READING AND WRITING INSTRUCTION IN THE EARLY COLLEGE THROUGH THE

LENS OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

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by

Christi R. Keelen

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Mark, and my son, Hunter. They are literally my sun and my moon, my whole world. There were times that I did not believe in myself, that I really wanted to quit, but these two kept me going. They have been supportive when I have been unavailable both physically and mentally. This is for you. I love you.

I would also like to dedicate this to my students from the Early College where the data was taken. You guys are the reason that I want to make the world a better place, so that students like you can grow and achieve whatever they want because that is true social justice.

ABSTRACT

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This study is about the perceptions of 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students in an urban early college setting. The areas of focus were reading and writing instruction and critical pedagogy. Students overall indicated that they felt they were prepared in areas of reading and writing instruction. It was also evident that elements of critical pedagogy were present in the instruction provided to the students. Although, more research is needed, this study shows that students can feel positive about their reading and writing instruction in this setting, and that elements of critical pedagogy are an important piece of the Early College model.

KEY WORDS: Early College, Literacy, Latino/a Students, Social Justice, Critical Pedagogy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

While working in central office as a curriculum specialist, I served as a district test monitor at an early college. I had heard the term previously, but had assumed that this was a school that catered to White, middle to upper-class students who were bored at a traditional school and needed a more challenging curriculum. I was wrong. While monitoring, I watched students from a very poor, urban neighborhood as they walked between their high school and the community college across the street. The majority of these students were from under-served populations and many were bilingual. I was impressed by what I saw from these students and heard from their teachers and administrators.

Later when I began my doctorate, I took a class that focused on school reform, and it was then that I began to understand the pedagogical background for early colleges and middle colleges. An early college has a partnership with a college, allows students to earn up to 60 hours of college credit at no cost to them, and targets students who are at-risk for not graduating from high school (Texas Early College High School, 2016). Middle colleges share all of the characteristics of an early college with a few differences. The middle college is located on a college campus, and while students have the opportunity to take college classes, there is no push for students to complete an associates' degree (Middle College National Consortium, 2016). Many of my classmates had never heard of these schools, and I was able to share my experience. It helped all of us understand the constructs of an early college better. It was at that point that I decided to pursue a position at an early college if the opportunity presented itself.

I have always enjoyed working with those perceived by others as being "less-than." When I taught high school and middle school, I volunteered to teach the co-taught classes where one-fourth of my students were served under special education. I took great pleasure in teaching these students, who just happened to learn differently, how to do everything that their peers were doing. From there I moved on to struggling readers of all kinds; some were reading below grade-level and others who had dyslexia. Again, I relished watching these students succeed. So it seemed like a natural fit for me to want to help minority, low-socioeconomic, English Language Learners, and first generation college students, achieve in the college environment.

My opportunity came around three years ago when an opening for a Dean of Students was posted for an early college in my school district. I applied, interviewed, and was hired. I was amazed at the students and how many thrived in this environment, and I worked diligently to help those who struggled. I also found it interesting that even though there are five early colleges within my district, they all function differently. My early college is the most successful because 98% of our students graduate with both their associate's degree and high school diploma. We do not have the highest test scores, but our scores are not deficient either. I began to wonder how the students perceive their literacy instruction and their level of preparation for the university. This seemed like a natural topic for my dissertation.

Problem

In the United States, the demographic landscape is changing. Minority populations are growing in rapid numbers, and schools may not meet the needs of these

growing populations. For example, Latino/a children make up 12.5% of the population in the United States and more than 20% of the total population in our schools. Data reports this population is increasing and will continue to increase in the next twenty years (Fry, Gonzales, & Pew Hispanic Center, 2008; Ginorio & Hutson, 2001). The success rate of Latino/a students has continued to decrease despite population increases (Books, 2004; Hill & Torres, 2010; Pizarro, 2005).

To address the need of minority and low-socioeconomic students lacking the opportunity or support to be admitted to college, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation began the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI) in 2000. This program allows minorities and students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds to enroll and complete college courses for free. Students are also provided the books, resources, and support needed to be successful at college. ECHSI schools are guided by five Core Principals:

1. "Early college schools are committed to serving students underrepresented in higher education."
2. "Early college schools are created and sustained by a local education agency, a higher education institution, and the community, all of whom are jointly accountable for student success."
3. "Early college schools and their higher education partners and community jointly develop an integrated academic program so all students earn 1 to 2 years of transferable college credit leading to college completion."

4. "Early college schools engage all students in a comprehensive support system that develops academic and social skills as well as the behaviors and conditions necessary for college completion."

5. "Early college schools and their higher education and community partners work with intermediaries to create conditions and advocate for supportive policies that advance the early college movement" (American Institutes for Research & Stanford Research Institute, August 2009, pg. 2).

Students who participate in these early college environments have some, if not all of the following, characteristics: minority, low socio-economic status, English language learner, and/or are the first in their family to attend college (AIR & SRI, August 2009). Studies have reported that students who participate in early colleges are more likely to graduate from high school, they are more likely to enroll in college, and they are more likely to earn a degree than students who are served in more traditional school environment (American Institute for Research, 2013; Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2007; An, 2012).

While the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was responsible for the new interest in early college starting in the early 21st century, they were not responsible for the idea. This concept was borrowed from the Middle College High School that began back in the 1970s. The best known middle college is LaGuardia Community College in New York City. The ideas are the same in that both types of schools are targeting low-socioeconomic and minority students. Both schools' goal is to make these students more successful in high school, but the way they function is different. The middle college usually is located in the community college itself. It is different from the early college in

that the early college's goal is to provide the students with the opportunity and support system to allow them to be successful in attaining an associate's degree (Born, 2006). Middle colleges hope that students will take more interest in their college courses and aspire to later attend the community college as students.

It is also important to understand that not all early colleges look alike. While the vast majority of them are in existence because they have a goal to help students from underserved populations to have access to college, there are other models within the United States as well as other countries. In some other countries such as China, "…selecting a group of exceptionally gifted students for early college entrance may be a priority because the goal is to make the most of their gifts and talents for the benefit of both society and individuals involved" (Dai, 2015, pg. 6). Furthermore, in Michigan, three models of the early college project are used consistently: fifth year programs, enhanced dual enrollment systems, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Early college Expansion Project (SECEP) schools. Fifth year programs allow students to complete college courses while still receiving support from their home schools. Enhanced Dual Enrollment Systems (EDES) provide students who may not be ready to engage in dual-enrollment courses by themselves with assistance. These types of schools provide, (a) early assessment with guidance, (b) sequenced, dual enrollment courses, (c) support for courses such as companion courses and tutoring, (d) early warning systems; and (f) shared data collection. SECEP schools work with colleges to strengthen STEM pathways and allow students the opportunity to earn at least 12 college credits. (Barnett, Maclutsky, Wagonlander, 2015)

One of the disadvantages of attending an early college is that these schools do not offer the same experience that a student would get at a comprehensive high school. For example, extracurricular activities such as athletics, band, and a variety of clubs are not offered. Students understand, that to get a small environment (typically 400 or less students) and a school that has aligned its curriculum to prepare students for college and help them to receive an associate's degree, that in some cases, students may have to give up some of what is offered at a traditional high school (Kisker, 2006).

Texas became involved with the ECHSI through Educate Texas, previously known as Texas High School Project (THSP), a combined effort of both public and private entities involved with the Communities Foundation of Texas (Educate Texas, 2012a). While Educate Texas oversees the initiative, the project is funded by several organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, The Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Michael and Susan Dell foundation, and the Wallace Foundation (Jobs for the Future, 2006). Educate Texas works to improve the education system to ensure that all students are prepared for their life that comes after graduation. The group is particularly interested in assisting low-income students that are traditionally underserved as well as schools that are low-performing. Educate Texas has helped to begin and support more than 49 early college high school campuses (Educate Texas, 2012b).

A main goal for early colleges is to provide access to college for underserved populations. In 2000, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) adopted an initiative known as Closing the Gaps. The purpose of this initiative was to increase the number of students attending a higher education institution by 500,000 by 2015 (THECB,

2000). This number was increased in 2006 to 630,000 students due to demographic projections (THECB, 2006). This initiative's goal was to improve the Texas economy because people who only obtain a high school diploma make significantly less than those who have a college degree. Many obstacles that keep students from obtaining a degree such as not understanding how to apply to a college and high costs of tuition and books are no longer an issue in an early college. The tuition for students is paid for, as well as books. The process is explained by professors, counselors, and teachers who also give students important advice as how to be successful in this sometimes foreign environment.

College readiness is another topic that must be discussed in connection with early colleges. Conley (2008) focuses on areas of college ready skills: content knowledge, cognitive skills that assist students in a college environment such as analytical thinking and problem-solving skills, academic behaviors such as time management skills, and background knowledge and skills. To help students develop college-readiness skills, schools use various approaches, which can consist of ensuring that the curriculum is aligned to higher education standards, having students attend college success programs, and/or enrolling students in college courses while they are currently in high school (Adelman, 2006; Conley, D., 2011; Karp. Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2007).

Previous findings mentioned above have provided researchers with data about how early colleges benefit students, but there is a need to truly hear the voice of the student. Educators need to know how students feel about their literacy instruction and how prepared they perceive themselves to be for the university level. There is also a need to understand if elements of critical pedagogy are present in the early college literacy environment.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to focus on literacy instruction in an early college located in the southern region of the United States in an urban area. I examined how students perceived their literacy instruction and how they perceived their preparedness for the university level. I also examined how these perceptions connect to components of critical pedagogy of Freire, McLaren, and Giroux. I utilized a questionnaire, conducted a focus group, and interviewed select students who were currently enrolled in an early college. The information received at each junction of the information gathering process helped to focus and further drive questions that were asked further on in the research. These data allowed me to attain the select students' responses and perceptions and can better inform the field of both early college and literacy research and push new understanding revealed by other empirical studies previously mentioned. These data provided information to help current and future early colleges adjust their instruction, as well as provide better and more relevant information to the students in order to improve the culture of success at the early college level.

Definitions.

Dual-credit courses- Courses that provide students with both high school and college credit.

Early college- high schools that target specific sub populations and assist them in attaining both college and high school credit at the same time.

Economically disadvantaged- label for students who qualify for free or reduced lunch due to their family income level.

English language learners- students whose primary language is not English.

Lexile is a measurement system that measures both a student's reading level and the reading level of texts. It was developed by MetaMetrics (The Lexile Framework for Reading, 2018).

Magnet school- schools where students must qualify to attend the school. The qualification is met by grades and test scores. Magnet schools have specific areas of interest such as the early college experience.

Middle college- high schools that target specific sub populations. They typically are situated on a college campus. They function with the assumption that students who attend school in this environment will aspire to achieve more.

SAT (scholastic aptitude test) is a test designed to indicate if students will be successful at the college level. Specifically, the SAT tests in the reading section the students' abilities to draw inferences, synthesize information, distinguish between main ideas and supporting ideas, and understand vocabulary in context (College Board, 2009).

Theoretical Framework.

Students who come from underserved backgrounds: minority, low socio-economic status, English language learner, and/or the first in their family to attend college, are largely underserved at the post-secondary level; therefore, it is important to make sure that these students are given the same opportunity for education as their majority counterparts. Freire (1970) advocated for liberation for the oppressed and their oppressors through education. While minority groups are not openly oppressed, it is arguable that by not making it a goal to increase minority and low-socioeconomic success at the post-secondary level that minorities are being oppressed because they are not being

helped. Freire describes the banking model of education (Freire, 1994), in which, teachers deposit the learning into the students, and then the students give the information back at the end through testing. Freire wanted students' learning to go deeper than a deposit and return system. Freire advocated for the use of critical pedagogy in the classroom. Freire's passion for others can be seen through his work in Brazil where he not only taught the poor to read, but also taught them how to think about the world. It is important that minority students be taught the same. These students must understand what Freire understood, that no education is unbiased or unconnected to politics. The early college vision meshes with Freire's beliefs. He wanted equal access to education that the early college provides. Teachers at the early college campus involved with this study are encouraged and encourage their students to think deeply about the material being covered. Freire (2005) specifically argues that literacy, both the reading and writing of text, must be done in order for students to fully analyze the text and then transform because of it. Freire wanted dialogue to accompany reading tasks in order for students to discuss, understand, and make meaning.

Providing learning experiences in which students can increase their Cultural Capital is necessary for students to experience success in the college environment. Bordieu (1986) addressed the power found in social, cultural, knowledge, and linguistic capital. Cultural capital, in particular, is developed through opportunities to travel, visit places such as theaters and museums, exposure to religion, television, and books, and a variety of differing social situations. Because students may come from homes that may not have the means for offering students the opportunity to be exposed to these types of situations, schools should see the value in this type of learning opportunity. The early

college provides support for building cultural capital through various means. All students attend a college visit each year. Students tour the campuses, eat in the dining halls, and look at dorm rooms. Many of these students would never have this exposure or opportunity without these trips. Students are also encouraged to learn about current topics through advocacy lessons, and cultural activities are built through the advocacy periods as well. Students are also able to hear young-adult authors speak and learn the value of charity through their required service hours and senior projects that have to focus on giving back to the community.

Students from underserved backgrounds need to understand how to use critical thinking skills to make up for areas of insufficiency that the world deems to be necessary for success in middle to upper class society. Students need to embrace their own cultures, and at the same time, understand that there are other cultures that they need to be familiar with in order to be successful. Teachers must provide the opportunity to recognize that there is power in literacy, that it is a "discourse of literacy skills, attitudes, and values that can be used as a meta-discourse to critique personal, popular culture, community, and school discourses in order to think, speak, and act effectively on behalf of themselves and their communities" (Gee, 1991, p.8). This is what Gee refers to as big "D" discourse. These skills must be taught to students in order for them to participate fully and successfully in the world around them. Critical pedagogy reminds teachers that not all students come to the classroom with the background knowledge of the majority (white, middle to upper class children). Students at the early college in this study are encouraged to used academic language effectively in speech and in writing.

Vygotsky (1986) also saw that language, culture, and thought are connected and cannot be separated from one another. He understood that learning is a socio-cultural experience and that students who work collaboratively learn more, but he is also credited for the concepts of the zone of proximal development. In this idea, students are pushed just beyond their individual knowledge level to achieve more through a scaffolded learning experience (Vygotsky, 1962). Scaffolding is used in many early colleges to assist students who may have learning gaps from previous schooling. Collaborative learning is also highly encouraged because of the benefits to the students. The early college provides scaffolding within the classrooms, but remedial reading and writing classes, SAT prep courses, and STAAR prep courses also provide extended learning to students who are unable to pass the assessment to take courses at the college, need to increase their SAT scores, or data show that they may be in danger of failing the STAAR exam. Many classrooms in the early college are built with collaboration in mind. It is rare to see a room where the desks are seated in traditional rows. Students are also provided laptops to address the digital divide as well as teach digital literacy skills that will be needed at the university level.

Teachers of early college students also have to learn to meet the students where they are and accept the whole child for who they are. Dewey (1916) also believed that education should serve to increase the desire for more education, "The inclination to learn from life itself and to make the conditions of life such that all will learn in the process of living is the finest product of schooling" (p. 56). Teachers help students to develop this love of learning through, not only their teaching but the relationships that they develop with the students. Small-class size and caring teachers allow for students at the early

college to develop close relationships with their teachers and administrators. Students are also taught that attending a university is a given for them. Their only issue should be choosing the one that is right for them. McLaren (1994) speaks of the teachable heart which recognizes that teachers are leaders who understand that knowledge, experience, language, and power are important parts of the classroom and that the power to reach students is within us. Teachers build relationships with students and teach them to trust and support them emotionally through an ethic of care (Noddings, 2002). Without teachers who care, early colleges would not succeed.

It is for the belief in equity and social justice that the work of the early college is important. Early colleges allow for students to be successful at the post-secondary level by providing them supports that are needed and by specifically targeting these sub-populations.

Research Questions

Questions to be explored during the study are as follows:

1. In what ways do select students perceive literacy instruction in their early college either prepares them or does not prepare them for success at the university?

2. In what ways do select students' perceptions relate or connect to components of critical pedagogy?

Delimitations.

The delimiting variables of this study are as follows: All of the people participating in this study are students who are enrolled in an early college. All of the students in this study are concurrently enrolled in both high school and college courses.

The students in this study fall into one of the following categories: minority, English language learner, and/or low-socioeconomic status.

Limitations.

This study will not have that ability to be generalized due to its structure. The population of this study is limited to mostly Latino/a students because of the location of the school. While other minority groups such as African American and Asian are present, their numbers are not statistically significant. Also, only students who return both the assent and consent forms were able to participate in the research, which means that the entire student body in grades 10-12 was utilized in the study.

Organization of the Study

Early colleges are already considered effective because they contribute to students' success at the high school and college level. Students graduate from high school at higher rates and have more college hours, and some may hold an associate's degree for which they have not had to pay. But if research provides more information about the mindset and opinions of select early college students, then it might be possible to increase success rates and influence more students than are currently being reached. More successful early colleges means that more students who come from minority, low-socioeconomic backgrounds, who are English Language Learners, and who are the first in their families to graduate from college, will attain college credit allowing them more opportunities to better themselves and their lives.

The early college for this study is in a major urban city in southeast Texas. The students who participate in this study will be volunteers. The early college chosen is one of five in the large, urban district. This school is also a magnet school, which means that

students must qualify to attend this school. Select Latino students were selected to take a questionnaire focused on the previously mentioned research questions. From this group of select students, a smaller number of students were selected to participate in a focus group and then individual interviews.

Conclusion.

This chapter introduced the reader to the concept of the early college, explaining where the idea came from, how it is supported in the state of Texas, and the mission of the early college. The problem of providing access to under-served populations was discussed. The purpose of this study is to understand how students perceive their literacy instruction and how this connects to elements of critical pedagogy. This is pertinent to the field of early college research because there is a need to both hear the voice of the student, as well as ascertain what role critical pedagogy has in the early college. In chapter 2, I will conduct a review of the literature which will focus on an in-depth look at pedagogy that supports this type of school, parental involvement, college readiness, school culture, perceptions of educators, and both positive and negative early college research, critical pedagogy, and elements of literacy at the secondary level. In chapter 3, I will discuss the methodology and data collection process that I used for this study. In chapter 4, I will analyze the data and present the results of this research study. Finally, in chapter 5, I will summarize and discuss the results of the study.

CHAPTER II

Introduction

In this chapter, critical pedagogy is discussed, and research pertaining to the topic is also covered in general as well as an in-depth look at how it intersects with literacy. The research provides not only a general idea of what this practice might look like in the classroom, and it shows how critical pedagogy can be a powerful motivating force in the classroom. This chapter also takes a deep dive into Freire and Bordieu's contributions to critical pedagogy, Gee's theories about discourse, Vygotsky's ideas about socio-cultural learning and scaffolding, Dewey's concepts about democratic education, McLaren's thoughts concerning the pedagogical unsaid, and Noddings' ethics of caring. All of these theories and theorists help to explain why early colleges are able to attain academic achievement among traditionally underserved populations, as well as why critical pedagogy would be a powerful practice if used. Literature is reviewed that consists of varying topics that help to provide more information about what is already known about early colleges and areas that still need to be studied. The impact of parental involvement is discussed even though there is little parental involvement at the school being studied. College readiness is another topic that affects the success of students in college environments because it is directly tied to skills that students either have or need to develop. School culture and climate is an additional area that has been found to have a large impact on student success. It is imperative to see how early colleges differ from their traditional counterparts. It is important to note that both positive and negative research exists concerning early colleges and student success.

Questions to be explored during the study are as follows:

1. In what ways do select students perceive literacy instruction in their early

    college either prepares them or does not prepare them for success at the

    university level?

2. How do those perceptions relate or connect to components of critical

    pedagogy?

Theoretical Framework. Freire is known as one of the fathers of critical pedagogy and

critical literacy. Freire (1970) advocated for liberation for the oppressed and their

oppressors through education. He wanted oppressed people to develop critical

consciousness and the ability to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions

and learn to act against forces that oppressed them. While minority groups are not openly

oppressed, it is arguable that by not making it a goal to increase minority and low-

socioeconomic success at the post-secondary level that minorities are being oppressed

because they are not being helped. Freire is also accredited for the concept of the banking

model of education (Freire, 1994). In this concept, teachers deposit the learning into the

students, and then the students give the information back at the end through testing, but

Freire wanted students' learning to go deeper than a deposit and return system. Freire

advocated for the use of critical pedagogy in the classroom. He wanted teachers to utilize

a "problem posing" methodology, where the "teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-

teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while

being taught also teach" (Freire, 1970, p. 61). Here a relationship between students and

teacher and a culture of learning should be present within the classroom for this type of

true dialogue to exist. Critical pedagogy asks for students to think deeply about the world

that they live in and to consider why it is the way it is. Freire wanted students to understand *coscientizaca*, the social position and cultural forces at work within a text or situation. He also advocated for teachers to aspire to real praxis, where students would think about a text, name the position of power, and take action to make a situation better. This theory asks students to question privilege and power (Freire, 1970). Freire's passion for others can be seen through his work in Brazil where he not only taught the poor to read, but also taught them how to think about the world. It is important that underserved populations be taught the same. These students must understand what Freire understood, that no education is unbiased or unconnected to politics.

Students from underserved backgrounds need to understand how to use critical thinking skills to make up for areas of deficit that the world deems to be necessary for success in middle to upper class society. Students need to embrace their own cultures, and at the same time, understand that there are other cultures that they need to be familiar with in order to be successful. Teachers must provide the opportunity to recognize that there is power in literacy, that it is a "discourse of literacy skills, attitudes, and values that can be used as a meta-discourse to critique personal, popular culture, community, and school discourses in order to think, speak, and act effectively on behalf of themselves and their communities" (Gee, 1991, p.8). This is what Gee refers to as big "D" discourse. These skills must be taught to students in order for them to participate fully and successfully in the world around them. Students must be taught social languages and how to use them meaningfully. Giroux and McLaren (1992) further explore language and critical pedagogy by asserting the connection between the world and reality. "…language constitutes reality rather than merely reflecting it" (p. 12). They also explained that

language is powerful, and it assists by helping to create one's identity and allows students to be move beyond their social position. Giroux and McLaren state that language and the self cannot be separate from one another. Freire and Macedo (1987) also made the connection between language and thought. They asserted that, "there is no longer any separation between thought-language and objective reality" (p. 157). Students must learn and be taught how to not only realize what they are thinking but how they arrived at that thought or idea. Giroux and McLaren (1992) state that, "What makes literacy 'critical' is its ability to make the learner aware of how relations of power, institutional structures, and models of representation work on and through the learner's mind a critical perspective demands that the very ideological process of language itself can be interrogated" (p. 18).

Gee understands that for students to truly be literate that they must understand the social aspects of what they are reading (Gee, 1997). Gee also taught that theories themselves can cause social injustice and noted the importance of researchers thinking about what theories and generalizations they were using and to what ends they were using them (Gee, 2012). Gee notes that deeper social changes must occur for deeper effects of schooling to be seen. It is not simply enough to provide the opportunity to students. This is why it is important not only for early colleges to provide the opportunity but to begin to think of schooling in a new and different way. Gee (1990) states that "you learn discourse by becoming a member of the group" (p.150). He also uses the term "mushfaking," when a person goes along with a group and fakes it until they understand what they need to do and can do it on their own. This is particularly true of the freshman that we see at the early college. Students come from schools all over the city with a

varying degree of academic rigor, and they come from neighborhoods and homes that may not understand the language and culture of the school. Once they realize that everyone is here to better themselves and get themselves into college, they typically fall in line. Another important piece of the early college is to help the students become effective analytical readers. Gee (1997) agreed that students need to feel a sense of achievement in their reading abilities and see themselves as people who can thrive.

Critical pedagogy reminds teachers that not all students come to the classroom with the background knowledge of the majority (white, middle to upper class children). Providing learning experiences in which students can increase their Cultural Capital is necessary for students to experience success in the college environment. Bordieu (1986) addressed the power found in social, cultural, knowledge, and linguistic capital. Cultural Capital, in particular, is developed by through opportunities to travel, visiting places such as theaters and museums, exposure to religion, television, and books; and a variety of differing social situations. Bourdieu (2002) noted that when the various types of capital are highly regarded and rewarded in the school, meet with school culture, and then become academic capital. This type of capital assists students in creating academic literacies, languages, and identities. Because students may come from homes that may not have the means for offering students the opportunity to be exposed to these types of situations, schools should see the value in this type of learning opportunity. Bordieu and Passeron (1994) said that academic language is "no one's mother tongue" and for working-class students, "the divorce between the language of the family and the language of school only serves to reinforce that the education system belongs to another world" (p. 9). Bordieu (1980) calls this the "institutionalization of difference". Early colleges seek to

teach students that this is not true for them, and that they can learn how to navigate and learn the language of the system.

Vygotsky (1986) also saw that language, culture, and thought are connected and cannot be separated from one another. He also understood that learning is a socio-cultural experience. Vygotsky embraced the idea that a child's historical, social, and cultural contexts of his experiences would have to be understood to truly understand the child's development. It is, therefore, important to look at and understand the whole child. This happens at the early college in this research when grade-level teams meet to discuss how students are doing. Part of the conversation is the history of the student's education, any home issues that might impede their learning, and any health or psychological issues that may hinder the student. Vygotsky also understood that students who work collaboratively learn more, but he is also credited for the concepts of the zone of proximal development. In this idea, students are pushed just beyond their individual knowledge level to achieve more through a scaffolded learning-experience (Vygotsky, 1962). Scaffolding is used in many early colleges to assist students who may have learning gaps from previous schooling. Collaborative learning is also highly encouraged because of the benefits to the students.

Teachers of early college students also have to learn to meet the students where they are and accept the whole child for who they are. Dewey (1916) believed that education should serve to increase the desire for more education, "The inclination to learn from life itself and to make the conditions of life such that all will learn in the process of living is the finest product of schooling" (p. 56). Dewey realized something that some teachers do not. He realized that students learn more than the curriculum being taught

(Dewey, 1938). Some have called it the hidden curriculum. It is for this reason that teachers should be very reflective about the real content that they are teaching as well as the messages that they may or may not intend for students to learn. In the early college, it is important that one of the messages that is given to students is that they can all achieve an associate's degree and that they will all go to college. Dewey is also known with his concern with the democratic nature of the school environment. He wanted students to learn to think for themselves and that no curriculum should, "…impress upon the minds of pupils a particular set of political and economic views to the exclusion of every other" (Dewey, 1987, p. 415). Early colleges should teach students to know the world other than the world they live in and learn to make their own opinions about their world and others that they will encounter.

Teachers help students develop this love of learning through, not only their teaching but the relationships that they develop with the students. McLaren (1994) speaks of the teachable heart which recognizes teachers are leaders who understand that knowledge, experience, language, and power are important parts of the classroom and the power to reach students is within us. But McLaren (1998) also speaks of the *pedagogical unsaid* which is essentially known in other areas as the *hidden curriculum*. This is when the ideas of the dominant culture are passed through institutions such as schools. McLaren and Silva (1993) discuss how power can be abused in the classroom by the instructor. Teachers' behaviors such as deliberate silences, power position, and eye narrowing and procedures can create and cause a teacher to be both dominant and threatening. This is why it is important that a relationship between teacher and student exists that values everyone's knowledge and collaborative learning. Isaccs and Waghid

(2015) assert that, "these undemocratic classroom management approaches on the part of the teacher mimic the control and discipline imposed on especially minority students as part of the status quo" (p. 170). This is part of critical pedagogy which was discussed early in the context of Freire. It is important for teachers to be aware of the messages that they are sending about dominant and minority culture through their teaching practice. McLaren and Leonard (1993) discussed that to create a democratic classroom that is transformative in nature, the classroom must include practices such as collaborative learning, students posing questions, shared decision-making, and the choice to disagree.

Teachers build relationships with students and teach them how to trust one another as well as the teacher, while supporting them emotionally through an ethic of care (Noddings, 2002). Without teachers who care, early colleges would not succeed. Teachers who are able to trust create a classroom where students feel comfortable showing their vulnerability. Students are not afraid to show concern for others and be kind. This is true of the early college in this study. Classrooms have such a level of respect and compassion for every student you can literally see and feel a difference from a typical classroom environment. Noddings (2005) described an ethic of care. This involves several key concepts. First, who we are has nothing to do with our moral decision making. Next, the ethics of care puts an emphasis on consequences, but it does not focus on one greatest good. Last, caring should not be labeled as an ethic of virtue. Teachers must model the act of caring for students. Through this, they show how people care and the value of caring. Dialogue is a crucial piece in moral education because it assists allowing people to communicate and connects us to others to create relationships. Teachers musts talk to their students to create that relationship and be role-models for

how students should treat one another. It is also important to practice this type of behavior of caring for one another. The early college in this study, and many other early colleges, require students to do 25 hours of community service each year. The service can be to the school or another school, community, charity, or church of their choosing. Also, confirmation is an important part of a moral education. Confirmation recognizes students for what they do well, and to understand the circumstances when they do not. The early college celebrates a student of the month. This student is chosen based on his behavior toward others and his commitment to his education.

Critical Pedagogy in the Classroom. Perveen (2015) conducted a study at a Pakistani university. The students in the course ranged in age from 25 to 40. These students were learning to speak English over a two-year period. Students in this course expressed the desire to learn English because they felt that it would benefit them by providing better opportunities. The course consisted of several components. One of those was reading. The instructor used comparative literature as a teaching tool, pairing a piece of literature written in English with one written in their native language, Urdu. Students were encouraged to discuss texts in groups and collaboratively find their meaning. An example of how critical pedagogy was utilized in the class would be the pairing of *Othello* and the Indian-version, *Omkara.* Students in one group rewrote Othello to include a postcolonial context from Pakistani history. This helped the students understand the relationships of power in this historical context. The instructor also used a Pakistani movie called *Khuda kay Lie,* which portrayed a Muslim terrorist. Students compared the main character in the film to characters from *Othello* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Students discussed questions that focused on the creation of the text, the audience, and the hidden

agenda. Students also read short stories and poetry analyzing roles of power in areas such as gender, class, and culture. Students wrote essays that were political in nature. This allowed them the opportunity to share their beliefs in written form. From the lesson, Perveen found that the students were able to analyze their thinking and beliefs. They also were able to understand the power of language. Students began to discuss power issues within the Pakistani society and culture. Because of their experience, a few things happened. First, the students created a magazine called "Numlect" where they wrote both creative pieces and essays. Second, the students decided to talk to the Regional Director about some of the issues that they were having on the campus. The researcher noted that she felt that the use of critical pedagogy in this course had been very effective. She also noted that change does not come quickly. She also felt that critical pedagogy is not truly effective until it spreads and inspires everyone.

Kurki (2015) conducted an ethnographic study on 12 students in Grade 9. The study followed both their English and Social Studies courses. These students attended an alternative high school in Western Canada. All of the students that attend this school are considered at-risk for not completing high school due to academic issues, drug and alcohol abuse, health issues, or the students were previously bullied. 70% of the students in these two classes were served under special education. The instruction for these courses included a variety of texts such as movie, YouTube videos, songs, poetry, painting, Tweets, and narratives. Almost all of the students had Individual Education Plans (IEPs) because of their special education services, so expectations were varied by goals set in these plans. Students were to focus on current events, and they could choose whatever texts that they wished. The researcher developed a continuum to help analyze

students' responses. Student responses that showed analysis and evaluation were categorized as critical thinking. Students' responses that showed the students challenging or transforming were categorized as critical literacy. After classifying the students' responses, she was able to make several conclusions. First, students were engaging critically with the texts collaboratively and independently, and with and without teacher assistance. Second, the students engaged with a variety of texts, as mentioned above. Third, the students were influenced and included their families, friends, and peers. Fourth, the students were very serious about what was happening in the world. Fifth, students did not often reach the transformation stage when interacting with texts. Last, the students did not spend a lot of time discussing issues that focused on social justice. The researcher felt that this study was important because it showed what students can bring to a classroom. It is not only the teacher who has something to offer, which is an important part of critical pedagogy. She also mentioned that really getting to know students in this way can help teachers to learn about their interests and lives, and thus, how to motivate them in the classroom.

Johnson (2011) followed students who were participating in a class that was working under the guidance of The Young Writer's Project. Students were going through the writing process with their essays to create a book of student work. She focused on a tenth-grade student named Simone. Simone was able to explain the concept of critical literacy, but she called it 'swag.' She explained it as a way to put yourself out there at school. Simone was asked to photograph pop culture texts. She chose to focus on condominiums and townhouses that were being built in her neighborhood as well as bars on windows and doors. For her essay, she chose to focus on a song by Christina Aguilera

and Lil Kim. The song talked about the double-standard for men and women sexually. She identified with other artists such as Jay Z and Biggie, which in her opinion, wrote about real things that were happening in the neighborhood and community. The teacher in this classroom called critical literacy "getting political." This is where the class would look at an article from several viewpoints. Part of the activity for this class was disrupted because the school newspaper had printed a quote of a student saying that he wanted to kill the president. This had caused administration to be very concerned with what students were publishing. The students were anticipating moving forward with a CD that they had been working on where they used voice overs to accompany the student handbook. When the teacher began to discuss the incident that occurred at school, the students began to make fun of the teacher's Spanish pronunciation of a word and began to speak in Spanish. The teacher was not a Spanish speaker. The teacher wanted to broach this subject before the students began editing their CD, but the students did not take this as seriously as the teacher had hoped. Simone and the others side-tracked the whole class. The researcher still felt that Simone had practiced critical literacy despite her behavior due to previous interviews and observations of discussions in the classroom. The researcher said that Simone used gestures and actions to illustrate her understanding of the situation and the political issue of censorship at hand. The researcher felt that there was deep information offered to a teacher that wasn't necessarily verbal.

In 2015, Jowallah conducted research in the Yorkshire area of England. This area is known to be a working-class area where the students struggle due to a lack of proficiency in their skills. The school decided to implement critical literacy as an intervention strategy at grade seven. Teachers volunteered for this study, and the students

who were in these teachers' classes received one of four lessons. Students completed a questionnaire afterwards to provide data for the study. In one lesson, students were shown a picture of a boy who had no shoes and was holding a stick and carrying a bundle of green onions. Students were asked to write two sentences describing the picture. Some students were not able to move beyond a surface level description in this activity showing that they either did not understand what was wanted or that they needed assistance providing a more in-depth response. Students were asked why the picture was taken and if they would have taken the picture. Most students responded that they would have taken the picture in order to educate others about the issues of child labor and poverty. As an extension of this lesson, students were provided a picture of children pushing a cart through a landfill and collecting food. Students were asked to write a letter to these children. Some students seemed to find this to be a creative writing response and provided responses that were illogical or inappropriate. Many students thought of themselves as being privileged. This was evident in their responses. Some students were asked to write to the boy carrying the onions describing England. Again, students positioned themselves in a place of power and prestige by describing the houses, many cars, and games that they were good at playing. In a different lesson, the teacher used the poem "Timothy Winters." Students were asked after reading the poem how they could make Timothy's life better. They were then asked to write to the Director of the National Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Students also created a poster on the 'Role of Parents.' Finally, students were asked to research the topic of homelessness and create a drama to explain what they learned. Students who received these lessons stated that they wanted more lessons like the ones that they were able to experience, and they

really enjoyed the class discussions. It was clear that the students may not have been aware of the importance of classroom discussion because a split number of students indicated that that were or were sometimes important. Students were concerned that discussions could cause classroom disruptions, but other answers indicated that students were interested in talking about and challenging opposing viewpoints. The majority of students indicated that they would speak up and share their beliefs. When provided possible topics for the classroom, three were the most popular. The first was how to write a good story, the second was saving the planet, and the third was how to become a better speller. The vast majority of the students indicated in their questionnaire that they had little to no interest in reading. The teachers involved in this study noted how excited and involved the students were with the activities. Overall, this research showed again that students can be motivated by critical literacy. It also presented the idea that teachers need professional development on this topic in order to fully understand and implement critical pedagogy.

Skhonde and Kajee (2013) directed a qualitative study on the use of dialogue journals to promote extended readings which were not a common practice at the school in the study. The study took place in Swaziland and included students in grade 7, who ranged in ages from twelve to fourteen. The students volunteered for the study, and two were male and five were female. During the study, students were to read between three and five books. Some students made text-to-self connection while reading. Some of the social issues that elicited these types of responses dealt with HIV/Aids and homosexuality and homophobia. Some of the students made text-to-world connections in their journal entries. One of the issues that elicited this type of response dealt with what

makes a hero. The researchers felt that the evidence supported that the students had interacted critically with the texts that they chose.

Riley (2015) lead a research project that focused on five teachers from different urban schools who formed a group that concentrated on adolescent literacy education. One of the participants, Becca, joined the group because the school that she worked at pushed direct instruction and standardization of curriculum. She felt that this was in contrast to her personal beliefs about education. Becca chose to focus on creating more opportunities in her classroom for dialogue and discussion. She wanted support from the group because she knew that her beliefs would contrast with the climate of her school and the opinions of her administrators on what they should be seeing in the classroom. Becca related an incident of what happened during an observation by an administrator. She was marked-down for the lesson because they administrator felt that it was not rigorous enough because the students were discussing something instead of writing about it. This teacher shows that an experience where educators can discuss their visions for their classroom can be very valuable. The researcher found the following concepts from her study. First, teacher's critical literacy is a very important part of critical literacy in the classroom. Second, critical literacy should be measured with the context of the school, who the teacher is, and their professional identity. Third, critical literacy will create mental struggles and difficult questions. And finally, critical literacy is collaborative.

Aukerman (2012) reflected on how dialogue is a crucial piece of practicing critical literacy in the classroom. It is important because it removes the teacher as the sole provider of information. The researcher focuses on several ways that critical literacy can be implemented in the classroom. The first way that it can be used is as an outcome. This

is where the students will come away from a discussion of a text with an understanding of a social justice issue or a specific viewpoint. This are predetermined before the discussion begins. A benefit of this use would be that students might be able to see a text from another perspective. The second way that critical literacy can be used as a procedure. In this use, the teacher wants students to acquire a set of skills to be able to analyze a text independently. Another avenue of using critical literacy is as a personal response. Here a teacher chooses a text that will be provocative to students emotionally. Students then respond to the text. Students sharing their personal feeling and experiences offers a possibly incredible opportunity in the classroom. Finally, critical literacy can be used as dialogic engagement. Again, the author warns against the teacher being sole person to bring knowledge to the classroom. Here everyone's voice and thoughts are valued, and through the discussion, new perspectives can be formed. The most important ideas that this author wants to bring to the fore-front arethat we should remove the teacher as the authority and the text as the authority.

Pandaya (2012) cautions educators against misuse of critical literacy. In the article, she discusses the use of *Open Court Reading's* inquiry component. In many curricular products that offer a scripted version of direct-instruction, or in this case, an inquiry process, that some central office and campus administrators may see the script or process and see it as non-negotiable. There were several issues with having to follow a scripted process step-by-step with no deviation. First, sometimes in a teacher-centered classroom, students may be confused about what step they should be on. Second, this takes away from the skill and knowledge of the teacher. What do they need to know if they just have to read the script. Finally, when students didn't ask the questions or make

the "correct" conjectures, their ideas were rejected, or the teacher moved the students to where they thought their ideas should be. The author focused on the idea that teachers need freedom from a narrow curriculum to try concepts such as critical literacy. Teachers also need freedom to move away from a teacher-centered classroom.

Boyd (2016) posed some thoughts about how Freire would feel about Blackboard and learning in a digital environment. This is a poignant concept because the school in this study is a one-to-one school. One-to-one refers to the students all having their own laptop for learning to use at both school and home. Teachers also use a digital management system to teach, assess, and manage documents. His concern with online learning begins with a few areas. First, he concludes that online learning was developed to have education be more cost-effective and to be able to reach more students. It wasn't until later that educators began to look at the pedagogical aspects of online learning. Second, Banks is concerned that many areas of online learning mimic the banking concept that Freire was against utilizing in the classroom. This is because that many online learning opportunities do not encourage critical thinking, analysis, and discussion. Third, Banks is concerned with the digital divide. This digital divide is the new separation between students who have and those that do not. He is concerned that students will be denied access to learn because they do not have access to devices or the internet. Finally, Banks worries about the "disembodied nature of the online learning process" (p. 176). His concern is the lack of human interaction with fellow students and the instructor. However, despite all of these concerns, Banks feels that there are many opportunities within the digital learning environment that Freire would approve of. For example, the ability to have meaningful dialogue online. Students can engage with both

their professor and classmates through postings on a digital blackboard. Also, through various resources like Skype classmates and professors can interact with one another through the internet. Second, online line learning allows great access to various types of information through the internet. Databases, search engines, YouTube, and many other resources provide a wide variety of information. It is for these reasons that Freire would approve of some aspects of digital learning.

Halx (2014) conducted a study on Latino males in low-socio-economic-status (SES) who had already dropped out of school, or they had to finish their credit recovery after their speculated graduation date. His study was qualitative in nature. He interviewed four, 18-20 year-old Latino males, who might not graduate from high school. He found the following. First, when students were asked about their social status and others, they were unable to articulate their social class or that others around them were better off. They only spoke about social groups within their schools. They did note social differences in their neighborhoods, but none of them could describe a larger social status, such that might exist in the city, stator, or nation. When asked about jobs, they spoke about what teachers and principals made, and that the jobs that they did were, "…Mexican work…what people with money don't want to do…what people with education don't' want to do" (p. 263). But students never made the connection with a larger context, or how they would achieve a certain profession or advance their status. Second, the students believed that they had received the education that they needed. Halx noted that their passive nature was in line with what students who have been marginalized express. None of the students were able to specifically say what is was that they would need to know for the future, but it was clear that they valued education, even

though they might not complete their own successfully. Third, all of the students stated the important to advance themselves in society and to achieve power and influence. Several even noted that they wanted to get out of their community. Finally, these students could not make the connection between their situation, their education, and the larger picture. Students who had been taught using critical pedagogy would be able to articulate what and why their situation was. They do not understand the differences between social classes. The students also were unaware of the education that they should be receiving. These finding show that students would be receptive to class taught with critical pedagogy at the basis. All of these students had not been well-served by a traditional classroom experience.

Using sports, Muller and Rosatto (2016) conducted research on how this aspect of culture can be blended with Freirean pedagogy in the classroom. They argue that sports also create the same social structures and barriers that are present in life. Sports, like soccer, are played by poor people in Brazil, but in the Unites States, it is a game played by the middle class. The fact that sports could also serve a positive purpose was also noted. Sports can allow students who are traditionally underserved by helping them feel comfortable to participate more in discussions and making decisions. In the United States, sports scholarships allow many students access to and education that they might not have had previously. The researchers used the concept that school should bridge the gap between students' outside of school and their knowledge inside of the school. They also argue for the use of "curriculum theorizing" and student-centered instruction (p. 175).

Parental Involvement. Various studies have shown parental involvement increases the success of students in the school environment. Early colleges are no different. Parental support increases a student's success at school. Leonard, (2013), looked at parental support and how and why it was an important component in the early college. He found parents supported the early college program in three ways. The first was through recruitment and enrollment. Parents had different reasons for wanting their students to attend an early college, but all of the reasons connected back to the idea that they wanted the best for their students' education and sought to increase their students' chances of being successful in college. 85% of students indicated that their parents encouraged them to enroll in the early college. The second area that parents supported their students was financially. Parents had to pay the $600 annual tuition fee. It was noted that this was not a wealthy suburb, so the financial contribution was a significant amount of money for many of the parents. The third area that parents supported their students was with emotional guidance. In this domain, parents monitored their students' grades online and encouraged their students when the work was hard, and the students wanted to quit. Parents also noted their students began to discuss with them the long-term goal of attending a university and that many parents noted that their students' study skills had also improved. While it should be noted that the overall tone of the research was positive, the comment was made that having the students enroll in college level courses did cause their GPA to decrease.

College Readiness. Since college readiness is a significant theme in educational research involving secondary schools, it is important to include research focusing on this theme. These studies are critical for early colleges because of the need for students to be

college ready in order to be successful in the college environment. Conley (2008) defines college readiness as, "… the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a post secondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program" (p. 24). McDonald & Farrell (2012) analyzed students' perceptions of their preparedness for college. The researchers focused on three areas: (a) academic preparedness, (b) social preparedness, and (c) personal preparedness. In the domain of academic preparedness, students had to stay committed to their studies and pace their workloads. The students also noted the importance of the expectations of "real" college, and they often were sleep deprived. Students recognized the need to be responsible for their actions and to be accountable for completing their part of group assignments. Procrastination was mentioned as a negative behavior when concerning time management.

In the domain of social preparedness, students felt more confident they were prepared to interact with their college peers and had attained more confidence in their academic abilities. Students felt a sense of camaraderie with their school peers and their college peers. Students also learned how to form and utilize study groups to help them with their coursework. A sense of community and bonding with their peers and with educators was also mentioned as an extremely positive experience for these students.

In the domain of personal preparedness, students said that they were worried that they would stand out in the college setting the way they had at their previous schools, but students noted that they felt a sense of belonging in both the college and high school setting. Students also noted that while unacceptable behavior in the college classroom

would make them stand out the new freedoms they had acquired made them feel more confident. Students also learned to be proud of their smart personas. At these schools, they were not alone and because of their desire to fit into their new environments, students tried harder to act in a more mature manner. Students also noted they were focused on the future lives and goals they had because of the environment of both the college and high school. Students also became more likely to put academic pursuits ahead of social activities and normal distractions at home. Overall, the early college environment was found to help prepare students for all aspects of college life. Conley, Aspengren, Stout, & Veach (2006) discovered that many first-year students find that their college courses are very different from their high school courses.

School Culture and Climate. Freiberg & Stein (1999) stated that, "School climate is about that quality of a school that helps each individual feel personal worth, dignity and importance, while simultaneously helping create a sense of belonging to something beyond ourselves" (p.11). School culture and climate can have a significant impact on any learning environment. The school culture and climate are an essential piece of any successful early college. Early colleges provide smaller campuses which means students develop close relationships with their peers and their teachers. Smaller campuses also mean smaller class sizes, which again has been shown to increase academic achievement. Cravey (2013) conducted ethnographic research among early colleges in Texas which revealed how different the culture of an early college is from a traditional high school. The study revealed several themes pertaining to the culture. The first theme was diversity. Students came from varying ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds. It was noted that the closer the students came to a large urban city, the more diverse the

student population was. Diversity was not an issue on these campuses because conformity was not expected. Students learned to accept others regardless of the backgrounds. Another theme represented was respect. Students mentioned that they had learned to deal with conflict, work through issues that they experienced with one another, and not to fight. The focus on these campuses is learning and excelling, so students try to work with one another, and this work creates a unified community within the school. Also, some of the schools has zero-tolerance policies when it came to fighting. Students also said it was important to help newcomers understand how the structure within the school functioned, which also contributed to respect. Responsibility was another theme of the ethnography. Students remarked that they had to be responsible for their homework, helping others, being at school every day, and asking for help if they needed it. These campuses focused on having learning-centered classrooms, which requires self-motivation from the students to be successful. Also, students realized the importance of being successful because they are attending college at no cost to them or their families. Students also took responsibility for others by speaking about helping others who needed it, mentoring other students, and helping each other with rigorous assignments. Another theme of the study was that the school had a learning culture. Students no longer have to be afraid to show off how smart they are. Students also explained that students who come to an early college must be committed, focused, have a desire to achieve, and also have a desire for a college education. Also, a safe school environment was another theme of the ethnography. Students noted that they felt safe both physically and emotionally. They no longer had to hide how smart they were or feel like their intelligence could impede them socially. Students also said that there was a lack of fighting in the early colleges and that

they felt that their belongings were safe. Another subject mentioned was that their

teachers cared about them. Students remarked that their teachers tried to help them, they

paid attention to them, and they wanted them to be successful. The last theme presented

was the difficulties of attending an early college. This environment does cause students to

make some tough choices. Students have to abandon many activities that are available to

them at a traditional high school such as athletics, band and orchestra, choir, theater,

cheerleading, and art. Many students said they felt pressure from family and friends to

stay at traditional school, and that it was very hard to leave their friends. Students also

noted that felt a significant amount of pressure to succeed, especially if they were the first

in their family to attend college. Additionally, many students commented that it was a

difficult transition to move from classwork focused on being successful at standardized

testing to that of learner-focused environment. Many students who attend early colleges

feel they are gaining much because of the positive environment and culture, but many of

them feel like they are missing out on a traditional high school environment. This also

holds true for the early college in this study.

Positive Research for Early College. There have been many studies that show

how effective the early college environment can be for a variety of learners. Edmunds

et.al. (2012), looked at the effects of an early college on outcomes for 9th grade students.

The researchers primarily looked at English I and Algebra I, as well as behavioral issues

such as discipline and attendance. More early college students took and successfully

completed their math courses than did students from a comprehensive high school. There

was no statistical difference in the English courses. Overall, there was a positive

correlation between course taking and course passing. Students at early colleges were

absent fewer days and the number of suspensions was almost half. The one unsuspected finding was that there was no difference in the number of students wanting to attend a four-year college. Overall, the researchers felt the positive outcomes of the study were due to the designs of an early college.

Another piece of research that supports the effectiveness of the early college is from Hall. Hall (2013) chose to focus research on the effectiveness of four early colleges in North Carolina. The researcher found the retention rate of the schools to be 92.6%. 88% of students who took the English I exam passed, and 68.9% of students passed the Algebra I exam. The average GPA for students was 2.92. Students, overall, liked their early college experience. They did, however, feel that the high school teachers cared more about them and their success than their college professors. More students also felt their high school teachers had higher expectations of them than did their college professors. This research again shows the overall positive nature of the early college for students.

Early colleges do exist outside of the United States and are successful there too. Dai & Steenburgen-Hu are researchers that conduct research focused on early college in China (Dai & Steenburgen-Hu, 2015). Researchers found the early college environment did make a positive difference in the areas of personal, academic, and career development. The researchers also discovered the Cope-and-Grow experiences were positive, but that overall, students' experiences could be improved by implementing intervention measures and allowing more flexibility in the curriculum and instruction in reference to students' learning styles. Cope-and-Grow experiences are when students learn how to deal with new experiences and learning environments and grow from these

experiences. These findings could be true of any learning environment, but they are especially true of early colleges.

As mentioned before, early colleges can vary in how they are organized and function. The early college in this study partners with a community college, but some early colleges partner with universities. Research conducted by Fishchetti, MacKain, & Smith (2011) occurred where the early college partnered with the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Students did not reside on campus. This study compared the early college students with traditional college freshman. The early college students and the traditional college freshman both perceived themselves as having the same levels of academic readiness. This could be due to the fact that the early college students were taught many of the study skills that helped them to be successful. In contrast, the early college students did not feel as attached to the university as did the traditional freshman. This is most likely because the early college students were still living at home with their families and did not have the free time to engage in all of the activities offered by the university since they were also still enrolled in high school and many of them also worked part-time. In addition, the early college students were not taking full loads which could have also prevented them from feeling more of an attachment to the university. Additionally, it was found the females in both groups did have high levels of personal stress and anxiety. Other studies have found similar statistics. Finally, the difference in the GPA's for both groups were not statistically significant. Although, the traditional freshmen did have a slightly higher average GPA for the year. Again, this research shows it is possible for high school students to experience success at the college level while still being enrolled in a high school.

Another difference that can be seen in early colleges is the area of focus. All early

colleges aim to have students complete associate's degrees, but some of them add on

another characteristic to set them apart. There are early colleges to also advertise

themselves as international schools. Some early colleges are STEM-focused as well.

Some early colleges are developed with a focus on mathematics and science, and in this

exception, students actually live at the university. Sayler (2015) focused research on an

early college called the Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science (TAMS). This

program is different from other early colleges in that the students come from all over the

state of Texas and actually live on campus at the University of North Texas. 78% of the

students who graduate from this program attain a career in the Science, Technology,

Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field. Students enrolled in this program also

participated in research projects while on the campus. Many students received awards for

their scholarship and research. Studies on this campus focused on improving its

effectiveness. For example, it was discovered that students who did not decide to

participate in the program even though they had been accepted said they were worried

about leaving their families and being so far from home. Hispanic students from the

border areas specifically had this concern. Another issue students noted as not being

positive was the lack of time to socialize and relax. Finally, students who came from

schools and communities that were mostly Hispanic had never had an experience where

they were the minority. This was also an adjustment for them. On a more positive side,

the majority of the students at this school were considered successful (maintained a GPA

of 2.5 or above, did not received behavioral write-ups, and did not have serious

adjustment issues). Some of the other corresponding characteristics of the successful

students were that males who participated in church or music-related activities were more successful. Males who participated in sporting activities were not. Females who participated in academic activities were more successful, while those who engaged in social and recreational activities were not. It was also mentioned that students who came from large families were more successful because they adapted easier to living in the dormitories with many other people. As previously mentioned, this is not a typical model for an early college but is obviously still successful.

Another example of how early colleges can differ from one another follows. There are early colleges are entirely geared towards gifted students. Although, students at the college that will be analyzed in this study may be gifted, it is not a requirement. Students at the early college do have to meet a specific matrix scores based on grades and standardized testing. Heilbronner, Connell, Dobyns, & Reis (2010) analyzed if and why there were differences between students who left the early college program and those who stayed. This particular early college program was a residential program at Mary Baldwin College (MBC). This program focused on only gifted, female students. The program is specifically known as Program for the Exceptionally Gifted (PEG). The majority of the students began this program at the beginning of their eighth-grade year. Most of the students who entered the program had high SAT and ACT scores in middle school and their parents were well-educated. Also, the majority of the students who entered the program stated that they did so because they wanted to advance their learning. The main reasons that students cited for leaving were that their major was not offered at the college, they wanted to learn in a coeducational environment, or they missed family and friends back home. None of the students who left said the work was too difficult, that

they didn't have any friends, or they missed high school or the traditional high school experience. The majority of the students who left cited positive attrition reasons. The students had seen the program as a stepping stone for being admitted later to a more prestigious university or program. Both students who left and stayed at the program viewed their experience at PEG positively and said they would recommend the program to other students who were interested. Students also noted that PEG was not for everyone, and students who come to the program must be prepared for the academic rigors that the program offers. Overall, students who left and stayed to graduate from the program both viewed PEG as a positive experience.

Students' attitudes and perceptions about their early college experience is important for educators to be aware of. It is one of the pieces of this study which is why the following study was included and the desire is to expand upon the following study and add more depth and student voice to this area of study. Valadez, McDowell, Loveless, & DeLaGarza (2011/2012) conducted research following students through their progress at an early college in South Texas. Students who entered the program were excited because for many they would be the first in their family to go to college. Students also acknowledged that they wanted to get ahead by getting college credit while still be enrolled in high school. Students also understood the value of getting a college education for free. Students who were entering the program felt that they would have the support of their community within the school to help them succeed. Those students who had already graduated explained that they felt more mature and capable of handling more rigorous work. Graduates attributed much of their success to the support system they had while attending the early college. Support systems are a crucial piece of an effective early

college, but often, students are unaware of how they became prepared for college or how or what the supports work in their early college. These are areas which will be addressed in this study.

Researchers also asked current college students who had graduated from an early college to reflect on their experiences when they were there still attending the early college (Woodcock & Beal, 2013). One student who was interviewed said she experienced much more homework at the early college than she was used to and that when she graduated, she was sick of school. Another student who was interviewed said he enjoyed the early college because he was bored at his other school. He said that he liked attending classes with students who more mature and older, he liked being able to attain both a high school diploma and an associate's degree, and he enjoyed the freedoms that he was given. Both of the students mentioned that many students did not respond well to the freedoms given to them and would skip class and do drugs or alcohol. The last student interviewed also mentioned students abusing the freedom allotted to them. She also said that she had a very positive experience because of the close relationships she developed. Students at the early college in this study provide feedback before they graduate which will extend upon this area of research.

Other researchers who added to this body of research are Hertzog & Chung, (2015). They examined the success of students who attended early colleges in their lives after they left the school. This early college was part of a four-year university. The researchers surveyed students and found that the majority of the students were satisfied and happy in the areas concerning their academic achievement, family relationships, relationships with friends, financial aspects, and with romantic relationships. The former

students also indicated the school had a positive influence on them and provided a rich social environment. 89.5% of former students surveyed said that they would choose to attend the early college again. Students who attended the school said they came because they needed a challenge and that they were excited to learn. 94.3% of the students surveyed continued their education and received a degree from the University of Washington. 52.1% had attained a graduate or professional level degree. The majority of the graduated indicated that they were currently employed. The top three workforce areas for the students were business, education, and government agency. Again, many students have a positive experience with early colleges.

Unsuccessful Early College Experiences. Unfortunately, not all research on early colleges has been positive. This is important to be included because education is never a one-size-fits-all answer. While many students thrive in the early college environment. There are those that do not. One study focused on why an early college's Latina students were not thriving as well as the other students (Locke, Stedrak, & Eadans, 2014). The Latina students expressed that positive aspects of the school included the rigorous coursework, access to college coursework and credit, small classes, and increased communication with their teachers. These students also noted some negative aspects of the school. The girls felt that they were underprepared for the level of rigor of the school, they were also overwhelmed by the amount of homework and the assessment schedules, they also felt that they did not have the necessary organizational skills, they were frustrated by things at home that competed with their times (such as chores at home or having to work), and they had no one at home to discuss college life with because no one at home had experiences from college that they could share. The girls also noted that they

had made poor choices such as procrastinating and not getting help from teacher or attending tutorials when they needed assistance.

Again, research that pertains to Latino/a students is of great interest because of the population that exists in this study. Hungerford-Kresser, & Amaro-Jimenez (2012) investigated the experiences of five Latino/a students who had graduated from an early college and had proceeded on to a university. These students expressed that some of the areas in which they were struggling included time management, understanding what their professors wanted, and locating and utilizing resources. These students noted that their experiences were the same as the experiences of other college students because they felt that all college students struggle and that all college students are poor.

There is also quite a bit of discussion amongst educators about the value of the early college when most high schools offer dual-credit courses to students. It is important to note that high schools that offer dual-credit courses do not have the experience of students attending on the college campus nor do they offer students the ability to achieve their associate's degree. Martin (2013) conducted a comparison of traditional high school students, high school students who were taking dual-enrollment courses, and students from an early college. He found that the early college group and the students participating in dual-enrollment courses were more committed to attending college. The dual-enrollment students received better grades than traditional college students. The early college students preformed lower than the dual-enrollment students in two areas. The dual-enrollment students had better grades in their college courses, and they had better self and resource management skills, but it should be noted that these differences were not statistically significant once controls were put in place. This area of research will be

an interesting area to watch as education progresses over the years to see if early colleges or dual-enrollment programs produce more successful students.

Students' abilities to adapt once they leave the early college is very important information for early colleges to know. Dai, Steenbergen-Hu, & Zhou (2015) also investigated how early college students adapted to a university once they had graduated from high school and were no longer receiving supports. Many of the students noted the academically challenging nature of their college courses. The students experienced what the researchers called growing and coping experiences where the students were inspired by professors or content they encountered, or if they failed a course or a test, their self-efficacy and self-concept were affected negatively. Another concept discussed by the researchers was the Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect (BFLPE). This is where a students' performance can be a good or bad depending on how they compare with their peers. Many of the students interviewed had been among the strongest students in their classes at the high school, but now felt they were below the average mark. These students were also entering college several years before their peers, so there was a significant transition for these students. Students had to transition to a different style of learning than they had experienced before, and many missed being close to their families. Students did also mention that they felt they had more freedom now that they were at in the high school. Students also experienced what is called *Mimang* which means confused when it came to choosing their majors.

Most of the students reported positive experiences with academic coping and growing. A group of students felt that there was not a big difference between their high school and academic experiences with course work. Students who felt this way tended to

have a strong home support system. A larger portion of the students felt that they were handling the academic challenges but were experiencing self-doubt about the majors they had chosen. A small portion of the group interviewed did not try to keep pace with the other students. They felt that they did not need to follow the "rules" of the college experience. An even smaller group, basically admitted to being lost and were having overly negative experiences. It seemed clear from this research than attending an early college for these students did not necessarily mean a seamless transition to a university.

Oliver, Ricard, Witt, Alvarado, & Hill (2010) compared traditional first year college students with students who graduated from an early college. Interestingly, the early college students had more confidence in the math and science abilities than the traditional freshman, and they indicated a higher desire to attain a higher level of education; college freshman were less likely to have a bad attitude, had a stronger desire to finish college, and were willing to make sacrifices. Early college students felt that they had more financial security, while college freshman were more social. College freshman were more likely to seek out tutoring, discuss college finances, engage in group activities, and receive help in picking out a major or career. Early college students expressed having the most stress, and college freshman were more likely to seek out help from the institution. Again, it is important to note that early college students still experience some of the same stressors as traditional students, and the transition to college is difficult no matter the students' educational background.

Perceptions of Educators. How the teachers that work in the early college environment is very important because they can have a positive or negative impact on the students' experience. Teachers who do not understand the mission of the early college

can be detrimental to the process. They can also add to negativity to the school's culture and climate. In 2013, Howley, Howley, Howley, & Duncan sought to add to the research focused on early colleges by providing qualitative data provided by interviewing the educators who worked at these schools. Some of the issues discussed was funding and recruitment. Educators felt the pressure to continually enroll more students at the college. Funding was an issue because the district lost funding for the students who attended the college. This could be perhaps due to the rural location or due to state funding. The educators felt that this school was an opportunity for students who had grown up in a rural environment to broaden their horizon. Many of the students who attended this school come from poverty and this provided them the opportunity to be prepared to move to a suburban and urban area and possibly escape the poverty they had grown up with. Another issue addressed by the interview was that of the border crossers. Border crossers are educators who are employed both on the high school side and the college side. These border crossers had information from both institutions and could see issues from both sides. The border crossers had three ideas that they thought were important: (a) Having conversations between the high school and college that focused on issues of common concern; (b) The need for respect between the high school and college educators and communication between both groups, and (c) The program functioned effectively when educators, students, and parents all communicated. There were also issues of organizational power dynamics noted by the educators. They felt that these dynamics affected the relationship between the school and college. College faculty and high school teachers were often focused on different concepts that were deemed important by both parties but not necessarily by the other party. The last theme discovered by the interviews

was personal attitudes. Educators had varying opinions about the early college mission and values. In particular, three areas were discovered where educator differed in their opinions: the relevance of the program to particular types of students, benefits and costs of the program, and attitudes about the programs features and logistics. Educators are the backbone of the school and their attitudes and beliefs can impact a school in a powerful way. This is the reason their voices are also important in this area of research.

Chapter 2 covered a review of the literature concerning early colleges that is closely related to this study and builds a foundation of research where other researchers will in turn build upon. A thorough overview of the theoretical framework was provided. It was noted that parental involvement can be a powerful motivator for early college students. College readiness skills are another piece that helps students be successful in an early college environment as well as a positive school culture and climate. Empirical studies found that students at early college had higher rates of course completion and did better on exams than their traditional school peers. Most early college graduates taut their experience is being a positive one that they would like to repeat. On the other side, there was research that showed that Latino/a students did not have such positive early college experiences. Many of these students felt underprepared and perceived they had not developed skills that would help them cope with the rigors of the courses. It should also be noted that there were studies that did not find a statistical significance in college freshman that came from early colleges and those that came from traditional high schools. The last area of importance reviewed was that of the educators that work in early colleges and their perceptions. In Chapter 3, the specifics of the research design will be discussed as well as setting, participants, and how the data will be collected and analyzed.

Chapter 4 will provide the findings of the research and an analysis of the data. And finally, Chapter 5 will include a discussion of the implication of this research as well as direction for future research.

CHAPTER III

Introduction

Early colleges have been found to be more successful than traditional high schools at preventing dropouts and providing access to higher education to groups who are traditionally underserved (American Institutes for Research & SRI International, 2009). It is for the belief in equity and social justice that the work of the early college is important (ARI, 2009). The purpose of this study was to focus on literacy instruction in an early college and examine how students perceive their literacy instruction and how they perceive their preparedness for the university level. The study also examined how these perceptions connect to components of critical pedagogy of Freire (1970, 1994, 2005), McLaren and Giroux (1992), and Giroux (1989, 1994).

This chapter contains an overview of the research methodology used to create this design. It consists of the research design, setting participants, method for data collection, and the method for data analysis.

The following research questions drove this study:

1. In what ways do select students perceive literacy instruction in their early college either prepares them or does not prepare them for success at the university?

2. In what ways do select students' perceptions relate or connect to components of critical pedagogy?

Research Design

A qualitative research design was used for this study. Miles & Huberman (1994) state there are several qualities of qualitative research including research that is directed

towards thorough and lengthy interactions with participants in their natural setting; the researcher gains a complete view of the subject matter; little standardized instrumentation is used; the researcher gathers data while trying to understand and empathize with the subjects; analysis is done with words; the researcher analyzes themes and patterns; the focal point is to describe how people in a specific setting understand their situation; and many interpretations are possible. Besides the qualitative nature, the methodological framework for this analysis was a collective case study (Yin, 1994). This allowed for analysis of the similarities and differences among the 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students. The qualitative analysis of the questionnaire came first and was then followed by a focus group, and then one-on-one interviews. The rationale behind this type of design is that the initial questionnaire provides an idea of themes that the interviewer might be looking for in the interview process. The process of interviewing offers rich details and description that can impact future decisions for the school and help to improve school culture, effectiveness of the courses, and students' experiences (Patton, 2001).

This research was also evaluative in nature. Patton (2001) describes the purpose of this type of evaluation, "Summative evaluations serve the purpose of rendering an overall judgment of the effectiveness of a program…for the purpose of saying that the *evalund* (think being evaluated) is or is not effective…" (p.281). I wanted to see how students perceive the reading and writing instruction in the early college. I also wanted to ascertain what aspects of critical pedagogy are being used in the early college and how it affects the students' learning.

Denizen & Lincoln (2013) describe the researcher as being the human instrument. It is important that a researcher be objective when developing their instrument as well as

through the interview, coding, and analysis process. For some researchers, this is what makes qualitative data so valuable. Researchers are human; therefore, making it easier to understand other humans. My role as the researcher was emic in nature. At the time that the data was collected, I worked as the Dean of Students at the early college where the research took place. My hope was to improve the experience of the students at my school to better prepare them for college and to make their learning experience a positive one. This early college is located in a large, urban city and is situated next to a community college. It is important to note that I was functioning under the impression that the design of the early college is overall effective in nature, but there is always room for improvement and to hear the voice of the students and truly understand their experiences is a very powerful piece of data that needs to be added to this field of research. This is why the focus of critical pedagogy is a crucial portion of this research.

Case Study Methodology. Case study methodology chooses participants from a small geographical area (Zainal, 2007). In this case, students were chosen from one particular early college. Yin (1994:23) describes the case study research method "…as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used." Stake (1995) describes case study research as "…the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). Merriam (2009) describes case study as "…an in depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40). Both Stake and Yin connect their beliefs about case study to Constructivist ideas (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The students interviewed in this research explain their thoughts about the

instruction that they have received. Their perspective is what is being recorded which aligns with these beliefs and definitions. This is the underlying goal of case study research (Harrison, Birks, Franklin & Mills, 2017).

The overall design of this case study research is embedded (Yin, 1994) because the students all belong to one school even though they a part of different grade levels. When a researcher looks across all sub-units, Baxter & Jack (2008) call this "cross-case analysis." Yin (1994) also would define this type of research as descriptive in nature because the case study is used to describe a real-life phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred.

Zainal (2007) notes that there are several advantages of using a case study design. First, because the data is examined within the context of its use, it is close to the situation where the activity took place (Yin, 1994). This makes the data meaningful. Second, there are variations in the collective approaches that allows for both qualitative and quantitative data. Now, many research studies that are being conducted have both. This study has percentages, thus quantitative data.

"Third, the detailed qualitative accounts often produced in case studies not only help to explore or describe the data in a real-life environment, but also help to explain the complexities of real-life situations which may not be captured through experimental or survey research" (Yin, 1994, p.4)

It is difficult to build a full picture with quantitative data, but with qualitative data, the rich descriptions help to fully describe the situation and the participants and their perspectives.

Yin (1994) also notes that some researchers do have some issues with the use of case study research. The first issue is with the lack of rigor. Some researchers tend to think that if there isn't a quantitative aspect to the research that the research isn't truly rigorous. Second, another concern is that they provide little basis for generalization. This is untrue because generalization comes from the theory that it is based on, not from how the research was conducted. Third, case studies take too long to conduct. While they do take more time than more quantitative studies to collect the data, it is not really much longer than quantitative research. Issues with time come in when the researcher is unorganized or is unclear how to triangulate the data being collected (Yin, 1994).

Setting and Participants. The research took place at an early college in a large, urban city in Southeast Texas. The school is situated next to a local community college. The school's enrollment is approximately 470 students. Of that total student population, 92% are Hispanic, 4% are Asian, 3% are African American, and 1% is White. There are currently no special education students, and 1% of the students are currently being served as English Language Learners. 84% of the students are considered economically disadvantaged meaning the school is also classified as a Title I school (Texas Education Agency, 2015).

Table 1

Demographics of the School

Hispanic/ Latino/ Latina	Asian	African American	White	Special Education	English Language Learner	Economically Disadvantaged
92%	4%	3%	1%	0%	1%	84%

For this study, purposeful random sampling was used. The type of sampling was chosen to allow for generalization and to provide the opportunity to learn as much as can be learned about this subject (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2001; Denizen & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 2009).

Parent consent forms were generated in both English and Spanish. Assent forms were provided to students in English. All students in grades 10-12, approximately 486 students, were provided with the forms and the opportunity to participate in the study. These were distributed through their Advocacy period, which is like a homeroom. Of those students, only 46 students returned both consent and assent forms and were able to participate in the study. Of this number, 48% of the students were in the 10th grade, 44% were in the 11th grade, and 4% were in the 12th grade. 63% of the participants were female, and 37% were male. 93% of the students classified themselves as Hispanic/Latino/Latina, and 7% classified themselves as Asian/Pacific Islander.

Table 2

Demographics by Grade Level

Grade Level	Total	Male	Female	Hispanic/Latino/Latina	Asian/Pacific Islander
10th	48%	50%	50%	50%	50%
11th	44%	28%	72%	95%	5%
12th	4%	33%	77%	100%	0%

I allowed two weeks to collect the letters. Because I could not collect the letters myself, a locked mailbox was placed in the library where students could turn in their forms. I made announcements as well as visited their advocacy periods to ask for students to participate

and explain why this study is important. Freshmen are excluded from the study because a large majority of them have only participated in classes that occur on the high school side. All participants who returned all signed forms were allowed to participate in answering the questionnaire. Students who chose not to participate were not punished, and those who chose to participate were not rewarded. The students understood that they were simply helping me with my school research.

Data Collection/Questionnaire. Survey Monkey was used to collect the data from the questionnaire. This online questionnaire had questions where students clicked on a button that indicated if they knew quite a bit, a little, or none about the reading skill mentioned. Survey Monkey is an online tool that is free if the basic components are used. With the free version, the number of people who answer is limited, data cannot be exported, and the user cannot customize it. I had used this platform in school previously to get feedback from our students. It is very easy to use. Data can also be collected in this manner through products like Qualtrics, Google Forms, and Type Form. Questions for the questionnaire were created to get information about reading and writing skills. These questions also provided more information about the perceived effectiveness of reading and writing instruction available to the students. I chose basic strategies used in reading and writing instruction that are generally considered to be best practices Vygotsky (1986), Bruner (1982), Fountas & Pinnel (1996), Fisher (2000), Parkes (2000), and Allen (2002). The questions were also formulated to examine if students had encountered critical pedagogy while in the school, where they might have encountered it, and what effect it might have had on the students. This was determined from research taken from Freire (1970, 1994, 2005), McLaren and Giroux (1992), and Giroux (1989, 1994).

Critical pedagogy asks for students to think deeply about the world that they live in and to consider why it is the way it is. I went through everything that I had read about critical pedagogy and created a list of key ideas and themes that appeared in the text. I was able to group some of these ideas. From this list, I created my list of questions.

Focus Groups. All of the questions from the focus groups and interviews were open-ended in nature. From the group of students who completed the questionnaire, 10 students from each grade level were chosen to participate in a focus group. This was done randomly by picking every 7th student from the list of students who chose to participate. Questions for the focus group were created focusing on the same topics as the questionnaire, but the format was open-ended questions. This allowed for triangulation within the study. Feadin, Orum, & Sjobery (1991) stated that triangulation can occur with data, investigator, theories, and methodologies. Yin (1984) concurred that triangulation can be achieved by using multiple sources of data. Sample sizes were chosen based on research conducted by Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007. Although, this is not the focus of qualitative research, it is important to have a large enough sample size to reduce the chance for error.

Focus groups are defined as having three characteristics. First, they are a research method where data can be collected, the discussion among the group is also a source of data, and the researcher has an active role in group discussion for the purpose of data collection (Morgan, 1996). It is also important to note both the advantages and disadvantages of using focus groups. First, focus groups are ways to not only analyze what is said but also the behaviors and motivations that occur within the group (Morgan, 1993). Behaviors and motivations were not analyzed in this research. Second, looking at

the behaviors and motivations in focus groups called the "group effect", allows more information in how group member agree and disagree (Carey, 1994, Carey & Smith, 1994). And last, another strength of focus groups is that the group members explain themselves and ask each other questions, thus generating valuable data. Some of the concerns of the use of focus groups is that the researcher/moderator may have an impact on the data itself. Another concern in this type of research is the impact that the group members may have on each other (Carey, 1994, Carey & Smith, 1994). Maybe some group members may be more or less likely to share depending on who is in the group and how well they know them. Last, is the concept that some people may feel uncomfortable discussing certain topics in groups. I do not feel that this was an issue or concern with this group or the topics discussed. The 12th grade focus group consisted of four females who were all Hispanic/Latina. The 11th grade focus group consisted of six females and four male students; nine of the students were Hispanic/Latino/Latina and one was Asian/Pacific Islander. The 10th grade focus group consisted of two male students and two female students; two of the students were Hispanic/Latino/Latina and two were Asian/Pacific Islander. The focus group lasted approximately 20 minutes. From the focus group, four students from each grade level were randomly selected for an interview. This interview was semi-structured in nature as the interview questions were created beforehand, but additional questions were asked if clarification was needed or if new or interesting information was presented. Again, the questions for the interview were created following the same specifications as given for the questionnaire and the focus groups. Interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes.

Focus groups were also recorded. Students held signs with numbers on them one through seven. I asked them to respond calling on them by their number. If they raised their hand to respond, I said, "Please go ahead number 7, etc." If a student wished to have their comment erased, I redacted the comment from the transcript so that no other information was accidentally erased. The groups took place in the library. Before beginning in each focus group, I talked about confidentiality within the study and that all opinions that were expressed within the focus group were important even if you did not agree with them. Any student who did not wish to participate in the focus group was dismissed, but this did not occur. Any student who became uncomfortable during the group could leave at any time, but this did not occur.

Interviews. Interviewing focuses on getting a description from people of what they have experienced (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). Researchers who use interviews do so because they value the rich descriptions that they can produce. There are, however, many criticisms to the use of interviews. First, that it isn't scientific. It is important to understand that not just quantitative research can produce valuable research. Next, the research is subjective. For this to be untrue, the researcher must provide the information as it exists and not read into the information that is retrieved from the interview. Last, this type of research is reliable because the researcher can create leading questions (Carey, 1994, Carey & Smith, 1994).

Interviews were before or after school or during their advocacy period to ensure that students did not miss out on learning opportunities. Interviews were recorded digitally with two separate devices, and I took notes about thoughts that I had when the students were answering questions. One-on-one interviews were also conducted with

every grade level. For 12th, grade the same four, Hispanic/Latina females participated. In

the 11th grade, three females and one male student participated; all of the students were

Hispanic/Latino/Latina. In the 10th grade, the same four students participated, two males

and two females. Two were of Hispanic/Latino/Latina origin, and two were Asian/Pacific

Islander.

    Data Analysis. First the data needed to be transcribed. I had planned to hire a

service to complete this task; however, the high cost prevented me from doing that, so I

transcribed the data myself. Once the data have been transcribed, I began the coding

process. I used the NVivo coding software created by QSR International to assist in

analyzing the information. I had hoped that using this software would make the coding

process go more quickly and be more thorough than hand coding. I did not find this to be

the case. This could be because I had not used the software previously, and I had to watch

videos and read information to understand how to work the software effectively. The

First Cycle coding consisted of Evaluation Coding. Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014)

describe this type of coding as, "appl[ying] primarily nonquantitative codes onto

qualitative data that assign judgments about the merit, worth, or significance or programs

or policy" (p. 76). This fit with the research process because I was trying to ascertain the

effectiveness the reading and writing instruction in our early college. I looked for

statements that indicated that the students felt confident in their skills and could

adequately describe the process they used. If they could, I counted this as effective. If

they could not or indicated they had not been instructed in an area, then I counted this an

ineffective. The Second Cycle Coding consisted of pattern codes, in which, I was looking

for categories or themes among the codes. I was able to see what aspects of critical

pedagogy are evident in the learning experience of the early college students. These data will help to increase the effectiveness of the reading and instruction as well as provide information about the use of critical pedagogy at the early college. For this piece, I looked for themes within the questions the students were asked. I looked for common strategies or topics that were mentioned during their answers. I used the themes of reading strategies, writing strategies, and aspects of critical pedagogy. I also noted answers that seemed to stand out either in a positive or negative way.

Conclusion. In chapter 3, the qualitative research design was discussed. The setting of this study was an urban, early college with a high, underserved student population. Data collection methods such as the questionnaire, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews were conferred. The data analysis method utilized in vivo coding to assist in evaluation coding, and coding for themes and patterns. Chapter 4 will provide the findings of the research and an analysis of the data. And finally, Chapter 5 will include a discussion of the implication of this research as well as direction for future research.

CHAPTER IV

Presentation of Data

In this chapter, data are presented from both the questionnaire and student interviews. This is organized by data that answers the research questions posed for this study. The purpose of this study is to understand how students perceive their literacy instruction and how this connects to elements of critical pedagogy. Data are presented in both narrative from and in tables.

Research questions

The following research questions drove this study:

1. In what ways do select students perceive literacy instruction in their early college either prepares them or does not prepare them for success at the university?

2. In what ways do select students' perceptions relate or connect to components of critical pedagogy?

Procedures and Participants. Consent and assent forms were distributed to the 486 students through their Advocacy periods. Advocacy period at this particular early college is very similar to a traditional homeroom. Of those students, only 46 students returned both consent and assent forms and were able to participate in the study. Of this number, 48% of the students were in the 10th grade, 44% were in the 11th grade, and 4% were in the 12th grade. 63% of the participants were female, and 37% were male. 93% of the students classified themselves as Hispanic/Latino/Latina, and 7% classified themselves as Asian/Pacific Islander.

Table 3

Demographics by Grade Level of Students Who Took Questionnaire

Grade Level	Total	Male	Female	Hispanic/Latino/Latina	Asian/Pacific Islander
10th	48%	50%	50%	50%	50%
11th	44%	28%	72%	95%	5%
12th	4%	33%	77%	100%	0%

There was a focus group conducted at each grade level. The 12th grade focus group consisted of four females who were all Hispanic/Latina. The 11th grade focus group consisted of six females and four male students; nine of the students were Hispanic/Latino/Latina and one was Asian/Pacific Islander. The 10th grade focus group consisted of two male students and two female students. Two of the students were Hispanic/Latino/Latina, and two were Asian/Pacific Islander.

Table 4

Demographics by Grade Level of Students Who Were in Focus Group

Grade Level	Male	Female	Hispanic/Latino/Latina	Asian/Pacific Islander
10th	50%	50%	50%	50%
11th	40%	60%	99%	1%
12th	0%	100%	100%	0%

One-on-one interviews were also conducted with every grade level. For 12th, grade the same four, Hispanic/Latina females participated. In the 11th grade, three

females and one male student participated; all of the students were

Hispanic/Latino/Latina. In the 10th grade, the same four students participated, two males

and two females. Two were of Hispanic/Latino/Latina origin, and two were Asian/Pacific

Islander.

Table 5

Demographics of Students Who Participated in the Interview

Grade Level	Male	Female	Hispanic/Latino/Latina	Asian/Pacific Islander
10th	50%	50%	50%	50%
11th	25%	75%	100%	0%
12th	0%	100%	100%	0%

Overall, 28 pages of transcribed data was created from the transcriptions. I did not

record the number of minutes of recorded data

Reading Instruction. The data analyzed in this section reveal the categories and

themes present in the students' perceptions of their reading instruction. Information came

from the questionnaire, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews.

10th Grade- Focus Group

Response to Question 1

Question 1: Tell me about the extra reading and writing courses you take in your

freshman year? This question was asked because this course was designed to support

students who had not passed their Texas Success Initiative (TSI) test in order to take

courses at the community college. The TSI assesses college readiness in reading, writing,

and math.

One student responded, "…it helped me…improve more because she went over specific topics." No other students chose to respond.

In the first cycle of coding, data were coded first as negative or positive to ascertain if students' perceptions were positive or negative about their instruction and preparation for college course. There was one positive response in this cycle.

The second cycle coding consisted of finding themes within the categories of reading, writing, and critical pedagogy. For the second cycle coding, the theme that emerged was strategies.

Response to Question 5

Question 5: Tell me about the reading strategies you use to understand what you have read. This was asked of students because it is important to know if students are able to name strategies, and if they are able to explain how those strategies assist in their comprehension.

A student 3 noted, "Annotating so that you can go back to it." The student continued by elaborating that annotation helped you to understand what you were reading and to find the deeper meaning. This student also noted that you should look up words that you don't know in the dictionary. Student 2 felt the same as this student.

In the first cycle of coding, there were two positive responses. In the second cycle, strategies of annotation and looking up unknown words in the dictionary were noted. I coded these as strategies, but also made note of which strategies the students said. The overall theme to take away from this question set and data source is strategies.

11th Grade Focus Group

Response to Question 1

Question 1: Tell me about the extra reading and writing courses you take in your freshman year?

Student 1 noted they, "read different books." When questioned what they read, the student answered *Canterbury Tales*. The student then continued to explain the teacher would help them analyze the poem or text. Student 4 said the teacher would focus on nouns and pronouns. The student went on to day the teacher also focused on why the author used those words. The student used the term diction to describe this skill and then made the connection to the creation of mood by the author. When asked what diction was, several students responded it was the author's choice of words.

First cycle coding revealed two positive responses. Second cycle coding showed one example of literature, two that were coded as analysis, one coded as grammar (part of speech), and two instances of academic vocabulary (diction and mood).

Response to Question 5

Question 5: Tell me about the reading strategies you use to understand what you have read.

Student 2 stated they used context clues to help understand unknown words. The student said they used this strategy to help him/her on the SAT. Student 9 remarked they would go through the text to, "...break down all the rhetorical strategies to fully understand what he is trying to say." When asked what rhetorical strategies were, the student responded, "…ethos, pathos, and logos…" Student 1 also mentioned using annotation to aid in comprehending the text. This student also mentioned using simpler

terms to help define vocabulary words. Student 9 remarked when an article reflects a specific point of the view that the reader must, "figure out what the author was going through in the real world and figure out what motivated him..."

For the first cycle of coding, there were four positive responses. In the second cycle of coding, there were four examples of strategies, two of analysis, and one of academic vocabulary. The overall theme for this section for this data group was analysis.

12th Grade Focus Group

Response to Question 1

Question 1: Tell me about the extra reading and writing courses you take in your freshman year?

Student 4 mentioned a focus on grammar and vocabulary and reading novels. When asked what novel they read, the student responded *Frankenstein.* No other students opted to answer this question.

The first cycle of coding showed one positive response. The second cycle revealed three categories: grammar, vocabulary, and literature.

Response to Question 5

Question 5: Tell me about the reading strategies you use to understand what you have read.

Student 6 noted his/her current English teacher requires them to read novels and take quizzes over the material. This student mentioned annotating the text and rereading sections to help with comprehension. Student 3 said in History they found it helpful to find the definitions for different words. Student 4 agreed with student 3 and added that there was a lot of reading and the teacher required the students to do outlines. Student 4

said, "…they got very detailed after a while, and I definitely saw a difference in my grades." Student 5 agreed with both students 2 and 3. This student also noted underlining and highlighting of important parts. Student 2 agreed with the students 2, 3, and 5, noting they used all of those strategies to grow as a reader and study.

First cycle of coding presented five positive responses. The second cycle of coding showed the following categories: one example of assessment, one example of literature, six examples of strategies (annotating, rereading, outlines, underlining, highlighting), and one example of vocabulary. The overall theme for this data source was strategies.

Overall, the data from all three data sources indicated positive responses to their reading instruction. The 10th grade students who had just taken the course a year ago indicated that it was helpful because the teacher covered specific topic, but they were not able to be more specific than that. 11th and 12th grade students both discussed the use of novels and texts that are typically associated with the traditional cannon. 11th and 12 grade students both described learning grammar, specifically parts of speech. Only the 11th grade students mentioned analysis of literary devices such as diction and mood. Only the 12 grade students discussed learning about vocabulary. Students who discussed vocabulary did not specify any specific techniques used to learn vocabulary.

When asked what reading strategies students used to aid their comprehension, again the 11th and 12th grade students provided more strategies than the 10th grade students. All three grade levels, 10th, 11th, and 12th, mentioned annotation as a method to improving comprehension. It was clear that all of the students had all been taught this method at some point and felt comfortable using it. 11th grade students mentioned

rhetorical analysis as another method of helping to understand the text, as well as identifying the author's point of view. The overall theme for all three grade levels was strategies.

Information in the following questionnaire represents all the students' responses. Students were not asked their names and grade levels were not connected to the students' responses, so these data are the only data not analyzed by grade level.

Table 6

Reading Instruction Date from Questionnaire

Strategies	Quite a Bit	Some	Little or None
Inferences	53%	29%	16%
Graphic or Semantic Organizer	45%	32%	23%
Comprehension Strategies	50%	45%	5%

Most of the students who were questioned reported as if they knew quite a bit or something about basic reading strategies such as making inferences, using graphic and/or semantic organizers, and comprehension strategies. Again the overall theme of strategies is prevalent through both the questionnaire and focus groups. Making inferences and the use of graphic organizers are all strategies for improving comprehension.

Writing Instruction. The data analyzed in this section reveal the categories themes present in the students' perceptions of their writing instruction. Information came from the questionnaire, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews.

10th Grade- Interviews

Response to Question 5

Question 5: With as many details as possible, please describe your process for writing. This question was written to find out how students approached writing, and if they were able to articulate their process.

Student 9 indicated they just began the writing process by getting his/her ideas down on paper. Then, the student described a revising and editing process where they made corrections until they "liked it." Student 10 did not answer the question. Student 11 indicated more of a process. This student described starting with brainstorming, followed by writing supporting idea, and then combining it together to create a draft. This student also noted that they would revise and edit until the paper was finished. Student 12 wanted clarification about the question by asking, "Like writing an essay?" This student said they used a pre-writing method where they wrote down the main topic and then created a chart off it. The student remarked that they chose the topics that had the most detail about them, and they chose them for his/her main points. Then, the student said they would make the details into sentences and the sentences into paragraphs.

First cycle coding revealed three positive responses. Overall, the students' responses toward their writing process was positive. The second cycle coding revealed several themes: three examples of drafting, two examples of revising, three examples of brainstorming, and one example of editing. The overall theme for this section was drafting.

Response to Question 6

Question 6: With as many details as possible, please describe your process for conducting research. This question was created because it incorporates reading and writing into inquiry, which is a required skill for students who are college bound.

Student 9 noted they would begin the research process by going to the library to check out a book on the subject. Then, they said the next step of the process would be to consult the internet to find "some good resources." The student also mentioned that HCC (Houston Community College) has a good library catalog where you can find research papers. Student 10 also did not answer this question. Student 11 answered they started with the question and then moved to figuring out how to "get your research." This student made the connection to the research I was conducting, "Like how you're interviewing people. And it's kind of like a survey, right?" The student then went on to say you might do online surveys but then noted, "I'm not really sure because I've never conducted research." Student 12 used an example of a country. They said to begin with searching about that country, and then you would find little main points. Then, you would narrow down those points and elaborate.

First cycle coding revealed three positive responses. Overall, the students felt positive about their researching. The second cycle of coding revealed several themes: two for resources, one for interview, one for survey, one for question, and one for narrowing. The overall theme for this question for this data sources was resources.

11ᵗʰ Grade Interview

Response to Question 5

Question 5: With as many details as possible, please describe your process for writing.

Student 5 had a unique approach to the writing process. This student stated they didn't write anything for about 30 minutes. They would just create the story in thier mind and look for errors. Then, the student would begin to write after this process and write as many details as possible. This student also could understand the difference between types of writing. They stated if they were critiquing something, then they would need to understand the writer's point of view and decide if they agreed or not. Student 6 explained that their process began with brainstorming. This student used the example of an expository essay. For this type of writing, they would find facts and then create paragraphs and add details. Student 6 acknowledged creating first a rough draft and then a final one. Student 7 also described planning out what they wanted to write. They also stated if they did happen to get stuck, they just wrote. Then, they created a structure. They described an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion that might need to be adjusted based on the assigned length. This student also said they need to use strong vocabulary. Student 8 used the example of persuasive writing. This student also said you needed to have four or five paragraphs. This student discussed creating an introductory paragraph and body paragraphs. They also stated you needed to add evidence to the body paragraphs, and those paragraphs were the most important ones.

The first cycle of coding revealed four positive responses. Overall, the students felt positive about their writing process. The second cycle of coding revealed several themes: three examples of brainstorming, one for analysis, two for persuasion, two for structure, two for drafting, and one for vocabulary. The overall theme for this question for this data sources was brainstorming, also known as prewriting.

Response to Question 6

Question 6: With as many details as possible, please describe your process for conducting research.

Student 4 said they used Google to search for sources that were reliable, and their English professor has taught them how to figure out what sources were reliable or not. They also said you could use the resources from HCC (Houston Community College) for research. Student 6 said they made a list of what they needed to research. They said they would use, books, textbooks, and Google. Then, they would conduct their research and write their results. Student 7 related research takes "many, many steps." First, the student stated that they would find the: who, what, when, where, and why. They also said they would take pictures and do interviews, but research was a process. Student 8 used an example of conducting research for an AP Environmental Science course. They said they would first ask the teacher for possible sites to go to. Then, this student would ask students around them what they were doing, just to get an idea. Then, they would go to the sites and see what information they could find for the project.

For the first cycle of coding, there were four positive responses. Overall, students felt positive about researching. The second cycle of coding revealed several themes: three for resources, one for reliable, one for incorporation, one for draft, one for analysis, one

for picture, one for interview, and one for process. The overall theme for this data sources for this question was resources.

12th Grade Interview

Response to Question 5

Question 5: With as many details as possible, please describe your process for writing.

Student 1 said the process had changed since elementary and middle school. Back then, they did a lot of preplanning. The student stated when they started high school they focused on outline. From the outline, they do a rough draft and then edit it to create the final draft. Now the student stated they didn't do any of those things, they just write down ideas. They also said they have many more rough drafts than ever before, and they never felt like they were done. They mentioned writing a 10-page essay psychoanalyzing Hamlet, and they really enjoyed it. Student 2 also said they created an outline, and then, they created their thesis. This is followed by creating body paragraphs and adding details to those paragraphs. Last was the review process. Student 3 said they just get their ideas down on paper, and they see how those ideas connect and interact with each other. They also spoke of writing paragraphs but did not name the specific type of paragraph. They also talked about doing multiple revisions, moving ideas around. They noted checking for grammar was a separate part of the process. They also said they would have a friend look over it before they turned it in. Student 5 also asked if I was referring to an essay. They said based on their topic they brainstorm ideas. They noted they must have a clear thesis and create an outline. Then, they would write their rough draft. They said they would go to a teacher to have them edit it, and then, they would produce their final draft.

The first cycle of coding revealed four positive responses. Overall, the students felt positive about their writing process. The second cycle of coding revealed several themes: two examples of research, three for brainstorming, three for outlines, four examples of drafting, four examples of editing, two for structure, one for revising, and one for analysis. The overall theme for this question for this data source is drafting.

Response to Question 6

Question 6: With as many details as possible, please describe your process for conducting research.

Student 1 said they would start with websites to get general information about a topic. They would "book mark them and put them all in one folder." They would later return to the folder and decided which ones they wanted to keep. Then, they would scan the information. If the product was a research paper, they would create an outline. Student 2 used an example from Astronomy class where they conducted research on Astro-Biology. The student began with looking up the term to find out what it meant. Then, they read articles on it and found people who worked in that industry. The student stated that, "You have to start from the bottom. Who are they, what do they do…" The student also noted that if it was a different topic like math, they would have to approach it differently. Student 3 said that English 1301 and 1302 help them learn how to conduct research. This student also mentioned using the databases from HCC. Through those website, topics can be narrowed down. The student also said that you can use Google Scholar to find information. Student 5 seemed to connect research to the type I was conducting. They said if they were looking at a specific population or group that you

could conduct interviews like I was. They said that if you were doing something scientific that you would conduct an experiment.

The first cycle of coding showed four positive responses. Overall, the students' responses about researching were positive. The second cycle of coding revealed several themes: one for interview, one for experiments, one for course work, two for resources, one for narrowing, two for reading, one for questions, one for analysis, two for scanning, one for drafting, and two for outline. The overall theme for this question for this data source was resources.

Information in the following questionnaire represents all the students' responses. Students were not asked their names and grade levels were not connected to the students' responses, so these data are the only data not analyzed by grade level.

Table 7

Writing Instruction Data from Questionnaire

Strategies	Quite a Bit	Some	Little or None
Revision	73%	25%	2%
Pre-Writing	68%	25%	7%
Editing	83%	15%	2%
Peer Writing Groups	51%	37%	9%

The data from the questionnaire showed that students indicated that they felt they knew more about reading strategies than writing strategies. Students knew the most about revision and editing, but felt they knew less about pre-writing and peer editing groups.

When students discussed their process for writing, most talked about revising and editing. It was clear that this process had been stressed in their instruction. This will be discussed more below.

When students were asked to describe their process for writing, it was clear students in all grade levels understand that writing is a process. To start with the writing process, we will start at the beginning with prewriting. All three grade levels mentioned some aspect of prewriting. In 10th grade, one student talked about getting their ideas down on paper. Some teachers call this freewriting. Brainstorming was another term used by used by all three grade levels. Another 10th grade student described a pre-writing process that most teachers would call bubble clusters. One 11th graders talked about their preplanning process. Another 11th grader used an original approach of creating a movie of their paper in their mind. Only 12th grade students discussed making an outline as their method of pre-writing. They were the only group to also use the term pre-writing.. It was clear students felt positive about their preparation in writing. Most students were able to articulate a process they had for writing.

While drafting was mentioned in all three grade levels, it varied in some respects. 10th grade students only talked about drafting. 11th grade students spoke of drafting, but they were specific in naming the different types of paragraphs that were part of this process, the introductory, body, and conclusion paragraphs. Students also talked about different purposes for writing and genres such as critique, expository and persuasive writing. 12th grade students were the only ones to use the term thesis in their drafting process. 12th grade students also named the various types of paragraphs. They also mentioned writing for the purpose of analysis.

10th and 12th grade students discussed revising and editing. 11th grade students did not. Students did not relate how revising was taught to them, only that they knew that it should be part of the writing process. Students indicated that they went through several revisions as part of their process and that many never really felt like a piece was finished.

When asked about their research process, 10th and 11th grade students both mentioned using the library to find books for textbooks to conduct their research. All three grade levels mentioned using the sources available through Houston Community College (HCC) where they take their college courses. A 12th grader further explained this by saying that they had really learned how to do research in their English 1301 and 1302 courses. 11th and 12 grade students mentioned using google to find information. A 12th grader clarified that you should use Google Scholar. An 11th grader specifically talked about finding reliable resources. One 11th grader said they would find which sites to use from their teacher. It was clear that students understood that they needed to collect information to conduct research.

One 10th grade student said they would start with a question. One 11th grade student commented on using the 5 W's: Who What, When, Where, and Why, to collect information. A 12th grader said they used an outline to organize their information. It was clear that students knew that you gathered information and created some kind of product, but they weren't as specific and didn't elaborate as much as they did about their writing process. It could be students did not have as much experience with research as they did writing. None of the students discussed writing a research paper

Students used various examples of how research could be conducted, so I knew that they had some experience with research, but maybe not enough to feel comfortable

articulating the process. One 9th grade connected the question of what their process of research was to a time when they had to research a country, as part of their World Geography class. Both a 9th grade and 12th grade student connected the question back to my research. An 11th grade student used an example for AP Environmental Science. A 12th grade student used an example from Astronomy.

I found it very interesting that students indicated they knew more about writing than they did reading. This could be because students at the early college are expected to complete a formal piece of writing each cycle. These writings differ every cycle. Students are also required to produce formal writing in their college courses because all of the students take English 1301 and 1302 in their 11th and 12th grade years. Again, students understanding the writing process and indicating overall that their perceptions of these abilities is again plausible because of the high STAAR scores for students as well as their success at the community college.

The overall theme for the writing category was resources. This corresponds with the data from questionnaire in a few ways. First, writing is a process. If you are writing a research paper or some type of analysis, resources will be a part of that writing task. Next, writing is part of research where finding resources is key.

Critical Pedagogy. The data analyzed in this section reveal the categories and themes present in the students' perceptions of critical pedagogy. Information came from the questionnaire, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews.

10th Grade Focus Group

Response to Question 2

Question 2: Think back to any time at this school, tell me about a time a teacher valued you as a person. This question was written for several reasons. First, when students feel valued they are motivated to work. Motivation is a key piece of success in the Early College. Second, in critical pedagogy it is important that all people are valued in a society regardless of who they are and where they come from .Third, feeling valued empowers students, which is also a piece of critical pedagogy.

I removed one of the student's responses to this question because they applied it to a teacher in middle school, which was not what I asked and did not reflect the data being collected on this school. No other students chose to respond to this question.

There was no data to code for this response.

Response to Question 3

Question 3: Tell me about any opportunities that you had in your classes to make choices about your learning. This question was written for two reasons. First, choice empowers students which is part of critical pedagogy. Second, providing choice is extremely important in both reading and writing instruction because it empowers students and motivates them.

One student said they learned about the different classes offered at this school, and some classes were more advance. Students could choose classes based on what they would like to focus on. No other students chose to respond to this question.

The first cycle coding revealed a positive response regarding choice. The second cycle coding revealed the category of course work.

Response to Question 4

Question 4: Think about your past experiences in this school, tell me about the opportunity to reflect on your learning in a classroom. This question was written because reflection is an important piece of critical pedagogy. It allows the student to reflect on what they know and do not know. It is also a critical piece of reading and writing instruction because metacognition should be part of this practice.

A student provided the example of their music class at the high school. The student said that the teacher likes to give them things to think about. For example, a metaphor and a video about how to become a straight "A" student. The teacher encouraged the class to reflect on themselves and see what they needed to do. No other students chose to answer this question.

First cycle coding defined this as a positive experience with reflection. Second cycle coding showed the theme of self.

Response to Question 6

Question 6: Reflect on your learning experiences at this school, tell me about any time at school that you created question about a topic you learned about or when you were encouraged to ask questions. This question was created because questioning both the world, why it is the way it is, and the word, what is being written and what bias might it have, is part of critical pedagogy. Questioning also helps reader in comprehension of a text.

A student provided an example from their English II class. The activity had to do with creating a book that was all about themselves. The students had to ask questions, and the student stated that it helped them learn more. It also had to do with their personal

lives, and it made the student think more about their academics and personal lives. Another student provided a general example connected to the field of science because in science it is important to ask questions. The student stated they wanted to know more about why things happen? And that you keep asking why? Until you find the narrowed down answer. The student also said you could relate the knowledge to your own life. Another student provided the example of World History because it related to where we are now.

First cycle coding revealed three positive responses in relation to questioning. Second cycle coding showed two themes: one example of self and two examples of learning. The overall theme from this question from this data source was learning.

10th Grade Interviews

Response to Question 1

Question 1: Tell me about your experiences with SAT prep course (or in preparing for the PSAT). This question was written because the SAT test students' college readiness in reading, writing, and Math. How well students do impacts if and where they are able to attend college. This is also tied to Cultural Capital because while advances have been made to insure that standardized and norm-reference test do not discriminate against females, minorities, low socio-economic status, and English Language Learners. Students who come from white, upper-to-middle class backgrounds typically do better on these types of tests.

Student 9 stated that they used Khan Academy. Student 10 chose not to respond. Student 11 described a process that they did individually when their PSAT scores back. They said they went through the booklet when they got it back, and they scored about 40

points better. They also said that they used Khan Academy which was encouraged by their EMERGE coach. Student 12 also said that they used Khan Academy.

First cycle coding revealed three positive responses about preparing for the PSAT. Second cycle coding revealed several themes: four examples of learning (Khan Academy, PSAT booklet), one example of caring, and one example of pride. The overall theme for this question for this data source was learning.

Response to Question 2

Question 2: Could you describe in as many details as possible a student's status in society? This question was written to address the issues of power that are a part of critical pedagogy.

Student 9 chose not to respond. Student 10 said they were the future, so teachers, parents, and other adults should do a good job to take care of the students. They said it was the adults' job to ensure students received a good education. They also mentioned, "…we are already in a mess, so they could make it better." Student 11 said students were supposed to do their homework and have good behavior. Student 12 said students were on the bottom. There are still some things we can't do for ourselves, but we must learn, and we can go up with more education.

The first cycle of coding revealed two negative responses and one positive responses. So the overall feeling towards a student's status in society was negative. The second cycle of coding revealed several themes: 1 for caring, 1 for education, 1 for mobility, one for dependent, 1 for practice, and 1 for behavior. Because all of the themes were once, I chose one of the themes from the negative response. I chose dependent as the overall theme.

Response to Question 3

Question 3: Could you describe in as many details as possible how society is structured in terms of power (who has power and who doesn't)? This question was created specifically for its connection to critical pedagogy.

Student 9 said adults have power, and adults who are in government, specifically, have power. Student 10 said people who have power are the people who have money. Even though the lower classes have more population than the rich, the rich are still in power, so this makes the power unfair. Student 11 said people have power because they vote. Then, after that it is elected officials that have power. Student 12 also said people who have money have power because they can pay their way out of anything.

For first cycle coding, there were four positive responses. Students' responses to the question about who has power in society was overall positive. Second cycling coding revealed four themes: two examples of adults, one example of government, and two examples of money. Because money had been brought up in previous discussion, I chose it was the overall theme for this question for this data sources.

Response to Question 4

Question 4: Can you describe in as many details as possible how important an education is? This question was developed to ascertain the connection between the work in school and what happens next for the students.

Student 9 said, "education give everybody an opportunity to become a better version of themselves." They also said when you go to college you can find out what interests you and what kind of person you are. College provides the opportunity to get a career and do well in that career. Student 10 said an education can moved you forward,

but also noted that our education system is currently flawed. Student 11 said an education can help you with your future. It can make you happy and give you financial support. Student 12 remarked an education can help you with real-life scenarios, like voting and knowing how things work. The more knowledge that you get can help you with you work and that can help you get more pay.

The first cycle of coding revealed three positive responses and one negative response. Overall students felt positive about education. The second cycle coding revealed several themes: one example for dreams, one example for who you are, two for career, three for important, one for future, one for achievement, one for happiness, two for money, one for real life, and one for knowledge. The overall theme for this question for this data source was the importance of education.

Focus Group for 11th Grade

Response to Question 2

Question 2: Think back to any time at this school, tell me about a time a teacher valued you as a person.

Student 5 mentioned their World History teacher. They did not give any specific reason why, just she appreciated them. Student 9 said their One Goal teacher. She would personally go around and tell you things, not just speak to the class. Student 2 said their advocacy teacher. This teacher would talk to you one-on-one and told the student to never doubt themselves. The teacher told the student that they were a good writer and they felt the teacher valued them. Student 3 mentioned their Chemistry teacher. The student felt the teacher valued the work they did in class. The teacher wrote a recommendation letter for the student and would always speak to them in the hallways.

First cycle coding revealed five positive responses regarding if they felt valued by a teacher. Second cycle coding showed several themes: three examples of caring, four instances of personal attention, three example of being valued, and one example of being helped. The overall these for this question from this data sources was personal attention.

Response to Question 3

Question 3: Tell me about any opportunities that you had in your classes to make choices about your learning.

Student 7 mentioned their One Goal class. In this class, the students have an opportunity to research colleges and apply for scholarships. It's an opportunity not everyone has. Student 5 mentioned their Chemistry class and their U.S. History class. The Chemistry teacher would listen to the students' ideas about class, even if he didn't take their suggestions. The U.S. History teacher was very open to hearing how the students wanted to cover the information and how they felt about the topics. Student 6 agreed with Student 5 about the U.S. History teacher because she made the students ask questions. She also made the students speak in complete sentences. The student felt it was helpful. Student 4's response was removed because it dealt with questioning and not choice.

First cycle coding demonstrated two positive responses towards having choice at school. The second cycle coding revealed several themes: one example of university, one example of scholarships, and two examples of instruction. The overall all theme for this data sources and question was instruction.

Response to Question 4

Question 4: Think about your past experiences in this school, tell me about the opportunity to reflect on your learning in a classroom.

Only student 6 chose to answer this question. They used the example of their Algebra II class. This student said the teacher would give reviews for an upcoming test or quiz, and after they complete the review, the teacher will put the answers up on the board, so the students can go back and see if they are ready for the test.

First cycle coding showed a positive response to reflection at school. The second cycle coding lead to the theme of learning.

Response to Question 6

Question 6: Reflect on your learning experiences at this school, tell me about any time at school that you created question about a topic you learned about or when you were encouraged to ask questions.

Only student 1 chose to answer this question. This student used the example of their U.S. History class. The student would go back through the chapters and find the vocabulary they had to write the definitions for, and then they would place a sticky note on top of it and write a question. Then, when it was time to study for the test, they had already created questions to help them study and understand the material.

The first cycle of coding revealed a positive response about questioning. The second cycle of coding revealed the theme of learning.

11th Grade Interviews

Responses to Question 1

Question 1: Tell me about your experiences with SAT prep course (or in preparing for the PSAT).

Three of the students stated that in their One Goal class they had assignments to get on Khan Academy and complete practice sections. One of the student also explained that the SAT section had questions that were like those on the SAT, and it helped them to learn the structure of the test. The second student interviewed also mentioned using Khan Academy.

The first cycle of coding revealed four positive remarks on preparing for the PSAT. The second cycle of coding revealed several themes: two examples of practice, four examples of learning, two examples of preparation, one example of motivation, and one example of tutoring. The overall theme for this question for this data source was learning.

Response to Question 2

Question 2: Could you describe in as many details as possible a student's status in society?

Student 4 stated the majority of people did not take the opinions of students into consideration. Adults felt they had more experience and didn't need to listen to somebody who was younger. They stated, "our say doesn't count as much." Student 6 declined to answer the question. Student 7 said they were just a normal student, and they weren't higher or lower than anyone else. Student 8 said they were on top because there are a lot of people in Houston who don't have an education. The student said they had an

education and being at "this" school provided them more opportunities than other schools.

The first cycle of coding revealed one negative, one neutral, and two positive responses. So overall, the students felt positive about their status in society. There were several themes for this question: one example of no power, one example of being inferior, one example of difficulty, one example of family, one example of hard work, two examples of education, and one example of opportunity. The overall theme for this question was education.

Response to Question 3

Could you describe in as many details as possible how society is structured in terms of power (who has power and who doesn't)?

Student 4 stated the people with power are people who have graduated from college, and people with money also have power. The student used the examples of a homeless person as someone who does not have power. Student 6 also declined to answer this question. Student 7 also said people who have an education have more power. The student also said those in power have more rights than lower class people. Student 8 also said the people who have power are those with money. The student said the people who do not have power are those that work for the rich.

First cycle coding revealed four positive responses. Overall, the responses regarding who has power in society were positive. Second cycle coding revealed several themes: two examples for education, two examples for social class, three examples for money, and one example for right. The overall theme for this data source from this section was money.

Response to Question 4

Question 4: Can you describe in as many details as possible how important an education is?

Student 4 reconnected this question with the previous question by stating again education gives you power. Student 6 said you need an education to well later in life. The student noted their parents said that was better to struggle now than to struggle later in life. Student 7 said, "Education is for me…I am going to keep it with me always…and no one can take it from me." The student talked about how education is the best free thing that you can have. The student continued on by saying that education takes hard work and determination, but it doesn't cost you anything. Student 8 said education is a top priority because you need it to get into a college and to get a job to make money. Education is the most important out of everything.

First cycle coding showed four positive responses. Overall students felt positive about education. Second cycle coding revealed several themes: two examples for important, two for power, one for struggle, one for future, one for personal, one for benefits, one for career, and one for money. The overall theme for this question for this data source was the importance of education.

12th Grade Focus Group

Response to Question 2

Question 2: Think back to any time at this school, tell me about a time a teacher valued you as a person.

Student 2 stated a Math teacher who no longer works at the school helped them when their father passed away. They said the teacher shared her experiences and checked

in on them. Student 6 responded their Math teacher helped them when their grandmother had been really sick. Again, the teacher shared their own personal experience and helped the student. Student 3 shared their Physics teacher helped them out because they had transferred to the school as a 10th grader and didn't really know anyone. The teacher shared advice about how to do well in Algebra II, and they also talked about Spanish futbol. The student stated it helped to have this relationship since they did not know any other students. Student 1 shared their Chemistry teacher helped them through a time when their mom was in the hospital. The teacher was very understanding and provided the student additional time for assignments and just supported them overall. Student 5 said the Chemistry teacher and Algebra II teacher had also helped them. They said the Chemistry teacher is also their advocacy teacher, and he checks in on the student's well-being and gives them advice about setting goals and having dream. The Algebra II teacher provided the student advice about being a parent and how to cope with stress. Student 4 also spoke about the Physics teacher. The student said they had a breakdown, and the teacher stopped what they were doing and sat down and talked, gave them advice, and was very understanding. The teacher allowed the student to take a break from the test and relax, and then allowed them to resume the test when they were feeling better. The student said, "you can definitely tell that there is a father in him, very caring…" This student also mentioned their English II teacher. The student stated she was having doubts about college, and the teacher shared events from her personal life and gave the student advice. Student 2 shared the example of an English II teacher who no longer works at the school. He stated the teacher noticed that he was playing around and not caring out his

grades. The teacher sat him down and talked to him about how he needed to take things more seriously.

The first cycle of coding revealed seven positive responses about being valued as a person in the school environment. The second cycle of coding revealed several themes: six examples of caring, one example of support, one example of providing assistance, one example of personal attention, and three example of advice. The overall theme from this data source on this question was caring.

Response to Question 3

Question 3: Tell me about any opportunities that you had in your classes to make choices about your learning.

Student 5 talked about their Engineering/Robotics class. The class allows different projects were the students build catapults and mouse trap cars. The class allows you to choose how you want to do your projects. You learn from your mistakes how to improve your project. The student notes this had helped them as an individual learn how to cope with making mistakes and how to learn from them. Student 4 gave the example of a college English teacher who gave them several choices of what they could write on. There were parameters for the assignments, but they got to choose the topics. In a different class conducted by the same teacher, you had to stay within a theme, but you got to choose how to represent your project.

The first cycle of coding revealed two positive indications for having choice in school. The second cycle of coding revealed two themes; one example of making mistakes, and four examples of choice in work product. The overall theme for this question from this data source was work product.

Response to Question 4

Question 4: Think about your past experiences in this school, tell me about the opportunity to reflect on your learning in a classroom.

Student 6 used the example of his Algebra II class. The teacher had them present their homework problems on the board, and students could ask questions and help each other out. Student 4 shared that their Pre-Cal teacher also asks for students to go to the board to work problems. The student remarked that at first, they were scared to go up there and be wrong, but now that they were in Calculus they go up there because they know they are wrong, and they want to figure out how to fix it. This student also mentioned their U.S. History class where the teacher made them have portfolios that had vocabulary and questions. Students were supposed to go home and read the chapters and come the next day with their questions. Student 2 also shared that having the Pre-Cal teacher give them the opportunity to understand why the problem was wrong was very helpful.

First cycle coding revealed three positive responses in regards to reflection at school. Second cycle coding revealed four responses that represented the theme of learning.

Response to Question 6

Question 6: Reflect on your learning experiences at this school, tell me about any time at school that you created question about a topic you learned about or when you were encouraged to ask questions.

Student 5 used the example of the Economics teacher. This teacher had the students ask questions before you began to study the topic. They would take notes about

their questions, and then at the end of the lesson, she would have them reflect on the topic and what they had learned. Student 6 used the example of their college English teacher. The student said he was big on the students asking questions and giving commentary. Student 4 agreed with Student 6 on the college English teacher. This student wanted to add the teacher created an atmosphere of respect so that students and each other and the teacher could have differing opinions. The student also agreed the teacher encouraged the asking of questions. This student also wanted to add their college Astronomy teacher, but the student used this as an example of a time where you got to choose what you were learning about. Students could pick anything in the realm of Astronomy and create a presentation about it. This piece of the data was included because it included inquiry which involves questioning. Student 2 added their English 1302 teacher. The teacher showed the students interesting things about nutrition, politics, and the economy, and encouraged students to ask questions about these topics. Student 3 agreed with student 2 about the English 1302 teacher. This student said the teacher, "Really opened my mind to thing that people didn't want to talk about." I asked the student to elaborate. The student gave examples of the food that students are being fed in schools that is not healthy. Student 6 wanted to chime in. This student gave the example of Proposition 1. I asked the student what Proposition 1 was, and the student answered that this allows transgender people to use the restroom of their choice. I included the data here from students 3 and 6 because they had to do with critical pedagogy and questioning the world, even though the data does not overtly seem to be about questioning. Student 4 gave the examples of their college Speech course. In the class, students could choose a topic, and then they were going to have a symposium. The student first explained they didn't know what that was.

The student said they ended up choosing international business etiquette. This comment was included in the data because it involved inquiry in which questioning is involved.

The first cycle of coding revealed eight positive responses involving questioning. The second cycle of coding involved four themes: three examples of learning, two examples of inquiry, one example of truth, and three examples of power. The overall theme for this data source for this question was learning.

When looking at all three case study groups and this data source, it was determined that the overall theme was learning. Learning was a pervasive theme throughout the questions even in some areas where it was not overtly stated. It is clear that learning is an important part of the culture of this early college.

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12th Grade Interviews

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Response to Question 1

Question 1: Tell me about your experiences with SAT prep course (or in preparing for the PSAT).

Student 1 said they had used Khan Academy to prepare for the SAT. This student was also able to participate in a test prep program called Test Masters. This was paid for by a program the student participates in called Emerge. The student felt that the test prep program was more beneficial than the online computer program. Student 2 said they used the Khan Academy, but they had to use it on their own time. Student 3 also said they used Khan Academy. This student also said that they had used some of the library books on the ACT that were available. The student noted the importance of being able to prepare without paying for it. Student 4 noted that their course work in English and Math helped them to prepare to take the SAT.

The first cycle of coding showed four positive responses concerning SAT preparation. The second cycle of coding revealed four themes: two examples of course work, one example of money, four examples of learning, and three examples of practice. The overall theme for this question for this data source was learning.

Response to Question 2

Question 2: Could you describe in as many details as possible a student's status in society?

Student 1 talked about when people make speeches they talk about the importance of students being the next generation. The student said it was important for students to "keep ourselves together" and to do what they should be doing because they are going to be taking over soon. The student said they also feel judgement coming from the older generations. Student 2 said they felt respected by people who found out they attended an early college. They felt like they were getting a better education than their peers at normal high schools. Student 3 said while they were technically an adult, they were still learning valuable lessons about life. Student 5 said they felt that it was important for students to get involved in their communities. This student felt that students didn't realize their potential within their community, and they had a responsibility to participate in it.

The first cycle of coding revealed three positive and one negative response. Overall, the students felt positive about their place in society. Several themes emerged from the second cycle of coding, one was responsibility, two were community, two were learning, one was appreciation, one was education, one was pressure, one was future, and two were judgement. Because there were several responses that had the same number of

occurrences, so I chose one that came from the positive set of responses. The overall theme of this question from this focus group was learning.

The answers from all the interviews were varied. This is one of the few questions that generated a negative response amongst the students even though the overall feeling about a students' status in society was positive. The overall theme for this section that was chosen was learning.

Response to Question 3

Could you describe in as many details as possible how society is structured in terms of power (who has power and who doesn't)?

Student 1 said the people who have the power in our society are older, white men. This student said to look at the government as an example because the majority of them are white, males. This student felt women did not have the same opportunities. The student also noted the difference between equality and equity in society. Student 2 said people with money have power. This student considered themselves to be middle-classed and said they would not feel comfortable in other areas like "River Oaks or The Heights." Student 3 noted the government has power. The student said the government is based on "We the People." The student also said there were major problems with our government right now, and we need to throw it out. The student also said in society the police have power and at school, the principal. Those people set the rules other people have to follow. Student 5 said some students feel like they have a lot of power, and they don't have to listen to authority. They said other students value authority.

First cycle coding revealed two positive and two negative responses. This time there was not an overall positive or negative feeling towards who has power in society.

The second cycle coding revealed several themes: one for authority, one for personal, four for government, one for money, two for men (white), one for equality, and one for opportunity. The overall theme for this data source for this question was government.

Response to Question 4

Question 4: Can you describe in as many details as possible how important an education is?

Student 1 said, "Education is everything that I've strived for." This student felt everything they did was for their education. The student noted other students their age did not value going to college because they would have debt, they would never own their own house, or they didn't need a degree unless they were going to be an engineer, doctor, or lawyer. This student said their parents only received a high school education up to their freshman or sophomore year in Mexico. This student valued a free public education, and they believed that for social mobility to exist that education was very important. Student 2 said they valued education because they had seen their own parents struggle because they didn't have a high school diploma. They wanted to have financial stability in the future, and they felt they would be able to find a good job quickly after they graduated from college. Student 3 related that when they were in elementary and middle school that they never attended the best school because they were always moving around. The student said themselves and their friends who had come from bad schools felt very happy to be here because education is a top priority at this school. Student 5 noted that education is important to you and your family. This student felt it was important to set a good example for your siblings and to help them if they needed it.

The first cycle of coding revealed four positive responses. Overall, the students felt positive about education. The second cycle of coding showed several themes: four examples of important, one for family, two for opportunity, one for priority, four for money, two for career, one for everything, and one for mobility. I chose the overall theme for this data source for this question to be money.

Information in the following questionnaire represents all the students' responses. Students were not asked their names and grade levels were not connected to the students' responses, so these data are the only data not analyzed by grade level.

Table 8

Critical Pedagogy Data from Questionnaire

Topics	Quite a Bit	Some	A Little or None
Cultural Capital	5%	24%	59%
Critical Thinking	73%	22%	4%
SAT	69%	27%	2%
Praxis	2%	16%	73%
Class Discussions	64%	34%	2%
Reflection	60%	38%	2%
Social Capital	11%	34%	50%
Prior Knowledge	47%	43%	9%

Students reported like they knew more about critical thinking, the SAT, classroom discussions, reflection, and accessing prior knowledge. Students stated like they knew less about cultural capital, praxis, and social capital. It does not mean that there were not activities and structures in place to encourage these concepts. It just may mean that the students and/or perhaps the teachers were not aware of or using these specific terms. Some of the terms listed in this section also could fall under reading or writing instruction, but for this study, they were secluded into the critical pedagogy section.

When asked about being provided choice in their learning, the students did not have much to offer. One 10th grader said they got to choose the classes they took at the school. An 11th grade student said in their One Goal class they got to choose which colleges they wanted to research and what scholarships they wanted to apply to. A 12th grade student said that in Robotics, also called Engineering, they got to choose how they approached their projects. The only two examples where students really got to choose was an 11th grade student told about the U.S. History teacher, and the teacher wanted feedback from the students about how they wanted to cover the material. A 12th grade students used the example of a college English teacher who gave them choice about what to write. This is an area that needs improvement. Choice is powerful for students. This is especially important when it comes to reading. In the classroom, we tend to see a lot of whole-group reading from basal readers or class sets of novels. But when, students get to choose what they read, their motivation to read is increased.

When students were interviewed, they were asked about preparation to take the SAT. All three grade levels mentioned using Khan Academy. One 10th grade student said they used their PSAT book and scores from the previous year to practice and improve

their scores. One 12th grade student mentioned a Test Masters program which was paid for through the Emerge program. One 12th grade student mentioned checking out texts on test prep from the library. One 12th grade student said their course work at the school prepared them. It was clear that preparation for this test was something that was built into the school's culture and that the students were expected to prepare for this test. Students felt overall positive about their preparation they had to take the SAT. Preparing for the SAT helps to increase students' cultural capital. This is important in schools that have high percentages of minorities, ELL, and students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds.

Students were again asked about the topic of reflection in their focus groups. Only one 10th grader answered about a teacher who asked the students to reflect on themselves and what they needed to do to get straight A's. 11th and 12th grade students discussed their Math classes and going to the board to go over questions they had over a review or homework to figure out what they weren't getting correctly. One 12th graders talked about their U.S. History class where they were told to complete a reading assignment and come with any questions they had about the information. It is clear that reflection was part of Algebra II and Pre-Calculus class, but that reflection was limited in practice on the campus. Reflection is something that teachers should be encouraging in all grade levels and subject matters to help students have clarity about what they understand in a topic and what they don't.

When asked about a student's status in society, one 10th grade student stated they felt like they should be taken care of since they were the future. Another said, they were on the bottom, but could move up with an education. An 11th grade student said they felt like nobody listened to them. Another 11th grade student said they weren't at the top nor

the bottom. Both at 11th and 12th grader said they felt like they were on top because of the education they received at the early college. One 12th grader said their generation was judged by older generations. Responses were varied. There was not one dominant opinion in the group; however, this is an important question to ask students because part of critical pedagogy is questioning who has power and status and why.

When the students were asked who had had power, one 10th grade student said adults. The most popular answer for all three grade levels were people who had money. Both 10th and 12th grade students said the government had power. One 10th grade student said people who vote have power. Two 11th grade students said that people who have an education have more power. One 12th grade student said older, white men have power. I assumed this would be the most popular answer, but it wasn't. Only one 12th grade student said they felt powerful. Again, issue of power are important to discuss in the context of critical pedagogy to allow students to read the world, but to also have a voice about the issues that they discover.

When students were asked about the importance of an education, they overall agreed that it was important, but what differed was the why. One 10th grade student said it offered the opportunity for self-improvement. Both 10th and 12th grade students connected an education with getting the job that you wanted. All three grade levels connected education with social mobility. The other popular answer for all three grade levels was that once you got an education you would make more money. Only one 10th grade student connected having an education and being happy because of it. One 11th grade student said the education was all for themselves. And one 12th grade student said an education could help your family.

Overall, with both the focus groups and the interviews, the students' responses were positive. The theme that was most prevalent through the focus groups and interviews was learning. These data are triangulated through the questionnaire in the following way. The questionnaire listed the following topics that are directly related to learning: critical thinking, SAT, praxis, classroom discussion, reflection, and prior knowledge. With the exception of praxis, all of these topics were indicated as the majority of the students knowing quite a bit about the topic. Learning is the underlying theme of the data revolving around critical pedagogy.

Summary. The results were divided into two sections: reading strategies and writing strategies, and topics related to critical pedagogy because these were the focus of the two research questions. Statistics from the questionnaire were given in each section and examples of student responses were summarized and provided. Afterwards, an overall summary of the results was given. In Chapter 5, there will be a discussion of the implication of this research as well as direction for future research.

CHAPTER V

Data Analysis, Discussion, and Recommendations

In this chapter, data presented from the previous chapter will be discussed, recommendations will be made for action, and implications for further research will be discussed. The purpose of this study is to understand how students perceive their literacy instruction and how this connects to elements of critical pedagogy. The following research questions drove this study:

1. In what ways do select students perceive literacy instruction in their early college either prepares them or does not prepare them for success at the university?

2. In what ways do select students' perceptions relate or connect to components of critical pedagogy?

Discussion of Data Analysis

Data analyzed in this chapter consists of data of all groups from the questionnaire, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. The data was collected and then transcribed from the focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Coding was completed using the NVivo coding software created by QSR International. The First Cycle coding consisted of Evaluation Coding. Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014) describe this type of coding as, "appl[ying] primarily nonquantitative codes onto qualitative data that assign judgments about the merit, worth, or significance or programs or policy" (p. 76). This was used because I was trying to ascertain the effectiveness the reading and writing instruction in our early college. I looked for statements that indicated that the students felt confident in their skills and could adequately describe the process they used. If they

could, I counted this as effective. If they could not or indicated they had not been instructed in an area, then I counted this an ineffective. The Second Cycle Coding consisted of pattern codes, in which, I was looking for categories or themes among the codes. For this piece, I used the themes of reading strategies, writing strategies, and aspects of critical pedagogy. I also looked for common strategies or topic that were mentioned during their answers.

Through the Lens of Critical Pedagogy

As stated previously, Freire (1970) advocated for liberation of the oppressed and their oppressors through education. The early college is a movement in critical pedagogy because it offers the opportunity to attain an associate's degree to underserved population through no cost of their own. Freire also wanted people to analyze power sources in education, politics, and the economy, discuss, and take action. This is one of the pieces missing from the data. With the exception of the English 1301 and 1302 teacher at the college who encouraged students to ask questions and form opinions about foods with GMO, food being fed to students in the cafeteria, and Proposition 1 (also known as the bathroom bill), conversations like this were not happening within the school. Freire also encouraged a "problem posing" methodology. When asked about questioning, students' answers were varied. Questioning the world that we live in is an important piece of critical pedagogy, but questioning is also important in regards to reading comprehension. When students have a teacher who allows for, "Establishing a purpose for reading, activating relevant background knowledge, posing open ended questions that provide for deep processing, responding to student initiatives, prompting peer interaction, and orientations to Literacy" (Lawrence & Snow, 2011, p. 160). Questioning is something

that should be common place in all schools and in all classrooms, but particularly a part of reading practice.

When questioned in the one-on-one interviews about power and themselves and power and society. Some students seemed to struggle with explaining their answers, but no students connected these questions to experiences within the classroom. It is fair to also state that students were not asked to make this connection. Power is an important part of the development of identity for secondary students (Nakkula & Tshalis, 2008). It is important that students feel empowered. Many adolescents are frustrated and want to have more choice and power as they develop their identities (Gee, 1996). One of the places where students should feel empowered is through their reading and writing. But as we see in (Morrell, 2008), often students see reading and writing as a neutral skill and not one that can empower them. Reading and writing can help students not only empower themselves, but help them to understand and develop their identities. "Students with strong, healthy identities in a socially responsible class and school environment are more likely to feel enfranchised, included and heard" (Selvester & Summers, 2012).

Critical thinking is an important concept in preparation for higher-education as well as adult life. Literacy is a powerful opportunity to apply critical thinking because it is a "discourse of literacy skills, attitudes, and values that can be used as a meta-discourse to critique popular culture, community, and social discourses in order to think, speak, and act effectively on behalf of themselves and their communities" (Gee, 1991, p. 8). While students indicated that 73% felt that they knew quite a bit about critical thinking, students did not offer any data in the interviews or focus groups to back this up. It was clear students had been taught to think critically about literature, but as far as thinking about or

having conversations in connection to a text about issues of power or bias, there was no evidence to support this. However, teaching students to think critically about text should not be dismissed. This is important for several reasons. Critical thinking helps students get ready for the type of learning they will encounter in college. In addition, this skill allows students to acquire the ability to self-regulate their learning. Self-regulated learning includes several metacognitive processes that each necessitate specific skills (Zimmerman, 1989a, 1989b).

Students also indicated 64% of students knew quite a bit about classroom discussion. This is an important skill for students to have as they continue to higher-education and the adult world, but again, there was no evidence that these discussions were about power, bias, or other issues concerning critical pedagogy. According to Wink (2010), "…discourse is not merely the use of words...they are all socially and culturally grounded (p. 66)." In discourse is also the message about power. The rules about who has power and who doesn't. Exploring these topics of power is a crucial piece of critical pedagogy. All students should feel as though their voices are heard. All students should have the opportunity and ability to discuss what they have learned and what they think about it. It also provides students the chance to practice using the academic vocabulary from the content area in which they are learning.

While Gee is known for his theories involving Discourse and socio-cultural learning, he also agreed that students need to feel a sense of achievement in their reading abilities and see themselves as people who can thrive (Gee, 1997). The students in this study indicated that 50% of them felt they knew quite a bit about comprehension strategies, and 53% knew quite a bit about making inferences. It was clear from the data

and previously mentioned test scores that the students felt confident in their reading abilities. They were able to articulate their processes for comprehending and analyzing texts as well. Students in 12th grade talked about rhetorical analysis and determining the author's purpose. Determining the author's purpose and point of view is helpful in helping students' comprehension in nonfiction text. (Nichols, 2006). Only the 12th grade students mentioned creating outlines of the text. This is a strategy that often helps students break down and understand non-fiction text (Harvey and Goudvis, 2007). The 12th grade students also noted highlighting important information and repeated reading to improve comprehension. Repeated reading is mostly noted for improving word recognition, speed, accuracy, and fluency, but not necessarily improving comprehension (NICHD, 2000). Students also noted methods for dealing with unknown words to improve their comprehension of the text. Both 10th and 12th grade students cited using the dictionary as a method for dealing with unknown words. Schatz and Baldwin (1986) agree that students should be taught how to use a dictionary to help find the meaning of words. Only 11th grade students mentioned the use of context clues to discover the meaning of unknown words. Looking for context clues can assist students in discovering the unknown words meaning. (Buikema & Graves, 1993).

Bordieu is known for his work with Cultural Capital. He noted that when the various types of capital are highly regarded and rewarded in the school, met with school culture, it then becomes academic capital. The students' responses to the questionnaire stated 59% of the students knew a little or none about cultural capital. Cultural capital is the expectation of behaving, thinking, and acting a certain. The appropriate way to do these things is determined by the group in power (Wink, 2010). It is important that

students maintain their own culture and beliefs, but it is also important that they obtain the behaviors to be successful outside of their own culture. August and Hakuta (1997) stated that they were certain characteristics that schools could have to help develop cultural capital:

> "A supportive school-wide climate, school leadership, a customized learning environment…use of native language and culture in instruction, a balanced curriculum that supports both basic and higher-order skills., explicit skills instruction, opportunities for student-directed instruction, use of instructional strategies that enhance understanding, opportunities for practice, systemic student assessment, staff development, and home and parent involvement (p. 20)."

None of the data revealed anything about improvement of Cultural Capital for the students with the exception of the SAT. This is where as Bordieu stated that cultural capital becomes academic capital. 69% of students stated they knew quite a bit about the SAT. When asked about preparation for the SAT, it was clear that this was part of the campus culture, and students understand the importance of this test in regards to their future. When students were interviewed, they were asked about preparation to take the SAT. All three grade levels mentioned using Khan Academy. One 10th grade student said they used their PSAT book and scores from the previous year to practice and improve their scores. One 12th grade student mentioned a Test Masters program which was paid for through the Emerge program. One 12th grade student mentioned checking out texts on test prep from the library. One 12th grade student said their course work at the school prepared them. It was clear that preparation for this test was something that was built into the school's culture, and the students were expected to prepare for this test. Students felt

positive overall about their preparation they had to take the SAT. Preparing for the SAT

helps to increase students' cultural capital. This is important in schools that have high

percentages of minorities, ELL, and students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. Park

and Becks (2015) found girls were more likely than boys to prepare for the SAT. They

also found that students who discussed taking the SAT with their family had higher levels

of test preparation and participation in taking the SAT. Family income was a predictor for

students who received private tutoring, as well as parents with higher levels of education.

Schools that offered an array of AP courses also had more students who participated in

private tutoring. Park and Becks (2015) also found students whose parents had higher

income levels and higher levels of education scored higher on the SAT. Higher scores

were also associate with educational goals of students, planning to take the SAT,

frequency of discussing taking the SAT, and parental goals for their children. This

indicates when students are coming in at a disadvantage, schools need to step up to help

students. The school where the research took place definitely did that. It was also clear

that the students did well on the SAT (College Board, 2009). According to the Texas

Tribune, an on-line newspaper, the average score students at this high school is 1461

(2018). This average shows that students at this school do well on the exam. Making sure

that students from minority and low-socioeconomic backgrounds are prepared for the

SAT is a good place to start to ensure that students from these experiences are as equally

prepared for college as the majority.

Vygotsky is credited with the concepts of the zone of proximal

development. Students are pushed just beyond their individual knowledge level to

achieve more through a scaffolded learning-experience (Vygotsky, 1962). The extra

courses at the early college were designed to scaffold students to get them to be college-

ready by the end of their sophomore years. This is much earlier than a typical high school

student. When asked about the Reading course which is given to 9th graders who are

unable to pass their Texas Success Initiative (TSI), students responses varied. The 10th

grade students who had just taken the course a year ago indicated that it was helpful

because the teacher covered specific topic, but they were not able to be more specific

than that. 11th and 12th grade students both discussed the use of novels and texts typically

associated with the traditional cannon. 11th and 12 grade students both described learning

grammar, specifically parts of speech. Only the 11th grade students mentioned analysis of

literary devices such as diction and mood. Only the 12 grade students discussed learning

about vocabulary. All responses showed that students felt positive about their experiences

with this course. This course was to teach students to analyze texts and increase their

Lexile. Students who discussed vocabulary did not specify any specific techniques used

to learn vocabulary. This does not mean research-based best practices were not used, just

students did not provide this specific evidence. It is important to know that according to

NICHD, 2000, vocabulary instruction:

1. Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly.

2. Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items are important.

3. Learning in rich contexts is valuable for vocabulary learning.

4. Vocabulary tasks should be restructured when necessary.

5. Vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning tasks.

6. Computer technology can be used to help teach vocabulary.

7. Vocabulary can be acquired through incidental learning.

8. How vocabulary is assessed and evaluated can have a differential effect on instruction.

9. Dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning.

Students also did not mention research-based best practices that are often included in remedial reading courses such as the use of Young Adult literature (Stover, 2001) or Reader's Workshop (NICHD, 2000).

Vygotsky is also known for his work with schema. This word was not used with the students. Instead the term prior knowledge was used. Prior knowledge can affect areas of academics, social background, and cultural knowledge. Students indicated in the questionnaire that 47% of them knew quite a bit about prior knowledge. Deficits in prior knowledge can affect learning. Teachers make the point of activating a student's prior knowledge because this can increase a student's comprehension of a text (Alvermann, Fitzgerald, & Simpson, 2006). Students may not have been aware if teachers accessed their prior knowledge before beginning an activity. They also may not have understood why you might do this type of activity.

Dewey (1916) believed that education should serve to increase the desire for education, "The inclination to learn from life itself and to make the conditions of life such that all will learn in the process of living is the finest product of school" (p. 56). The students at the early college clearly valued education. When students were asked about the importance of an education, they overall agreed that it was important, but what differed was the why. One 10th grade student said it offered the opportunity for self-improvement. Both 10th and 12th grade students connected an education with getting the

job that you wanted. All three grade levels connected education with social mobility. The other popular answer for all three grade levels was that once you got an education you would make more money. Only one 10th grade student connected having an education and being happy because of it. One 11th grade student said the education was all for themselves. And one 12th grade student said an education could help your family.

Relationships and having a teacher who cares about you are an incredibly important and powerful piece of a school culture. McLaren (1994) speaks of the teachable heart which recognizes teachers are leader who understand that knowledge, experience, language, and power are an important parts of the classroom and the power to reach students is within us. Noddings (2002) shared that teachers build relationships with students and teach them how to trust one another as well as the teacher, while supporting them ethically through an ethic of care. When the students in the focus group were asked to talk about the time a teacher valued them, none of the 10th graders shared any information that could be added to the research. One 11th grade student mentioned their world history teacher, but wasn't specific about why or how they knew that the teacher valued them. In the 11th grade, three students spoke about three different teachers, but they all stated they knew they were valued because the teacher took the time to speak with them one-on-one in the hallways or in the classroom. In the 12th grade group, three students talked about teachers who were there for them when a family member was very sick or had recently passed. One students discussed being new to the school, and a teacher taking the time to get to know them and create a relationship when they had no one else. Two students discussed teacher giving them personal advice and sharing personal experiences. One students told about a time that a teacher noticed they were not

doing their best and called them on it. Another student related a story about a time they had a nervous breakdown during a test, and the teacher allowed them to step away and collect themselves. All of these stories had a common theme of caring. The teachers saw these students as people and showed them kindness and care when they needed it. Noddings (2005), talked about how student do not want to be treated "like numbers." These students felt like their teachers saw them for who they were and cared about them. This is one of the strongest cultural pieces of the school where this research took place. There is no doubt that the students performed better because they felt like they were important and cared about. Students will do things for people they like and trust (Nodding, 2005). These students worked hard for their caring teachers.

Overall, there are some key pieces of critical pedagogy missing for the school. Incorporation of this type of pedagogy would increase the learning happening at the school as well as improve the culture and empower the students. The data indicated students were positive about their reading and writing instruction, and the students were performing well in both high school and college course work. Critical pedagogy would take a high-preforming school to the next level both intellectually and socially.

Recommendations. While there are many positive aspects of this early college in the realms of reading, writing, and critical pedagogy, there is always room for improvement. When it comes to reading and writing, the biggest missing piece of the puzzle is choice in what students are reading and writing. Some students noted being given choice about what to write from their college professors and in courses other than English, but none of the students specifically mentioned choice in regards to their high school English courses. Students at this early college are highly motivated by the

prospects of getting an education and continuing on in their education. How powerful would it be for students to be motivated by what they were learning as well? Providing choice in reading and writing not only increases motivation for students, but it directly ties into critical pedagogy because it gives the students more power. Reader's and Writer's workshop could provide a structure for allowing choice in the classroom (Atwell, 1987). This model still allows structure in the direct instruction piece conducted by the teacher and still allows choice in what piece of text the student choose to apply the skill to. Serafini (2015) outlines ten principles to drive the use of reader's workshop.

1. Realize that the strategies and skills students need to comprehend the complex texts they encounter nowadays have expanded beyond the strategies for written text alone.

2. Decrease the amount of time spent standing in front of the whole class delivering lessons that work only for a few readers, and instead spend more time in small groups working at readers' point of need.

3. Demonstrate how to approach, navigate, and closely analyze a wide variety of texts.

4. Reduce the dominance of the fictional novel in the reading curriculum to allow room for the other types of texts that readers in contemporary society enjoy.

5. Foster a sense of independence in one's readers.

6. Organize the reading workshop in response to the needs, skills, and interests in one's classrooms.

7. Read aloud every day from a variety of texts and for a variety of purposes.

8. Learn how to facilitate sophisticated discussions about the texts being read and shared.

9. Develop a sense of wonder and teacher readers how to tolerate the ambiguity inherent in many text and experiences.

10. Explore the potential for web-based and digital tools available to support the instructional practices for reading workshop.

Reader's workshop allows for power within in student choice, but educator have a social responsibility to supply diverse texts in which students can see themselves. Students deserve to have interactions with these types of texts. The same applies to topics of writing. Students are taught and modeled a skill, and they apply it in their own writing where they have been given choice in the topic or mode. Valuable time is again spent in small group instruction and conferring one-on-one with students about something that they have written.

The other area of improvement that is missing from the school is the connection to the real world and real-life current issues. Imagine the power of students reading articles about choosing to kneel or not during the national anthem. Students could choose what article they want to read, but all of the students could discuss based on the thematic connection to the piece they chose. According to Beers & Probst (2017), students want to discuss and learn and analyze how to solve real world problems such as suicide, bullying, racism, mental illness, protection of wildlife and the environment, and sex trafficking. These are huge issues that strike at the heart of where our students are. When you create relevance in the classroom, excitement and engagement follow. Again, this would encourage students to be excited not just about learning but about what they are learning.

This also connect back to critical pedagogy because it is teaching students to analyze the world around them and then provided them with an opportunity to develop their own voice.

There is much more research needed on both early colleges and critical pedagogy. It would be important to know if students' positive perceptions of their reading and writing abilities hold true in college. It is also pertinent that studies be conducted on a longitudinal basis to ensure that students are getting what they need at the early college and are indeed finishing at the university level.

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APPENDIX

Focus Group Questions for Students (These are some that will be asked, but more may be added based on information found in the questionnaires that may need to be explored further)

1. Tell me about the extra reading and writing courses you take in your freshman year?
2. Think back to any time at this school, tell me about a time a teacher valued you as a person.
3. Tell me about any opportunities that you had in your classes to make choices about your learning.
4. Think about your past experiences in this school, tell me about the opportunity to reflect on your learning in a classroom.
5. Tell me about the reading strategies you use to understand what you have read.
6. Reflect on your learning experiences at this school, tell me about any time at school that you created questions about a topic you learned about or when you were encouraged to ask questions.

One-on-One Interviews for Students (These are some that will be asked, but more may be added based on information found in the questionnaires that may need to be explored further.)

1. Tell me about your experiences in the SAT prep course?
2. Could you describe in as many details as possible at student's status in society?
3. Could you describe in as many details as possible how society is structured in terms of power (who has power and who doesn't)?
4. Can you describe in as many details as possible how important an education is?
5. With as many details as possible, please describe your process for writing.

6. With as many details as possible, please describe your process for conducting research.

VITA

Christi Keelen

Education/ Certification
Ed.D- Literacy, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas (In progress).
M.Ed- Reading Specialist, University of Saint Thomas, Houston, Texas, 2010.
BA- English major, Education minor, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, 2000.
Principal Certification, Lamar, University, Beaumont, Texas, 2012.
Teacher Certificate- **6-12 English**, Texas.
Teacher Certificate- **Reading Specialist, EC-12,** Texas.
Principal Certificate**- EC-12,** Texas.

Administrative and Leadership Experience
Instructional Coach, Quest Early College High School, Humble ISD, Humble, Texas
   2018- now
- Work with all content areas to provide observation and feedback on instruction, analysis of data, lesson planning, and assessment.
- Provide professional development specifically in the areas of formative assessment, personalized learning, the use of technology, and AVID strategies.

Teacher Development Specialist, Houston ISD, Houston, Texas 2017-2018
- Work primarily with Kashmere High School, a school that is in danger of being closed because they have been in IR for 7 years.
- Coach teachers and provide feedback
- Assist with lesson planning
- Assist with creating curriculum documents and assessments for the district
- Create and deliver professional development for the district as well as for Kashmere

Dean of Students, East Early College High School, Houston ISD, Houston, Texas
   2014-2017
- Dean for all 9th and 10th grade students- responsible for discipline and class scheduling for both our campus and courses at Houston Community College
- In charge of the school curriculum and instruction committee
- Testing coordinator for the campus- interim assessments, PSAT, SAT, EOC courses, and TELPAS
- LPAC Coordinator
- Oversaw English, Social Studies, Electives, and Science departments
- Appraised English, Social Studies, and Science teachers as well as electives
- Organized field trips to colleges

Secondary Reading and Language Arts Curriculum Specialist, Houston ISD,
   Houston, Texas, 2011- 2014
- Wrote Curriculum and Exemplar Lessons for the PowerUp Initiative (One-to-One)

- Wrote Scope and Sequence and research-based Curriculum for English I and ELA Grade 8
- Created District Level Assessments aligned to the state standards for English I and ELA Grade 8, as well as data analysis documents and intervention documents for teachers to use
- Provided professional development for teachers in the areas of utilizing curriculum documents, lesson planning, new teacher training, and information on and preparation for the STAAR and EOC assessments
- Prepared campus-specific interventions for literacy and provided specific support to struggling teachers and departments
- In charge of Do the Write Thing Challenge for 7th grade ELA
- Member of the Assessment Team for the District Literacy Project

Instructional Coach for Language Arts/ Academic Lead Teacher, Timberwood Middle School, Humble ISD, Humble, Texas, 2009- 2011
- Lead teachers in implementing new TEKS and scope and sequence
- Served as a Trainer of Trainers for the district's Pre-Ap Language Arts Initiative with Rice University.

Publications/ Presentations
- Keelen, C. R. (2015). The Value of Student Choice in Reading. A Book Review of *Keep Them Reading: An Anti-Censorship Handbook for Educators*. *Democracy and Education*, 23 (1).

- **Neuhaus Education Center, Bellaire, Texas. Summer 2010.**

Teaching Experience
Adjunct Professor, University of Houston Downtown, Houston, Texas, 2016-Present
- Taught READ 3305 Foundations of Literacy and READ 3313 Reading Curriculum, Methods, Assessment & Diagnosis and SOSE 3306 Culture of Urban Schools.

Instructional Coach/Academic Lead Teacher, Timberwood Middle School, Atascocita, Texas, 2009-2011.

Middle School English Teacher, Creekwood Middle School, Kingwood, Texas, 2005-2009

High School English Teacher, Kingwood High School, Kingwood, Texas, 2002-2005.

High School English Teacher, Caprock High School, Amarillo, Texas, 2000-2002.