together across many lines of difference to speak with a common voice about what concerned them in their city and the city's schools, and also they were able to speak to what gave them cause for hope. This coalition building is important to bridge some of the divides that exist between marginalized communities in our city; it is also fundamental to the development of our students as citizen-advocates who are able to bring people together in causes of social justice.

Finally, we wanted students to envision themselves as being able to play more powerful roles in advocating for equity and justice in their city, so the seminar sought to create contexts that would allow them to learn about becoming critical researchers as they also participated in meaningful ways in

exposing and ameliorating oppressive conditions in their schools and communities.

Our work as educators entailed creating the conditions that would allow the students to be able to experience the city. This included developing relationships with school personnel, city and neighborhood leaders, community-based organizations, and a cadre of parents and volunteer workers who could help to transport young students around a city as expansive as Los Angeles. The capital component to critical pedagogy included working with public transportation agencies to acquire monthly passes and tokens that would allow students and teachers to use public transportation to navigate the city efficiently throughout the research process.

#### Critical Pedagogy and the Praxis of Distribution

Once the students became invested in their participatory action research projects, an important component of our work as critical educators entailed locating and developing meaningful sites of exchange for the student research. There were several reasons for this focus. We knew that, to the extent that the young people were placed in positions where they were treated as intellectuals, they would also begin to see themselves as intellectuals. We also knew that, given that the young people worked so diligently on projects of social import, they deserved to have these projects shared with greater publics who would be able to benefit from or act upon this knowledge. Thus, we invited to our final presentations audiences that included university faculty members, classroom teachers, members of community-based organizations, media personnel, and elected officials and their staffs, along with peers, parents, and family members. Each of these populations had something to contribute to the experiences of our student presenters, and each of these authentic audience participants had something to gain from the research that the students had to present.

Following the presentations we arranged several physical, virtual, and print outlets that allowed the student research groups to distribute their findings. The university institute published an online journal that was frequently accessed by local teachers and students as well as researchers and policymakers from around the country, and students were encouraged to revise their individual and group projects for inclusion. We arranged for students to present their work to graduate seminars, to teacher education courses, and at regional and national educational research conferences such as the American

Educational Research Association, the Sociology of Education Association, and the California Association of Teachers of English. Many students created their own channels of distribution in their own schools and communities. Several students created presentations for their peers or faculty meetings on campus, students ran for school office on platforms that were bolstered by their summer seminar research, students lobbied school district personnel for policy changes on the basis of their research, and students contributed editorial and journalistic pieces to their school publications.

We argue that the distribution of youth participatory action research serves important pragmatic and pedagogical purposes. First, disseminating information to authentic audiences provides a rich, intellectually rigorous, and inspirational context for students to develop superior products. It was not necessary to tell the students to revise their work or to rehearse their presentations when they knew they would be speaking to an audience of several hundred people or if they knew that their films, PowerPoint presentations, and research reports would be accessed virtually by thousands of people (quite literally: the online journal received approximately 1 million hits during 2000–2006).

Furthermore, developing sites for information distribution allowed us as critical educators to position young people as scholars and intellectuals. Often when students “present” to adults the purpose is either to demonstrate a competency or to entertain, or the adults serve simply as external validation for the hard work of the students. These are all worthy reasons for young people to share their work with adults. Rarely, though, are young people placed in the position of experts with information that can *inform* adult audience members. It was important to us that our students felt as if they were bringing important information that contributed to ongoing conversations between researchers and advocates for social and educational justice. Student research teams brought data, analysis, and recommendations based on their findings that were meant to assist adults in their struggles to reform urban schools. The legitimacy and the relevance of these exchanges between adults and students further reified the students as researchers and as public intellectuals.

### Youth Participatory Action Research and Academic and Social Development

As we stated in Chapter 1, any critical pedagogy in urban education must simultaneously address academic, social, and identity development. Leaving any of these three goals out of the equation robs students of the education that will enable them to act powerfully upon the world as informed and affirmed agents. We have already discussed at length the impact of the youth participatory research on identity development. We would now like to elaborate the relationship between a critical pedagogy of youth participatory action research and academic skill development. We start with a quotation from the final research report of the hip-hop research project from the 2000 summer seminar:

We also found that the average student owned 10–15 hip-hop compact discs, several students own more than 20 compact discs and some own 5–10 compact discs or less. The average student watches 3–5 hours of hip-hop videos a week on television and listening on the radio. Several students watch 10 hours of hip-hop videos a week and a few students watch an hour or an hour and a half. With this abundance of information, we found that the average student believes that hip-hop music has an extreme influence on teens.

The students we interviewed and surveyed in the Los Angeles area believe hip-hop is so widely listened to for a myriad of reasons. The most popular reason was that they like it. The second most noted reason was that the students could relate with the music. It has to do with everyday things they have to go through. Students gave responses such as: “Hip-Hop is an expression of the soul that everyone can relate to because it combines so many art forms,” and “they talk about what teens are experiencing in life, so the teens feel a connection with the music.”

This short passage from a twenty-page research report (reports ranged from twenty-five to forty pages) reveals the extent to which the students appropriated the tools and language of social science research. To understand the impact of hip-hop culture on their peers, students created interview protocols and distributed a survey. They were able to quantify the very strong attachment that most of their peers had to hip-hop culture and to identify the ambivalence that many teens felt toward a culture that they thought represented their feelings to a certain extent but also glorified ways of being in the world that were dangerous (i.e., violence and drug use) and demeaning (i.e., sexism in lyrics and videos). To prepare themselves to engage in this level of research, students also had to become readers of social theory texts and texts related to social science research methods. Over the course of the

six summers of the seminar, every group produced a research report and presentation that contained at least this level of investigation and analysis.

In addition to increasing students' academic skill development across multiple core content areas, participatory action research also increased student motivation and student engagement in intellectual work. We documented this increased motivation throughout the work of the summer seminar in several ways. First, the students volunteered their evenings and weekends to continue the work of their projects. Faced with the time constraints of the seminar, students volunteered to conduct further research on their own time. Students borrowed our equipment to conduct interviews over the weekends, and they often asked whether they could stay late to finish projects. During the final week of preparation, it was not uncommon for students to remain after for several hours to complete data analysis or to rehearse their final presentations. On one night in particular, the final evening of preparation for the 2004 presentations, the entire cohort remained until 10 o'clock in the evening working on their research projects. Volunteers and university staff remained to help students with final edits on their research reports and short films, and the instructors ordered pizza for the entire group. As we look back on a dozen years of working with young people, watching the commitment of time and the energy and enthusiasm of a group of young people stands out as one of our more special moments of teaching.

Students also demonstrated their motivation by being more willing to take writing to extra drafts before submitting to external audiences, and they used the extra time and energy to create documents, documentaries, and presentations that were of a very high caliber. Our analysis of the quality of student work has been confirmed by interviews with practicing social scientists, who also spoke to the power and quality of the students' projects. In terms of sheer numbers, the twenty-five-page research reports and the notebooks, which averaged about a hundred pages written over five weeks, testify to the amount of work that students were willing to invest into the completion of these research projects. In addition, in interviews, students admit to being more interested and engaged in academic/intellectual work as a result of working collaboratively on these participatory action research projects.

A big challenge we face in adolescent education concerns motivation and engagement. Academic achievement (or under-achievement) is not always a question of skills; many times it is a question of motivation. After years of being told what they cannot do and years of attending oppressive schools, many students quite unsurprisingly decide not to continue to engage in

school. We must understand that fact if we are going to be effective with all adolescents, not just in urban education. We must understand the logic of their disinvestment, rather than just pathologize youth. One of the things we look for in our analysis of data is evidence of student engagement. We can see examples of engagement in the work from and the student commentary on the summer seminars. Students, in becoming participatory action researchers, are more likely to want to read complex and relevant texts, they are more likely to exert energy in the data collection and data analysis phase when they are conducting research that matters to their own lives and the lives of people they care about, and they are more likely to want to take their products through this process because they want their work to be solid, rigorous, and valuable to the process of remaking the world. We conclude this section with another excerpt from a research group report, written in the summer of 2002:

**From Learning Resource Group 2002**

The differences are exposed. The demands are voiced. Like the Chicano, Black, and Women's civil rights movements before us, we are engulfed in social and educational reform. We demand equity and the preservation [of] our civil rights. We demand that all our schools in urban and suburban communities be taught equally and be provided with the same quality educational resources. Otherwise, how are working-class people supposed to become an active part of society? Cesar Chavez once said, "Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot un-educate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. And you cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore." We are educated, full of pride, and united by a common goal for social change. We cannot be uneducated nor can we be humiliated. We are no longer afraid.

This is the summary paragraph from a prior seminar report where students focused on educational rights. It demonstrates the clarity and passion of the research groups, and it also demonstrates how they become powerful writers through this process of engaging in critical research. Finally, the quotation shows the willingness of the students to embrace the identities of action researchers and public intellectuals. The students implicate themselves in the process of working to change the conditions that they call out in the report. They further identify themselves as possessing the skills (academic content) and social awareness needed to engage in the struggle for educational, social, and racial justice. Everything we could possibly want for young people vis-à-vis their public educational experience is contained in this one

quotation, and it largely comes from creating contexts that allow for a critical pedagogy of youth participatory action research.

**Implications for Critical Pedagogy and Urban Education**

It is possible to draw on the principles of critical pedagogy to develop curricula and practices that are effective with urban youth. First, it is important to restate that we cannot separate critical pedagogy with urban youth from the development of academic literacy skills. One of our goals has to be the transmission of skills that help students to navigate professional and civic life; we must also acknowledge that there are too many sophisticated literacy skills required for true praxis. If these students are going to wear the mantle of the struggle for social and educational justice, if they are going to produce knowledge that forces us to look at our world differently, and if they are going to motivate people to act as collectives for social change, they will need to be able to read, write, and speak at high levels. As educators, we need to do a better job of linking academic skills to our ideal model of the public intellectuals that we want our students to become.

Given that schools and classrooms remain our primary sites of engagement with young people, we must do a better job of promoting youth participatory action research as a pedagogical approach across the K-12 spectrum. We talk more about this in the concluding chapter, but our research (Rogers, Morrell, & Enyedy, 2007) shows that when students are involved in action research projects, they also learn valuable skills and tools across the major content areas.

In addition, there needs to be more focus on the principles and applications of participatory action research in teacher education programs, in professional development seminars, and in master's degree programs for practicing teachers so that they can have the confidence and the expertise they need to help students with these most important projects. Given that most educators have little training in traditional research methods, their lack of expertise can limit their ability to work effectively with youth on local action research projects. Once schools accept the premise that participatory action research is a form of empowering critical pedagogy, they can also begin to reconfigure the skill sets that teachers need to be effective. Changing the nature of instruction or changing the ideology of effective practice has direct implications for what it means to teach. We must acknowledge that for every change we advocate in the classroom, we are also implicitly recom-

mending a change in the preparation of new teachers and changes for experienced teachers as well. That said, if we want critical educators to work with youth on participatory action research projects, we will need to figure out ways to help them do this.

In his work with a large East Coast urban school district, for example, Morrell developed a three-day seminar with interested teachers where they reviewed the principles of action research, read about what other students and teachers had done, and designed their own curricula to incorporate these principles. This working group and Morrell met monthly, often visiting each other's classrooms and refining their research projects with their respective classes. At the end of the year, each of the classes involved presented one of its action research projects to an audience of teachers, community leaders, and school and district leaders. In more than one instance, the issues raised by students (dropout rates, tardy policies, school discipline, etc.) were taken on by the appropriate authorities and these students themselves became involved in thinking about possible solutions to the problems they had investigated. In the relatively short period of an academic school year, teachers with no prior experience in participatory action research were able to develop concrete projects with a diverse array of students across a range of academic abilities. It all began with exposing teachers to the possibilities of participatory research as an instantiation of critical pedagogy and developing their own skills as researchers.

As critical pedagogy is defined largely by its outcomes for identity development and social change, it becomes the responsibilities of urban teachers and administrators to seek out more venues for the distribution of youth participatory action research. By its very definition, action research needs to lead to transformative action; teachers and students need opportunities to act upon the knowledge that they produce during the research process. This means that they need ample opportunities to share their work with the appropriate audiences, be they other teachers and students, district-level leaders, policymakers, or the community at large. We also know from our prior research (Morrell & Rogers, 2007) that students develop greater confidence in themselves as intellectuals and activists when they are affirmed in these identities through their public presentations. With the Futures project and with the summer seminar, we sought out opportunities for the young people to present their research. We created an end-of-seminar conference, we arranged for students to speak at professional and academic conferences, we

brought them into graduate seminars at the university, and we negotiated access to department meetings at individual school sites. In the East Coast project alluded to in the previous paragraph, students expressed increased motivation after presenting their work to school and district-level officials.

Finally, we need more empirical research on youth participatory research as a legitimate instantiation of critical pedagogy. In the spirit of this book, we urge critical educators across the K-12 educational spectrum, and across all major content areas, to initiate and document their action research projects with urban youth. We further challenge book publishers, series editors, journal editors, and organizers of professional conferences to provide ample space for educators who do this invaluable research to share their work. There should be whole book series, special issues of journals, and working conferences dedicated to the investigation of the practical applications of participatory action research to urban education. The high visibility of these events as well as the sheer quantity of critical studies that could be produced would ideally impact public awareness as well as shape educational policy.

The next generation of critical scholarship will need to push the theoretical parameters of our work as the scholarship of prior generations has done. To develop a complete grounded theory of critical pedagogy in urban education, we will need many more examples of the possibilities and dilemmas that accompany the transition from theory to practice. What we have provided in this book are powerful examples of what this practice might look like in traditional and out-of-school interactions with urban youth. With a call for additional work in this regard, we now turn toward our fifth case, which considers the intersections between critical pedagogy and ethnic studies in urban education.

#### Note

1. The state mandates that each school develop and provide an SARC that includes required elements (e.g., standardized test scores, teacher certification information) but may be supplemented with locally generated information.