

What gives life to critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector?

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This thesis is dedicated to Linda Bell.

Abstract

Critical pedagogy is an educational philosophy and approach to teaching and learning which challenges social and political hierarchies, and questions of power. Teachers and students co-create knowledge in order to develop an awareness of oppressive structures and forces at work in their own lives and in the wider world. This awareness leads to agency, in the form of social action, personal empowerment and transformation. It can be argued that this is vital if we are to progress morally, socially, politically, economically and ecologically, and for the development of democracy. Critical pedagogy is therefore an important area to research and develop.

In the UK, critical pedagogy has traditionally been practised in the lifelong learning sector. However, the sector has become constrained by funding cuts, instrumental curricula and accountability measures, and lecturers can feel that they have little room for professional autonomy and therefore the practice of critical pedagogy. Yet some do continue to practice critical pedagogy, often in relatively isolated circumstances, by working within the system but drawing upon their personal and professional identities. This research examines what inspires, motivates and sustains such practitioners in the face of constraints, the teaching strategies they consider to be successful, and how their experiences could be harnessed and mobilised to enable critical pedagogy to flourish.

The research draws upon the philosophy and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry to capture critical pedagogues' positive stories of success. This contrasts with the well-documented difficulties of using critical pedagogy in the current educational climate. A qualitative research strategy was used, including twelve face to face, semi-structured interviews with practitioners of critical pedagogy across a range of lifelong learning contexts, in the West Midlands, UK. The participants' narratives were analysed thematically, which revealed themes related to four dimensions: Society, Education System, Self and Others. Each participant acted as a conduit between the four

dimensions, whereby experiences in each dimension led to praxis in the other dimensions, in an iterative process. The participants suggested a number of methods of mobilising critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning sector, including networks and connections with other like-minded people, teacher education and continuing professional development.

The research illuminates what brings critical pedagogy to life, shining a light of hope for others who wish to practice in this way. It demonstrates the need to sustain hope, and to continue to fight for the education we believe in. It calls to us to join with others to make critical pedagogy happen, enlivening our deepest yearnings for social justice and humanisation, and encourages us to reclaim our agency.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter outlines the structure of the thesis, followed by a brief summary of the research. It then outlines the broader context in which the research is situated. It discusses the aims and objectives of the research and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning it, and summarises the methodology and ethical considerations. It then provides an account of my personal orientation to critical pedagogy. The chapter concludes with a brief account of the research's contribution to knowledge.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters: Introduction; literature review; methodology; findings; discussion; and conclusions. A synopsis of each chapter follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

An introduction to the thesis, providing a summary of the research, the context of the research in relation to critical pedagogical theory and current lifelong learning policy, the conceptual and theoretical framework, the aims and objectives of the research, summaries of the methodology, findings, conclusions, recommendations, ethical considerations, a personal orientation to critical pedagogy and the research's contribution to knowledge.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A literature review of the key theorists of critical pedagogy, current research and writing in critical pedagogy in the UK, and literature relating to the motivations of critical pedagogues.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The philosophy, paradigms and approaches underpinning the methodology, and the research strategy, design, data collection methods and analytic tools. Literature informing the methodology is referenced.

Chapter 4: Findings

A thematic analysis of the interviews.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The findings in relation to the reviewed literature.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

A synthesis and model of what gives life to critical pedagogy, a reflection on the positive lens approach taken, participants' ideas for mobilising critical pedagogy, proposals for dissemination and further action, and the significance of the research and its contribution to knowledge are presented.

1.3 Brief summary of the research

Critical pedagogy is an educational philosophy and approach to teaching and learning whereby teachers and students co-create knowledge in order to facilitate the development of an awareness of the oppressive structures and forces at work in their own lives and in the wider world (McElearney, 2018; 2020). This awareness is known as a 'critical consciousness' (Freire, 1973), or 'conscientizacao' (Freire, 1970; 2004), which in turn leads to social action and personal empowerment and transformation. Critical pedagogy challenges social and political hierarchies and questions of power, by teaching people to critique oppressive structures and exercise agency. It can be argued that this is vital if we are to progress morally, socially, politically, economically and ecologically, and for the development of democracy. Critical pedagogy is therefore an important area to research and develop (McElearney, 2018; 2020). As Giroux (2011) asserts, we need to educate students to lead a

meaningful life, to hold power and authority accountable and to be willing to work for a more socially just world.

In the UK, critical pedagogy has traditionally been practised in the lifelong learning sector. Fisher, Simmons and Thompson (2019) explain that lifelong learning can be understood as the process whereby individuals continue to engage in education or training throughout the life course. In this thesis, the term lifelong learning refers specifically to formal and informal education which takes place beyond the age of sixteen, and reflects Fisher, Simmons and Thompson's (2019) posit, that the term captures the diversity of the post-compulsory field. However, the work of practitioners in the lifelong learning sector has become constrained by funding cuts (Association of Colleges, 2016), instrumental curricula (Amsler *et al.*, 2010; Cowden and Singh, 2013; Duckworth and Smith, 2018) and accountability measures. Teachers can therefore feel that they have little room for professional autonomy and thus the practice of critical pedagogy (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015). Yet there are practitioners who do continue to work from a critical pedagogical stance (Amsler *et al.*, 2010), often in relatively isolated circumstances (Clare, 2015), by working within the system but drawing upon their professional identity to deliver alternative pedagogies.

My research examines what inspires, motivates and sustains practitioners of critical pedagogy in the face of constraints identified above, and the teaching strategies they consider to be successful. It also explores how what gives life to critical pedagogy could be harnessed and mobilised across the lifelong learning sector, creating a space in which critical pedagogy may flourish. It makes recommendations for how this could be operationalised. This is important in order to illuminate the way in which critical pedagogy can be used in spite of the current constraints.

The research provides an original contribution to knowledge through the use of a positive lens approach (Golden-Biddle and Dutton, 2012), drawing on the philosophy and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008), in order to capture

practitioners' positive stories of inspiration and success, with a view to inspiring others. Drawing upon the philosophy of AI to extract the positive, life giving forces of critical pedagogy constitutes an innovative research lens and resultant findings. AI, an organisational development process, demonstrates that the nature of the questions we ask and the stories we tell determine the direction of our future actions. When we relate stories of success in our work, we draw upon and develop these further in the direction of positive change (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008). The term 'gives life' is used in AI to denote the life giving essence of an organisation (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008, p.101). Using this positive approach illuminates what gives life to critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector, despite the constraints of the current performative climate (Avis, 2003; Ball, 2003; 2012; Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Elliott, 2012), thus addressing a gap in the literature and knowledge. The research makes a further contribution to knowledge by studying critical pedagogues in a range of lifelong learning contexts in the West Midlands of the UK, and as such enables common themes across different contexts to be analysed. The range of lifelong learning contexts, explored through a positive lens, is original in its focus and contribution.

A qualitative research strategy, with a case study design was employed. Twelve semi-structured interviews were undertaken with practitioners of critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector in the West Midlands, drawn from higher education, further education, adult and community learning, residential adult education, trade union education and prison education. My ontological position in the research is constructionist (Bryman, 2016), because the participants' realities in relation to their motivations to practice critical pedagogy, and their conceptions of critical pedagogy itself, were constructed by both those individuals and by the wider academic community as a social group. The participants' narratives were subject to interpretation by me and as such, my epistemological stance is interpretivist (Bryman, 2016).

Literature relating specifically to the motivations of critical pedagogues, indicated a wide range of drivers. These included a commitment to social justice, to democracy, experiences of oppression, inspirational teachers and role models, professional identity, political beliefs, religious and spiritual beliefs, pedagogical efficacy, transformation and self-actualisation, the power of community and group action, and the need to make a difference in the world (Torres, 1998; Connolly, 2008; Ramirez, 2011; Kirylo, 2013; Boudon, 2015; Clare, 2015; Porfilio and Ford, 2015). The motivations of my research participants echoed those of the critical pedagogues in the reviewed literature, and also included a commitment to socially just educational processes. A key difference was that the majority of the critical pedagogues reviewed in the published literature also cited a range of career influences and trajectories as important motivations. An exception to this were the participants in PhD theses (Connolly, 2008; Clare, 2015).

The participant narratives were analysed thematically, and during data analysis it became apparent that individual themes related to one of four dimensions: Society, Education System, Self and Others. Each participant acted as a conduit between the four dimensions, whereby experiences in each dimension led to praxis in the other dimensions, in an iterative process. The participants suggested a number of methods of mobilising critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning sector, including networks and connections with other like-minded people, teacher education and continuing professional development.

1.4 Context of the research

Critical pedagogy is committed to the empowerment of culturally marginalised and disenfranchised students and the transformation of classroom practices which perpetuate undemocratic life (Kincheloe, 2008a). It unmask the ways in which traditional educational practices influence and inhibit an emancipatory culture of participation and voice in the classroom. It aims to

facilitate an awareness by students and teachers of the social, political and economic forces which shape knowledge and material realities. Critical pedagogy demonstrates that humans create conflict and oppression, but can also change these, enabling students to recognise their own capacities for change and agency (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009). Giroux (2011) proposes that critical pedagogy teaches students to be deeply responsive to the problems of our time. He posits that teachers can raise the political consciousness of themselves, their colleagues and their students and can create the foundations for producing generations of students who will take part in social action to change the nature of society.

The early roots of critical pedagogy lie in Marxism and in critical theory as developed by The Frankfurt School in the early 20th century (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009). However, McLaren (1997, p.172) points out, 'many if not most critical educators work outside of the orthodox Marxian tradition.' This may be due to what McLaren (1997, p.172) refers to as 'Marxaphobia,' and Brookfield's (2005) suggestion that popular opinion equates Marxism with repression, bureaucracy and the denial of liberty and creativity. Gottesman (2016) explains critical pedagogy as a move to a post-Marxist orientation resulting from the work of Giroux and others in the 1970s and 1980s, which re-focused critical pedagogy on issues of culture and power, as opposed to radical reconstruction or revolution. Moreover, Gottesman (2016) asserts that whilst Marxism may be an intellectual and political foundation of critical pedagogy, it is by no means the only one, or necessarily the most significant. Breunig (2011) posits that whilst many theorists root critical pedagogy in Marxist social theory, others deem that repeatedly tracing its roots back to Marxism fails to engage critical pedagogical feminist and anti-racist agendas. She cites Lather (2001) and hooks (2003) in substantiating her claim. More recently, the work of McLaren (2010; 2013; 2015) calls for a return to a critical pedagogy which seeks to achieve a socialist alternative to capitalism.

Although Giroux (1983) was the first to use the term in a text, critical pedagogy is often associated with the work of Paulo Freire and his seminal text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Freire developed it as a method for teaching people without literacy skills in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s, to enable them to become cognisant of the forces oppressing them and to develop a 'critical consciousness' (Freire, 1973), or 'conscientizacao' (Freire, 1970; 2004), in order to take action, 'praxis,' for liberation (Freire, 1996, p.17). Freire was working at a time of great oppression of the disenfranchised populations of Latin America (Darder, 2018). He used his literacy teaching to facilitate this social and political consciousness. He saw the life purpose or vocation of human beings as that of 'humanisation'; of becoming fully human social and cultural agents (Freire, 1996, p.1; Darder, 2018). This necessitates liberation from oppression through a dialectical process of critical consciousness and praxis. Freire (1970) presented a number of concepts in his work. He argued that although the educator directs the educational process, students already have knowledge, which they bring to the learning situation. The teacher's role is to both validate and challenge the students' knowledge and perceptions, which result from their socio-economic and historic material realities. This contrasts with the 'banking' (Freire, 1996, p.53) system of education, which he conceived, whereby the teacher as expert fills the student as 'empty vessel' with knowledge. Freire developed a 'problem posing' education whereby through dialogue, the teacher and students both teach and are taught. He termed this 'teacher-student with students-teachers' (Freire, 1996, p.61), where the activities of the teacher and students are not dichotomised. The teacher being taught by the students was posited earlier by Fromm (1956), but despite this dynamic relationship, Kincheloe (2008a) explains that Freire was keen to emphasise that teachers do not relinquish their authority. They assume the authority of a mature facilitator of student enquiry and problem posing.

From the late 1970s and 1980s, scholars in the USA also began to develop critical pedagogy, studying the role of schools in the transmission of normative messages about political, social, and economic life, and the

reproduction of the dominant culture, including asymmetrical relations of power (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009). This creation of ideological hegemony reproduces cultural and economic domination within society. It reflects Gramsci's (2011) argument that social control is exercised by the moral leaders of society, including teachers, reinforcing 'common sense' assumptions of 'truth.' In schools, students are socialised into a consensus consisting of specific norms, expectations and behaviours, which conserve the interests of those in power (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres, 2009). Critical pedagogues also critique the influence of growing neoliberalism in education. Neoliberalism includes a belief in the superiority of a competitive free market, with market led policies being enacted by the state (Fisher, Simmons and Thompson, 2019). According to Giroux (2011), this strips education of its public values, critical content and civic responsibilities. He proposes that neoliberalism sees education as related only to economic growth, rather than to the production of engaged citizens and the realisation of social action and democracy.

Critical pedagogy has been criticised and contested on a number fronts, discussed in Chapter 2, including assumptions about the dichotomised positionality of its proponents and concomitant lack of self-reflexivity (Ellsworth, 1989; Weiler, 1991), its early exclusive use of the male pronoun (Brady, 1994; hooks, 1994), for its use of exclusionary language, and for its early inattention to issues of race, gender, sexual orientation and physical ability (Ellsworth, 1989; Darder, Boltano and Torres, 2009). In spite of its critiques, it can be argued that in an increasingly complex, fragmented, and global world, people now, as much as ever, need a critical consciousness in order to address the emerging issues faced and it is through critical pedagogy that this can be developed (McElearney, 2020). Giroux (2011, p.13) proposes that critical pedagogy is a mode of intervention where 'individuals can think critically, relate sympathetically to the problems of others and intervene in the world to address major social problems.' It is, therefore, important that we keep critical pedagogy alive and extend knowledge of its theory and practice.

The gap between rich and poor is widening (OECD, 2017) and we face new threats and crises related to ecological destruction, global terrorism and the impact of neoliberalism. Consumerism, political disempowerment, the growth of communication technologies and the marketisation of public and private spheres now dominate our external worlds and increasingly shape our very psyches. Capitalism has become hegemonic 'common sense' (Regmi, 2016, p.192), whilst the ecological threats to the planet, ongoing wars, financial instability of unregulated economies, religious intolerance and acts of terrorism, among many other threats, continue apace. As Barnett (2000) asserts, we live in an age of super-complexity, and his call for a new epistemology in higher education, which embraces living among uncertainty, is ripe for the inclusion of critical pedagogy.

Alongside these global issues, it can also be argued that, akin to Freire's (1970) concept of humanisation, our task as humans is to grow and develop, becoming more fully human, in a move towards self-actualisation (Maslow, 1968; 1993). Self-actualisation refers to the need for personal growth, discovery and human flourishing, which is present throughout a person's life. Maslow (1968; 1993) posits that each person is continuously in a state of growth and that once fundamental needs such as food, shelter and belonging are met, people are motivated towards self-actualisation, to find a meaning in life that is important to them and to reach their full potential. Maslow (2001) considers self-actualising people to be highly effective in fighting injustice and inequality. Wilber (2000) depicts this in terms of the evolution of human consciousness, through a number of stages in both individual and collective spheres. This evolution represents increasing sophistication in terms of social justice, democracy and individual transformative and transcendent states of being.

It may be that critical pedagogical practices could facilitate this evolution of consciousness, through experiences of thinking, reflection, voice and praxis. As hooks (1994, p.12) declares:

...the classroom remains the most radical place of possibility in the academy... I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions – a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom.

As educators, we have the precious opportunity to develop this with students. Similarly, we have the opportunity to facilitate Habermas' (1992, p.165) observation, that 'individuals develop structures of consciousness which belong to a higher stage than those which are already embodied in the institutions of their society.'

At a national level, our citizens of tomorrow are suffering from epidemic levels of mental ill health resulting from the social pressure to consume, the ongoing intrusiveness of social media and its requirement for self-marketing (Cramer and Inkster, 2017). In addition to this, there are the enormous pressures exerted by an education system based on achievement related metrics (Hutchings, 2015). Many young people who are unable to flourish and reach their potential in this system turn to the post-compulsory education sector as a second chance learning opportunity (Atkins, 2010). However, we are also experiencing an increasingly instrumental, top down approach in this sector, evidenced by prescriptive learning outcomes, units of content, quantitative measures of 'success' to meet accountability data requirements, surveillance, neoliberalism and the marketisation of education (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Elliott, 2012; Bathmaker and Avis, 2013; Cowden and Singh, 2013; Duckworth *et al.*, 2016; Bennett and Smith, 2018; Duckworth and Smith, 2018; 2019; Smith and Duckworth, 2020). These are coupled with changes in lifelong learning policy over the past two decades, where its purpose has moved from the dual aim of social justice and contributor to the economic prosperity of the individual and of society in the early days of New Labour, to a narrow focus on skills for economic growth (Leitch, 2006; Government Office for Science, 2017), albeit with some retained support for adult and community learning.

Mirroring the experiences of teachers in schools, the lifelong learning context can make it difficult for practitioners to exercise professional autonomy in determining curricula based on learners' needs and constrain their ability to teach from a critical pedagogical stance (Giroux, 2010). This in turn limits their facilitation of students developing a critical consciousness of the forces that shape their individual circumstances and those determining local, national and international contexts. During my thirteen years in a large Further Education college (2000-2013; 2016), an increasingly anti-intellectual culture took hold in the transitioning years from the widening participation agenda of New Labour (1997-2010) through to the austerity measures of the subsequent Coalition (2010-2015) and Conservative (2015-present) governments. A culture of managerialism and metrics ran alongside annual redundancies and precariousness of employment, resulting in Healey, Jenkins and Lea's (2014, p.13) observation, that:

...for some, the wider further education colleges' culture has resulted in a somewhat stifled culture of compliance and surveillance, or what has been referred to as "the terrors of performativity."

I witnessed a shift among lecturers where interest in pedagogy was wholly subsumed by course administration requirements and accountability measures. Lecturers complied with an 'organisational professionalism' (Bathmaker and Avis, 2013, p.734), which Ball (2003) posits requires an alliance to corporate aims and performance indicators.

Russell (2010) reports that the ever narrowing skills agenda and focus on accreditation and employability make it increasingly difficult to use 'popular education,' a form of critical pedagogy, in adult and community education also. In my experience, there was more room to practise critical pedagogy in some informal contexts such as adult and community learning, because funding was not always attached to pre-determined qualification criteria.

However, it would be inaccurate to present critical pedagogy as thwarted only by policy and institutional agendas. Student resistance to critical pedagogy

has been explicated by Freire (1970) and hooks (1994) among others, in terms of the oppressed (less privileged students) wishing to become the oppressor (privileged students), and the oppressors not wishing to relinquish their position. Student resistance to critical pedagogy can also occur in a neoliberal educational culture (Boorman, 2011). Avis and Bathmaker (2004) report ambivalence to critical pedagogy among teacher trainees. They conclude that this derives partially from trainees' conception of individualised pedagogical relations, reflective of the neoliberalist individualism of wider society, and partially from the policy and practice contexts in which the trainees operate. They recommend that 'whilst valuing the individual learner they need to be able to locate both themselves and the learner in the wider structural context' if a progressive politics of care is to develop into a critical pedagogy (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004, p.309).

Nonetheless, regardless of the systemic obstacles facing teachers, and student resistance, critical pedagogy is still possible. As hooks (1994, p.207) argues, 'the classroom with all its limitations remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labour for freedom'. Critical theory views humans as agentic subjects existing at a point in history, and is premised on the theory that where there is power there is also resistance, possibility and hope. Brookfield (2005) draws upon Foucault's (1980; 1988) analyses of power relations to underline the possibilities of small-scale acts of opposition. In relation to the education system and to critical pedagogy, it is this that my research addresses. In the UK, many practitioners challenge the prevailing hegemony of the current education system (Amsler *et al.*, 2010; Cowden and Singh, 2013; Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015). The rationale for this research is to discover why and how they do this, in order to shine a light into the spaces and cracks where resistance to the current system does occur, thus extending our knowledge. Those practitioners who do continue to work in this way often operate in isolation and use a range of covert and subversive methods, particularly in the further education sector (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015).

It should be noted that the desire for a socially just world, critical pedagogy's role in this, and its appropriateness as a pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector, cannot be viewed as a normative position or assumption. The literature of critical pedagogy is predicated on the assumption that democracy and social justice are normative aspirations in 'Western' nations. While this may be largely correct, what constitutes social justice and the appropriate means to achieve this differ widely (Ruitenbergh and Vokey, 2010; Smith, 2012). Differing definitions of social justice link to different political ideologies (Burchardt and Craig, 2008), to values, philosophies and theoretical frameworks (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019), and to different conceptions of social justice in education (Smith, 2012). Any study relating to critical pedagogy and social justice needs to bear this wider context in mind.

Critical pedagogy represents a vast field of theory and research. I have been particularly influenced by the work of Freire (1970) whose work comprises a pedagogy of political, economic and emancipatory goals, underpinned by a humanist and arguably spiritual orientation, together with the work of hooks (1994) who develops a focus on self-actualisation and transformation. I have also been influenced by the work of Shor (1992), who presents very real and practical strategies for the critical pedagogical empowerment of students and teachers. Throughout the research, I have been continually mindful of the fact that my influencers could lead to researcher bias in interviewing and analysis. I have therefore remained cognisant of the full range of critical pedagogy's interests, many of which align with those of the interviewees, rather than those which particularly resonate with me.

1.5 Aims and objectives of the research

The aim of the research was to find out what inspired, motivated and sustained practitioners of critical pedagogy in spite of the constraints imposed by the current financial, instrumental and performative educational climate (Avis, 2003; Ball, 2003; 2012; 2018; Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Elliott, 2012;

Duckworth *et al.*, 2016; Duckworth and Smith, 2018; 2019; Smith and Duckworth, 2020). This was in order to extend knowledge of what actualises critical pedagogy and to potentially inspire and motivate other practitioners in the lifelong learning sector who wish to work from a critical pedagogical stance. The rationale for this was to facilitate the advancement of a pedagogy which develops a critical social awareness among students, arguably necessary to address the issues we are facing at local, national and international levels. This rationale was predicated on critical theory's view of humans as agentic subjects existing within a historic continuum, where power is dialectical and thus has the potential for resistance. Foucault (1980, p.142) hypothesises that 'there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective as they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised.' This can be extrapolated to theorise that teachers have the potential to resist the totalising effects of the current educational climate and find ways to use alternative pedagogies, even if this is in relatively small ways. As Goodson (2008, p.5) asserts, studying teachers' lives and work in a social context moves us from the commentary on 'what is' to an understanding of 'what might be.' It allows us to see the individual teacher in relation to the history of their time, thus illuminating the choices and options open to them, and exposing the shallowness of the prescriptive system (Goodson, 2008). It also provides an opportunity for other teachers to reflect on their own experiences and practices in relation to other peoples' stories (Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985; Plummer, 1995) and draw inspiration and sustenance from this. As Kincheloe (2007 p.15) observes, the issues chosen by researchers are 'marked by subjective judgements about whose problems are deemed most important.'

The research objectives were:

- To critically review and contribute to existing theoretical literature
- To present a case study across lifelong learning contexts using semi-structured interviews in order to:

- elicit the human stories and life events which originally led practitioners to critical pedagogy
 - capture the sources of inspiration, motivation and support which sustained their practice
 - provide an insight into the teaching and learning strategies they considered to be successful
 - explore how what gives life to critical pedagogy might be harnessed and mobilised across the sector
- To analyse the data thematically
 - To make recommendations and disseminate the findings in a manner which offers hope and inspiration to practitioners in the lifelong learning sector

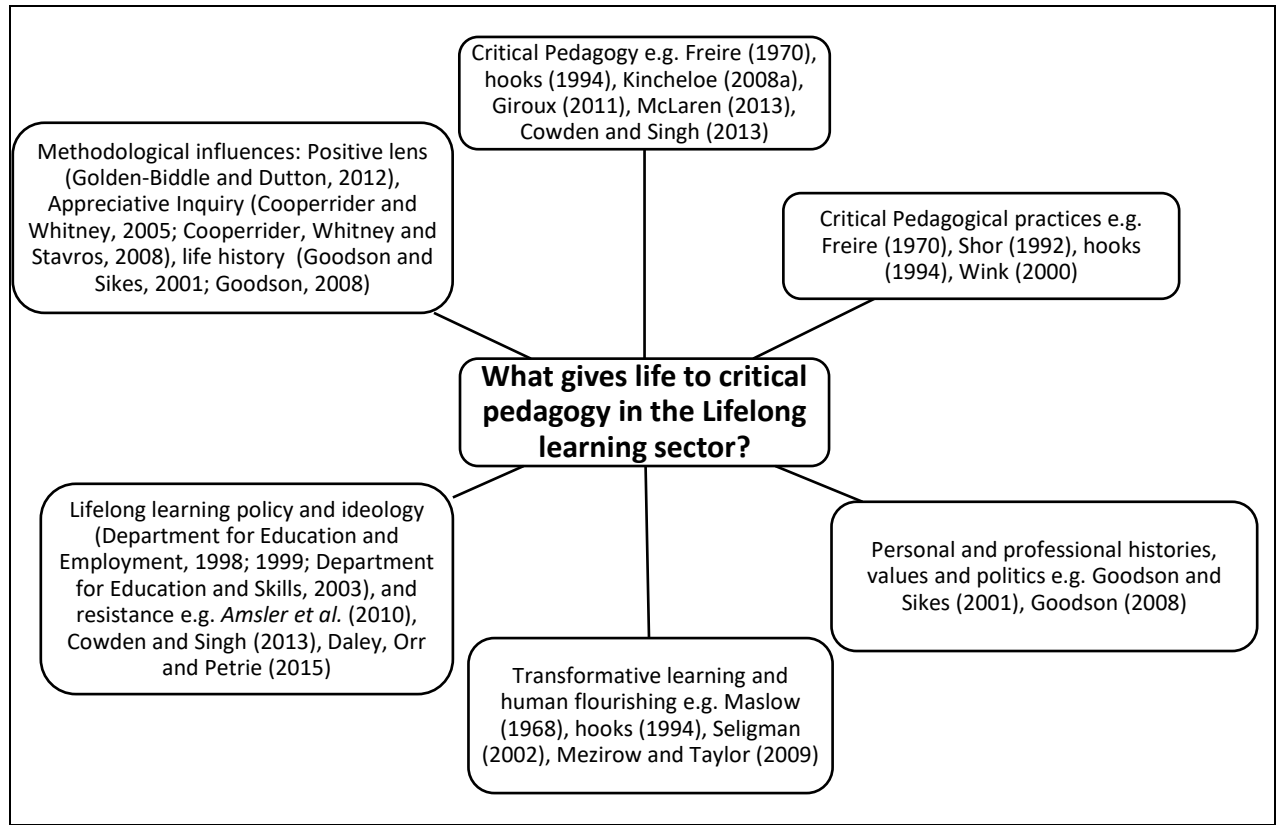
1.6 Theoretical/conceptual framework

The theoretical and conceptual framework informing this research derives from critical pedagogy practitioners' theoretical, pedagogical and personal drivers. These were indicated in the literature, in the informal discussions I had with critical pedagogy practitioners prior to the design and commencement of my fieldwork, and through a self-reflexive consideration of my own personal and professional drivers in relation to critical pedagogy. I divided these into the following six broad areas, illustrated in Figure 1, in which I include the methodological influences I drew upon:

- Critical pedagogical theories
- Critical pedagogical practices
- Transformative learning and human flourishing
- Teachers' personal and professional histories, values and politics
- Lifelong learning ideology and policy

- Methodological influences, drawing upon Appreciative Inquiry and life history

Figure 1. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework



I drew upon the critical theory and humanist paradigms, and positive psychology, in order to illuminate the different perspectives underpinning my theoretical framework. Each of these shaped rather than determined my approach, and drawing upon them created an innovative mix with which to approach the research question and research aims.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) consider critical pedagogy to be situated in the critical theory paradigm, the intention of which is to move individuals and society in the direction of social democracy. They consider associated critical educational research to be ‘intensely practical and political’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.52), and as existing to create a more just and egalitarian society, and to eradicate illegitimate expressions of power. The

aim of my research was not to directly change society through my findings, but to interpret what facilitated the practice of critical pedagogy, and as such, I drew upon the critical theory paradigm. However, within my research, the exploration of how critical pedagogy might be harnessed across the sector, in order to promote a pedagogy of social justice and agency, directly reflects the critical theory paradigm.

I also drew upon the humanist paradigm and positive psychology (Seligman, 2002), which was reflected in the choice of a positive lens (Golden-Biddle and Dutton, 2012), human flourishing approach. I fully ascribe to Freire's conception of human beings' life purpose as that of humanisation (Freire, 1970), whereby people are empowered to live as full cultural and social agents. At an individual level, this aligns with Maslow's (1968) theory of growth motivation, whereby our ultimate psychological need is one of self-actualisation. My personal and professional experience is borne out by this and I contend that lifelong learning contexts are places where this can actualise. They are often sites of transformative learning (Mezirow and Taylor, 2009; Duckworth and Smith, 2019), and this was echoed in the informal discussions with critical pedagogues at the outset of my research. In the words of hooks (1994, p.207), whose work is with adult learners, 'learning is a place where paradise can be created.' This can include providing the conditions for the evolution of human consciousness to higher cognitive and spiritual levels (Wilber, 2000).

Similar to the ideas presented by Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) and Ghaye (2011), I too believe that the nature of the questions we ask, the stories we tell and the discussions we take part in determine the direction in which we move and grow. In order to implement this as a research approach, I drew upon Appreciative Inquiry (AI), an approach to individual and organisational change, which focusses on what gives life to and what works within an organisation, by engaging people in telling stories of success (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008). AI is a philosophy, (Hammond, 1998; Bright and Miller, 2013), an organisational development method (Cooperrider and

Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008; Bushe, 2011) and a research methodology (Micheal, 2005). It is increasingly being utilised as a research method in educational research (Shuayb *et al.*, 2009; Clouder and King, 2016). This positive lens approach, as opposed to documenting the current challenges of practising critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector, has the potential to provide new insights into what enables critical pedagogy to happen. These are more likely to inspire potential practitioners, thus enabling critical pedagogy to grow. Ghaye's (2011) work on teachers' reflective practice is derived from AI and supports this positive lens approach, as does the paradigm of Positive Psychology, explicated by Cherkowski and Walker, (2014, pp.203-204):

Positive psychology..... shifts the focus of research and practice from deficiencies to strengths - from looking at what is going wrong and trying to fix or eliminate it, to looking at what is going right and trying to build on it.

This particular conception of Positive Psychology encapsulates my rationale for drawing upon both it, and Appreciative Inquiry, as tools to answer my research question, 'what gives life to critical pedagogy?' However, I do not embrace all aspects of their underpinning paradigms in my study.

Positive Psychology (PP) is criticised for aspects of its underpinning paradigm, including its narrow focus on the positive, thus ignoring the negative side of human existence (Ivtzan *et al.*, 2016; Wong, 2011; 2017), its use of positivist methodologies (Wong, 2017), and the unacknowledged Western ideologies it rests upon (Christopher and Kickinbottom, 2008). It is also critiqued for being theorised by an elitist, 'mutual admiration fraternity' (Wong, 2017, p.143). This reflects Harding's (1992a) critique of epistemologies in which dominant groups fail to critically and systematically interrogate their advantaged social positions. She argues that 'the effect of such advantages on their beliefs leaves their social situation a scientifically and epistemologically disadvantaged one for generating knowledge' Harding (1992a, p.442).

The most important critique of PP in relation to this thesis, is its focus on the individual and thus individualism, which according to Kern *et al.* (2020), ignores the complex social, political and economic systems in which individuals are embedded. Elements within a system dynamically interact with one another, with the whole differing from the sum of its parts. Critically, people's wellbeing cannot be separated from the social, political and economic structures of injustice in which they live. As Kern *et al.* (2020) caution in relation to PP interventions, what is beneficial and what is harmful is often defined by those in authority and power. Similarly, Christopher and Hickinbottom (2008, p.581) warn that PP may risk becoming 'a form of disguised ideology that perpetuates the socio-political status quo.'

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is also criticised for focusing on the positives while ignoring the negatives, although Bellinger and Elliott (2011) explain that this represents a superficial understanding of AI. More importantly, while AI is based on social constructionism and sees organisations as dynamic and self-organising systems, its narrative fails to site organisations within their wider political and economic systems. In addition, while the employees in an organisational system may dynamically create and recreate their organisation in many aspects, their terms and conditions of employment will be determined by the nature of the organisation, and the wider economic and political context in which they sit. As Grant and Humphries (2006) posit, AI can implicitly support the functional enhancement of organisations, without a critical contextualisation of the organisation within the wider social, economic and political landscape.

Ludema, Cooperrider and Barrett (2006) purport that AI dynamically promotes egalitarian relationships. However, in social constructionism, not all voices carry equal weight. Power and its dynamics are always present, and the knowledge that is produced by an AI cannot be decoupled from this. As Harding (1992b, pp.582-583) argues in her work on knowledge creation, at an epistemological level, 'the dominant ideology restricts what everyone, including marginalised people, are permitted to see and shapes everyone's

consciousness.’ She asserts that in some perspectives, no matter how well intentioned, the real relations of humans are not visible.

The above critiques of Positive Psychology and Appreciative Inquiry are particularly pertinent to this thesis, as critical pedagogy and a wider critical orientation are premised on a perspective of social justice which critiques oppressive, systemic forces in society. It must therefore be emphasised that I drew upon these two approaches to fashion a tool which would enable me to answer my specific research question, ‘what gives life to critical pedagogy?’ rather than embracing all aspects of their underlying paradigms.

1.7 Methodology

My ontological stance in this piece of research is one of constructionism (Bryman, 2016), whereby realities are multiple and constructed by individuals and social groups. However, the social construction of reality, although relativist, does not necessarily entail the adoption of a fully anti-realist position (Cheek and Gough, 2005). Educational practices such as critical pedagogy exist as real theorised and practised entities (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992; hooks, 1994; Wink, 2000), but are constructed and interpreted by individuals in a variety of ways. My epistemological stance is interpretivist and constructivist (Bryman, 2016) with the knower and the known influencing each other, and descriptions being context and time bound (Pickard, 2007). This notion is reflected in the research in that it provides a case study of a point in time (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011).

The positive lens approach I took, drew upon Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and I use the term ‘drew upon’ in relation to my use of AI because in its purest sense, AI is a collaborative process whereby people come together as a group to determine the future of their organisation (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008). My research constituted a series of interviews with individual participants operating in different organisations across the lifelong learning sector. It would have been impractical and therefore risky to attempt to bring

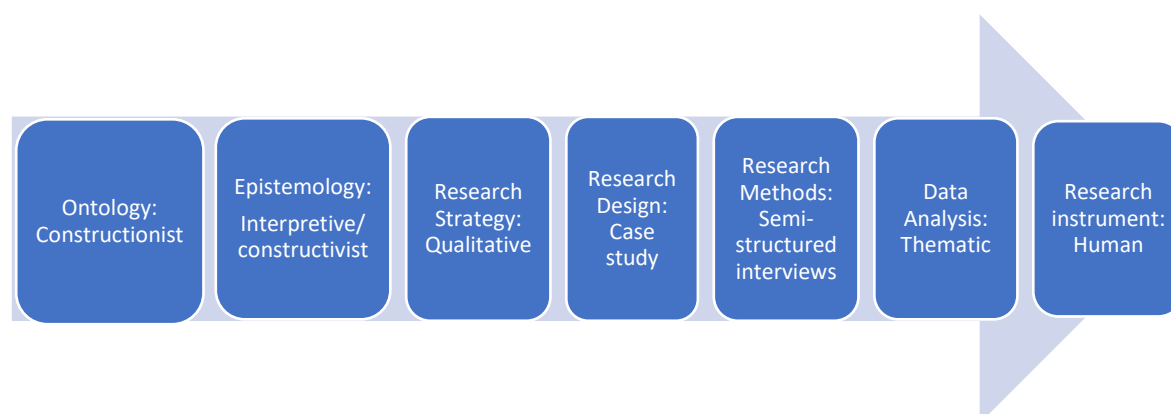
them together for a one or two day collaborative process. For this reason I use the term 'drew upon.' The individual interviews were however influenced by AI's Appreciative Interviews, which investigate what 'gives life,' by finding out what is positive, what works, what inspires, motivates and sustains (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008). In Chapter 3, I detail the way in which I drew upon both the philosophy of AI, and upon its methods, adapting these as appropriate to my research.

As discussed in 1.6 above, it is important to acknowledge that positive lens research approaches are not without criticism. Criticisms of AI highlight the oppressive nature of silencing negative experiences (Pratt, 2002; Oliver, 2005), and Grant and Humphries (2006) found that disallowing negative stories in AI may reduce participant engagement. The interviewees inevitably raised some negatives, which were fully acknowledged, before being guided back to the positive. As Bellinger and Elliot (2011, p.713) posit, AI 'incorporates the telling of negative experiences, as these underpin participants' motivation for improvement,' and that it is a superficial understanding of AI that leads to 'the focus on positives being interpreted as disallowing the exploration of difficulties.' Like Bushe (2010), I embraced the reality that focussing on the positive could evoke sadness, anger and that 'a deep yearning for something different from current experience' (Bushe, 2012, p.14) can be touched, and I honoured and included the participants' expressions of this in my findings. In the context of this research, such yearnings can be likened to Freire's (1998, p.70) concept of 'critical hope' which Webb (2010, p.328) locates at the heart of Freire's educational philosophy, and conceives of as serving 'to counter the crippling fatalism of neoliberalism.' In the face of such yearnings, I re-emphasised the positives of participants' use and commitment to critical pedagogy, and what gives life to this, akin to Gergen's (1978) concept of generativity. This approach is suggested by scholars as a means of ameliorating criticisms that AI overemphasises the positive (Cooperrider and Avital, 2004; Miller *et.al.*, 2005; Bushe, 2007; Bright *et al.*, 2013).

Issues regarding the validity and bias of positive lens methodologies such as AI have been raised by proponents of more traditional methodologies, but it can be argued that all epistemologies and methodologies represent a partial view. Transparency and criticality around these issues were addressed in the research, as were issues of researcher positionality and reflexivity. These are detailed in Chapter 3.

An overview of the methodology is illustrated in Figure 2, and denotes the terminology used in this study. Definitions of research terms differ between scholars and the terminology associated with qualitative research is overlapping and inconsistent, which can be difficult for the novice researcher (Savin-Baden and Howell-Major, 2013). I therefore decided early on in the research process, to use the terminology of one author as my overarching working tool, in order to avoid conflating terms and concepts. I chose Bryman's (2016) terminology because I found it to be the most effective conceptualisation of the research process. However, this is supplemented by the work of other authors as appropriate in the methodology chapter.

Figure 2. Methodology



The methodology was carefully chosen to enable rich, detailed descriptions of what gives life to critical pedagogy. This depth was necessary in order to discover and capture what enables critical pedagogy to take place in the current educational climate. A qualitative research strategy was employed and a case study research design used. Yin (2002, p.230) defines a case

study as, 'an inquiry which investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context.' Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used. The case study was akin to Merriam's (1988) interpretive case study, which moves past description to the provision of key concepts and the development of theories. Semi-structured, in depth interviews were conducted with twelve practitioners of critical pedagogy in a range of lifelong learning contexts in the West Midlands. Prior to this, three pilot interviews were carried out to ensure that the research approach and interview questions were fit for purpose.

In depth interviews were selected in order to capture the essence of the practitioners' narratives and to elicit thick, rich descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the practitioners' inspiration, motivation and sustenance. The interviewing technique drew upon Goodson and Sikes' (2001) life history approach, in order to elicit both the personal and the wider social influences which ultimately led participants to critical pedagogy. It also reflected Bullough's (1998, p.24) assertion that 'to understand educational events, one must confront biography', and Goodson's (1981, p.69) contention that 'in understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is.' The participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling, from higher education, further education, adult and community learning, residential adult education, trade union education and prison education. Whilst these represent a range of lifelong learning contexts, they are by no means exhaustive, as lifelong learning manifests in multiplicitous contexts. Because practitioners working in non-higher education environments do not tend to be visible through publishing activity, participants were identified and recruited through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Certain contexts, such as museums and libraries, University of the Third Age, work-based learning, and private adult education providers did not yield participants.

The interviews were analysed thematically and as noted in 1.3, the themes map onto four dimensions, comprising Society, Education System, Self and Others. These four dimensions aggregate to two higher-order dimensions,

Systems and People. A meta-theme of social justice underpins each dimension. Each participant acted as a conduit between the four dimensions, whereby experiences in each dimension were linked to and led to praxis in the other dimensions, in an iterative process. The participants recommended a number of methods for mobilising critical pedagogy which centred on the development of networks, connections, and training in the form of teacher education and continuing professional development.

In this thesis, I reflexively discuss my personal and professional experiences in relation to the participants' narratives, in order to develop themes in the fullest way possible. Personal reflection is important in order to clarify my personal stance and positionality in the research. Goodson and Sikes (2001) advise the researcher to be as reflective and reflexive as possible and to make this explicit to readers. Therefore, in the following section, I explicate 'what gives life to critical pedagogy' for me, providing a reflexive backdrop to my personal stance in relation to my research.

1.8 Personal reflection on what gives life to critical pedagogy

My parents were both passionate about education, my mother through having been privileged to receive a good, private education in Dublin up to the age of eighteen, my father through having been purposely and actively denied such an education and made to leave school at thirteen. However, his intense desire for an education motivated him to attend university as a mature student whilst working full time. This was a rare course of action for an adult in his particular social and economic conditions at that time in 1950s Dublin. My parents' love of education meant that it was in the ether of my home environment and we were given access to books and extra curricula educational opportunities wherever possible. However, from my earliest days in infant and junior school, I passively sat through most of the teaching in a dream like haze. I was not particularly stimulated by any of the content or methods, apart from during woodwork, and when using a real bricks and

mortar construction set. I felt a visceral satisfaction at building with the tiny bricks and cement and learning through using my hands, through 'doing,' through being able to exercise practical agency. These strongly underpinned my belief in the power of 'Practical Skills Therapeutic Education' (PSTE), a deep arts and crafts pedagogy based on the principles of Rudolf Steiner, William Morris and John Ruskin, which I studied at Masters level. Within this approach, students with special educational needs take a three year apprenticeship in a deep craft, which enables them to exercise agency in the practical realm.

At primary and secondary school, and at sixth form college and university, the majority of the teaching that I received was delivered via Freire's 'banking' method, where the teacher 'expert' deposits information into the 'empty vessel' students (Freire, 1970). I was predominantly disengaged and often struggled to stay awake. I epitomised Shor's (1992, p.14) 'endulled' student. This endullment was interspersed with insurrection and bad behaviour, my own form of resistance and entertainment. Yet the concept of school and education was one that thrilled me. As a primary school child I was hungry for a traditional school in the style of Enid Blyton's boarding schools; a world of ink and blotting paper, uniforms and dorms. We visited many cathedrals as children and I also yearned for the scholarly activities of learned monks in the mediaeval monastic system. Later, as a teenager, I yearned for the diametric opposite; a school with the progressive educational ideology of The Little Red School Book (Hansen and Jensen, 2014) or Summerhill (Neill, 1960). My school experiences could not be more different to the ones I longed for. Yet when teachers did occasionally divert from the practice of 'banking' education (Freire, 1970) and invite group discussion and dialogue, I found it incredibly stimulating and rewarding. However, the early years of my secondary education were a wholly desolate experience, predominantly caused by a negligently inept implementation of the new comprehensive system. I attended secondary school in the crossover years from grammar/secondary schools to the comprehensive system. During the five years I attended secondary school, my girls' convent grammar school merged with a mixed

secondary modern, the unprecedented failure of which culminated in 'sink school' status, heading for closure by the local authority. As teenagers we knew that we were being significantly failed by the education system, and were angry and disengaged.

The first year of the merger was particularly miserable and alienating for me. My year (third year/year 9) was shipped over to the secondary school building, now the 'lower school,' along with the year below. We did not see our former teachers or older school mates for a year. We remained in our girls' grammar school classes and the boys and girls from the secondary school remained in their mixed classes. The secondary school girls resented, bullied and constantly threatened us with physical violence. This was partly because of the boys' interest in us, an interest which involved daily gang sexual assaults. The teachers turned a blind eye to this. The following year the whole year was shipped back to the former grammar school building, now the 'upper school.' It felt like coming home. However, the former grammar school teachers, particularly the nuns, completely avoided the secondary school pupils through a mixture of fear and snobbery. The former male secondary teachers who were used to caning boys, ruled with an air of violent menace. The significance of these experiences lies in the fact that their palpable symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) has fuelled a lifelong hunger in me, to experience and to provide Freire's (1996, p.62) and hooks' (1994, p.207) 'education as the practice of freedom' for students.

My alienation and misery was to some extent replicated in my out of school life, where reports of my bad behaviour in school were unpopular with my father, who had been denied educational opportunities. I grew up in a patriarchal Catholic home and community at the time of the Northern Ireland 'troubles.' Bomb scares were a regular occurrence at school, and we experienced one at home, because my father worked for Guinness, targeted because it was a British company operating in Dublin. Although I experienced feelings of rejection and fear as a result, at an individual level I was largely protected from anti-Irish sentiment, because so many of my peers were from

Irish Catholic families. Therefore, when I came across Irish and Catholic prejudice as an adult, I was deeply shocked. My extended family lived in Dublin and restricted finances, together with my father's desire to leave the memories and symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) of his youth behind him, meant that we saw little of them. I think that he wished to integrate fully into English society, having arrived here in 1957, at a time of 'no blacks, no Irish.' I felt isolated from my extended family, although I only fully understood the wider context of this in terms of the Irish diaspora, as a much older adult. My parents were not particularly interested in Irish culture and did not celebrate being Irish, unlike my peers' families. As a result, I did not share the rootedness of an Irish identity experienced by many of my peers.

Each of these experiences impacted on me greatly, although as a white, middle class girl, I acknowledge that I was very privileged. I left school as soon as possible and attended sixth form college where I began to study Sociology A level. My teacher used a critical pedagogical approach and this transformed my world. Suddenly learning became relevant to me and my life. I began to understand and apply sociological theories of education and family to my own experiences and social context. I now possessed knowledge in the Freirean sense and I was able to perceive the systemic forces underpinning many of my experiences. It was at this point that the door to the world of education and knowledge opened for me. This was a transformative learning experience and was the one that really brought me to a critical pedagogical orientation and to transformative learning. I took action, praxis, inspired and politicised by my Sociology teacher's feminism, in order to override the career trajectory prescribed for me by my secondary school. I worked hard and gained a place at university, rather than following the traditional gendered path of nursing which I had arbitrarily chosen as a future career. The contrast between my pre and post-16 educational experiences was so stark, that it underpins much of my passion for the politics, sociology and philosophy of education.

Upon completing university, I returned to Nottingham, where I became an avid attendee at the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and taught O and A level Psychology at a sixth form college. I knew that my vocation was in adult education. The early 1980s were a golden age of radical adult education, particularly in Nottingham around the time of the 1984 miners' strike, and through my involvement with the WEA, my love for critical adult education was truly borne. For some years I worked in research, but then found my way back to education and spent seven years in education marketing, followed by sixteen years as a teacher in adult and community learning, further education, higher education and residential special education. I wanted to facilitate the critical, transformative experiences that had so profoundly influenced me.

Critical Pedagogy was not covered in my teacher training, yet when teaching adults from widening participation backgrounds and adults with learning disabilities, I adhered to its philosophy and approaches. I did this without knowing that it was a named theoretical and practical pedagogy. I elicited discussion around the students' own experiences, used debate, dialogue and many other student-centred, participatory activities, in order for students to become conscious of the oppressive forces at work in their lives, to challenge these, and, where possible, to take action. I repeatedly witnessed the transformative power of critical pedagogy in adult learning. For example, whilst teaching about Hate Crime with students with learning disabilities, I facilitated their designing of a course for other adults with learning disabilities, in how to recognise and report Hate Crime. The students reported finding this transformative in terms of their own sense of agency. One particular student developed the critical awareness to understand that his sexual orientation was his human right, and progressed to the point where he insisted that social services remove him from the oppressive adult foster placement in which he was living. The project culminated in the students and myself campaigning with the local bus company to effect protective measures against members of the public who repeatedly abuse adults with learning disabilities.

Another example of my use of critical pedagogy was in the training of learning support staff, where I always started with their own, often very negative, experiences of education, followed by activities where they embodied, simulated and experienced what learning is like for people with a learning disability, in as much as that is possible. They reported this to be transformative in terms of their awareness and perceptions of the multiple layers of oppression experienced by learning disabled people and were able to take action in their professional work with students.

My academic study of critical pedagogy has been informed and enriched by my own personal and professional experiences of both power relations and of critical, transformative learning. What gives life to critical pedagogy for me as a teacher and researcher, is a multi-faceted, multi-layered web of experiences, both personal and professional. During my fieldwork, one interviewee made me aware of an additional driver, related broadly to spirituality. I was brought up in a strict Catholic faith which I abandoned at the age of seventeen, partly because I was unable to reconcile its oppressively patriarchal structure with feminism and partly because I believed its restrictive teachings would constrain my lifestyle choices. Most importantly, I was hungry to join the colourful political, intellectual and philosophical milieu that I dreamed university would be. I thought that I would be rejected if I had a faith, and being brought up in such a hard-line religion meant that I had never been exposed to spiritual choices and alternatives to this. The interviewee I am referring to discussed the spiritual element of Freire's yearning for humanisation, and notions of utopia, which he likened to humans' search for a 'heaven.' I was moved both by this concept and by the eloquence of his explication. Reflexively, I had an 'aha' moment, and realised that my own inspiration and motivation for critical pedagogy also came from a much deeper spiritual source than my political drivers. It derived from my own notions of a spiritual utopia, having undergone many 'peak experiences' (Maslow, 1968, p.71; 1993, p.47; 2001, p.19) and transpersonal experiences (Walsh and Vaughan, 1993), when travelling extensively through tropical areas of South East Asia. It also aligned more with Freire's liberation theology

(Darder, 2018), which I became aware sprung from my childhood and teenage years in the Catholic religion, where we were taught to revere the essential humanity and equality of all people (Catholic Church, 1993). From the age of fourteen to seventeen I was a member of the St Vincent De Paul Society, which involved active community work with people perceived to be in need, and this became a fundamental part of my belief system, on both a spiritual and political level. The combination of these factors, together with a keen awareness of the transformative potential of education, a social justice consciousness, and politicisation around feminism as a teenager, were the factors that led me to a critical pedagogical approach in my later teaching career.

In carrying out this PhD, I have realised that I could have practised critical pedagogy to a greater degree in my previous teaching, and this saddens me. Had I been versed in critical pedagogical theory, rather than enacting an intuitive practice which came from within, I would have found many more opportunities to use it. I would also have had greater confidence in resisting the managerialist and performative constraints of the current education system. But looking to the future, this research will inspire my teaching of students of education, in higher education.

1.9 Ethics

Full ethical guidelines were followed at each stage of the research (BERA, 2018) and the University of Worcester granted ethical approval. Voluntary informed consent was obtained prior to commencement of the research and participants were not put under any pressure in providing this. Participants were given the right to withdraw at any point and were made aware of this. The research process and the reasons for their participation were made explicit, including how the research will be used and reported and who the audience will be.

The individual interviews were anonymised and confidentiality maintained, with pseudonyms used. This was particularly important in this piece of research because the research covered people's personal socio-historic narratives and as such could have included potentially sensitive information. Similarly, participants' current experiences of the education system were discussed. Critical pedagogy can sometimes be seen to be political, radical and at odds with institutional agendas and confidentiality was therefore particularly important.

The interviews were audio recorded and hard copy transcripts produced. These will be held on the University's secure, password-protected network and deleted/shredded after ten years. Should the findings subsequently be published in the form of full narratives, such as an anthology of practitioner narratives, consent will be obtained from all participants in advance.

1.10 Contribution to knowledge

The research investigates what inspires, motivates and sustains practitioners of critical pedagogy from across the lifelong learning sector in the West Midlands, building upon previous work, which is based in adult and community education in Ireland (Connolly, 2008) and further education in the North of England (Clare, 2015). Our lives as humans exist on a continuously evolving and changing historic timeline, and educational policy and practice reflects this. Therefore it is important to continuously challenge hegemonic practices and utilise our agency as education professionals to practice in ways that are congruent with our educational philosophies.

The research examines the multi-layered dimensions of what inspires, motivates and sustains practitioners in their practice of critical pedagogy in the current educational climate. Goodson and Numan (2002) assert that the life and work testimonies of (school) teachers expose the inaccuracy and shallowness of a managerial, prescriptive view of change. This managerial paradigm has now become rife in further education (Duckworth, 2011;

Bathmaker and Avis, 2013; Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015; 2017; Bennett and Smith, 2018; Duckworth and Smith, 2019; Smith and Duckworth, 2020) and in higher education (Amsler *et al.*, 2010; Cowden and Singh, 2013; Duckworth *et al.*, 2016). Goodson and Numan's (2002) assertion is therefore highly relevant to this research and further illuminates its contribution to knowledge. They caution that 'life history studies, by their nature, demonstrate that understanding teacher agency is a vital part of educational research and one that we ignore at our peril' (Goodson and Numan, 2002, p.276).

The methodology I have presented constitutes a new form of bricolage, reflecting Kincheloe's (2001, p.682) observation that bricolage incorporates the 'diverse theoretical and philosophical notions of the various elements encountered in the research act.' It incorporates Denzin and Lincoln's (1999) methodological and interpretive bricolages. The methodological bricolage in this research draws upon both the philosophy and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and upon the method of life history, using the salient components of each to create a rich narrative viewed through a positive lens. As Rogers (2012, p.5) asserts, Denzin and Lincoln's methodological bricoleur is one who combines research tools in a 'fluid, eclectic, and creative manner.' The interpretive bricolage in this research is constitutive of Denzin and Lincoln's (1999, p.6) definition of the interpretive bricoleur:

...a researcher who understands that research is an interactive process, shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting.

The presentation of participants' life histories in relation to critical pedagogy, together with my reflexive personal and professional reflections, provides opportunity for readers to reflect upon their own situation in relation to other peoples' stories, and to garner inspiration from this for their own practice. Positionality and reflexivity are addressed in Chapter 3.

The thesis will be available through the University of Worcester's online repository and Open Access. Journal articles will be developed exploring key findings and it is intended that an anthology of participant stories, including my own, will be published on a digital platform, subject to participants' full consent.

1.11 Summary

This chapter has outlined the structure of the thesis, and provided a brief summary of the research, and the context and rationale for the research in relation to critical pedagogical theory and current lifelong learning policy. The aims and objectives of the research, and an explication of the theoretical and conceptual framework have also been presented, followed by summaries of the methodology and findings, a personal reflection on critical pedagogy, ethical considerations, and a summary of the research's contribution to knowledge.

The following chapter presents a review of the relevant literature, which was important to investigate in order to set the research in its theoretical context and framework. It was also necessary to examine existing work relating to the motivations of critical pedagogues, to identify gaps in the literature and build upon these.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Structure of the literature review

This literature review briefly discusses definitions of critical pedagogy, then outlines its evolution, key themes put forward by its main theorists, and critiques. It examines critical pedagogy in the current UK lifelong learning context, and reviews literature relating to critical pedagogues' influences, motivations to practice critical pedagogy, and its mobilisation. This approach to the literature will enable readers of varying levels of familiarity with critical pedagogy, to site the thesis firstly in its broadest theoretical context, and subsequently in the UK literature and context. Critiques of critical pedagogy are explored in order to provide a balanced account of its underpinning assumptions. The literature relating to critical pedagogues' influences and motivations to practice critical pedagogy, enables the reader to compare the findings of the thesis with existing works relating to the research question, 'what gives life to critical pedagogy?', albeit in different contexts and with different methodologies. Literature relating to the mobilisation of critical pedagogy enables a comparison with what has previously been suggested, and the ideas put forward by the participants. The literature review provides the wider background of the thesis' contribution to knowledge.

2.2 Introduction and definitions

Critical Pedagogy is a philosophy and pedagogy developed by a wide range of scholars, including Freire (1970; 1973), Kincheloe (2008a; 2008b; 2008c), McLaren (1997; 2010; 2013) Giroux (1983; 1988a; 1988b; 2004; 2010; 2011) and Apple (1979; 1982; 1986; 2000; 2013), who are committed to a pedagogy of social justice and emancipation. It critiques the dominant economic, political and social forces which oppress non-dominant sections of

populations. However, critical pedagogy resists delimited definition. It evolved from a heterogeneous set of ideas united through an explicit intent and commitment to the liberation of oppressed populations. Such heterogeneity is key to its critical nature, and its democratic and emancipatory function, and writers such as McLaren (1997), Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009), and Giroux (2011) resist its reification. Definitions of critical pedagogy do of course abound and are arguably essential for any meaningful discussion of its tenets. Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009, p.9) 'tentatively' identify some of its principles; cultural politics, political economy, historicity of knowledge, ideology and critique, hegemony, resistance and counter-hegemony, praxis, dialogue and conscientization. However, they emphasise the fact that a multitude of expressions of these, explore the relationship between people, schooling and society. These explorations take place in a variety of intellectual traditions, and through a myriad of epistemological, political, economic, cultural, ideological, ethical, historical, aesthetic and methodological points of reference.

The scope for reviewing the literature in relation to this piece of research was therefore extensive and I needed to distil it in relation to the research question, 'what gives life to critical pedagogy?' I am particularly interested in the aspects of critical pedagogy relating to humanisation and transformation through education (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994), but did not want to pre-empt the interests of the research participants and potentially exclude literature relating to their particular critical pedagogical orientations. Because definitions and conceptions of critical pedagogy are simultaneously multitudinous and multivalent, in this chapter I review literature relating to its broad tenets, and then focus on themes specific to the research question, 'what gives life to critical pedagogy?' Kincheloe's (2008a, pp.5-6) statement that 'all descriptions of critical pedagogy – like knowledge in general – are shaped by those who devise them and the values they hold,' necessarily holds true for the contents selected for this review.

2.3 Key themes and theorists in critical pedagogy

Notwithstanding Darder, Boltadano and Torres' (2009) emphasis on the heterogeneity of critical pedagogy's evolution, they cite The Frankfurt School, Marxist in orientation, as creating the building blocks of critical theory. This critical perspective provided the foundation for the heterogeneous ideas which developed into critical pedagogy. Brookfield (2005) conceives of critical pedagogy as the educational application of critical theory. However, as Kirlyo (2013a) posits, as a way of thinking, it has been present for as long as there has been human oppression and resistance. Critical pedagogy is commonly associated with the work of Paulo Freire, and the term is applied to his method of teaching non-literate people in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s to both read, and simultaneously develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1973) leading to praxis. His seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), has influenced many scholars across the globe, as noted in the works of Torres (1998), Kirlyo (2013b) and Porfilio and Ford (2015). However, Gottesman (2016, p.5) argues that rather than instigating the 'critical turn' in education, Freire's work was revisited in the mid-1980s as a result of it. Gottesman (2016) sees critical pedagogy as emerging from Giroux's work in the 1970s and 1980s. In practice, critical pedagogical approaches across this period evolved relatively simultaneously, both independently and collaboratively, with a number of convergent and divergent principles and areas of focus.

The theorists selected for inclusion in this section are those most commonly associated with the major principles and themes of critical pedagogy. I have grouped these under the headings 'humanisation and liberation,' 'democracy,' 'reproduction and hegemony,' 'knowledge production, representation and voice,' 'neoliberalism' and 'capitalism.' It must be emphasised that the key theorists discussed have written on a number of these themes, and could have been classified differently, but in order to aid organisation of the literature, I review their work under the theme in which their major contributions and emphases lie, for ease and clarity in explication. Numerous

scholars have developed the work of these theorists further, representing a vast body of theory and critique. In Kirlyo's (2013a, p.xxi) words:

Throughout the world, there are, of course, hundreds of well-known and not so well-known critical pedagogues from across a variety of disciplines and experiences who have significantly contributed to critical thought and action.

Humanisation and liberation

As previously indicated, Freire (1960s-1990s) is often believed to be the most influential in the development of critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009). Freire's is an emancipatory, liberatory, transformative pedagogy, interwoven with the concepts of love and hope, and influenced by Catholic liberation theology and Marxism, among other intellectual and philosophical traditions (Gottesman, 2016; Darder, 2018). Freire's (1970) work centres on the concept of humanisation, which he believed to be the true ontological vocation of human beings, constituting the freedom to fully take part in one's culture and to flourish. He saw this as an unfolding process, with people being unfinished and in the process of becoming. Humanisation is achieved through a pedagogical process whereby people develop a critical consciousness of the forces which lead to and sustain their oppression, with a view to taking action, praxis.

Freedom is constrained by people's adoption of a false consciousness, whereby they take on, or are forced to take on, the role and psychological structures of 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' (Freire, 1996, p.26), a form of hegemonic acceptance (Gramsci, 2011). Critical awareness of these structures, and of the social, economic, political and material forces creating and enabling them, is essential to humans taking action to liberate themselves. The importance of both the oppressed and the oppressors moving beyond a desire to be the dominant, oppressing group, for the liberation of all is central to his theory. As Freire (1996, p.26) states, 'this, then is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate

themselves and their oppressors as well.' Kirlyo (2013c) synopsis Freire's postulation, that history is made, invented and reinvented by humans and that transformative change can be fostered in a counter-hegemonic process, where history is embraced and acted within, by peoples as subjects rather than objects.

Freire enacted his vision by using literacy programmes to enable people to both 'read the word and the world'. This was a phrase used by Freire and Macedo (1987, p.ix) to denote the process of learning to read using generative themes relating to the oppressive forces determining students' material realities. Freire states that education is not neutral and is always a political act, a view echoed by Apple (1975; 2013), Shor (1992) and Giroux (2010). Freire developed a participatory, 'problem-posing,' pedagogy, whereby adults bring their lived experience and knowledge to class, which is both validated and challenged by the educator. This takes place through dialogue, which is fundamental to the process, with students and teachers learning from each other. Notwithstanding Freire's (1970) emphasis on dialogue, Macedo, in discussion with Freire (Freire and Macedo, 1995), cautions against the rigid use of dialogue as a method, which in reality can come to represent a superficial democracy, or form of vacuous conversation.

Problem posing education 'affirms women and men as beings who transcend themselves,' and move forward to build the future (Freire, 1996, p.65). This contrasts with the 'banking' concept of education (Freire, 1996, p.53), in which, as Kirlyo (2013c) posits, cultural-socio-historical context is ignored, which thwarts creativity and reinforces a fatalistic outlook.

Freire's (1996, p.65) assertion that the 'unfinished character of men and the transformational character of reality necessitates that education be an ongoing activity,' attests to the necessity of lifelong education. Kirlyo (2011, p.51) affirms that Freire saw himself as unfinished and that his brilliance lay in his ability to:

...draw from a diverse range of influences and logically blend them into a unifying educational philosophy, which has led scholars and practitioners from around the world to uniquely identify a way of thinking or teaching that would fall under the singular umbrella of Freirean thought or Freirean action.

Freire illuminated issues of power, culture and oppression within schooling, and incorporated social agency, voice and democratic participation into his methodology and teaching practices. According to Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009), this reinforced The Frankfurt School's emphasis on theory and practice as imperative to political struggles against domination and exploitation. However, Jefferies (2016) characterises The Frankfurt School's key proponents as critiquing the impact of capitalism from a safe distance from action or change.

Freire's work has been subject to a range of criticisms. These centre on the dichotomisation of the educator and the masses (Weiler, 1991), his use of abstract, inaccessible language, his use of the male pronoun (Brady, 1994), his omission of issues relating to gender (Weiler, 1991; Luke and Gore, 1993; Brady, 1994; hooks, 1994;) and his reliance on literacy (Stanley, 1972) and rational thought (Ohliger, 1990) as the key to liberation and emancipation. He has been accused of romanticism, and of membership of a Catholic intellectual elite rather than a revolutionary (Facundo, 1984). However, hooks (1994) postulates that Freire's work contains an open mindedness missing from the US academic arena, and Darder (2018) emphasises the importance of situating his work in its temporal and political context.

hooks (1994) is an advocate of Freire (1970) and of his conception of 'education as the practice of freedom' (Freire, 1996, p.6; hooks, 1994, p.207). Her pedagogy emerged from an interplay of anticolonial, critical and feminist pedagogy, and is concerned with challenges to racism, sexist oppression and class exploitation. hooks (1994, p.15) developed an 'engaged pedagogy' which she sees as more demanding than traditional critical pedagogy, because it requires teachers to be actively committed to a process of self-

actualisation in order to teach in a way that empowers students. Her work constitutes a blend of Freirean critical pedagogy and Buddhist teaching, which views teaching as a healing practice whereby students share their stories and listen to the stories of others. Like Freire (1970), hooks (1989, p.111) emphasises that these personal narratives of lived experiences must be theorised and linked to knowledge of 'how we must act politically to transform the world.' She purports that small groups are particularly suited to critical analysis and politicisation of personal experiences. Assumptions regarding the use of small, dialogic groups in critical pedagogy have been criticised by Ellsworth (1989), Gore (1993) and Brookfield (2005), and are discussed later in this literature review. However, hooks (1989) does not rely on dialogic groups, and asserts that critical educators must constantly try new methods and approaches.

hooks (1994) also attends to the role of the teacher, whose power she acknowledges, and whose role it is to ensure that people confront their critical acceptance of dominant ideology. She insists on participation by all students which she concedes that many find difficult. Nonetheless, hooks (1994) also advocates that teachers must share of themselves in the classroom, a concept echoed by Canaan (2010). hooks (1994, p.38) asserts that 'our lives must be a living example of our politics'.

The importance of theory and theoretical understanding as well as action is emphasised by hooks (1989; 1994). She explains that 'I came to theory because I was hurting...to grasp what was happening around and within me...I saw in theory then a location for healing' (hooks, 1994, p.38). The use of critical theory as alleviation of pain is also identified by Poster (1989), and Brookfield (2005, p.4) supports hooks and Poster in this. He asserts that theorising 'helps us to understand and act in the world - helps us breathe clearly when we feel stifled by the smog of confusion.' He asserts that theory helps us to name or rename our experiences, and feel affirmed or recognised.

Like hooks (1994), Apple (2013, p.3) also recalls that 'powerful critical theories' enabled him to understand his own experiences, schooling and the economy. He conceives of this as form of counter-hegemony, which gave him a sense of freedom and possibility, particularly when connected to educational and political action. Theory is demystified by hooks (1989), who emphasises that it is merely an underlying system of understandings which people use in everyday life, as opposed to an alien sphere. She posits that theory must be written in a way that is accessible to people, which relates to the criticism identified by Darder, Boltadano and Torres (2009), whereby critical pedagogy is accused of being abstract and theoretical to the point of being distant from the very people it hopes to politicise.

The concluding chapter of hooks (1994) text is entitled 'Ecstasy,' which encapsulates her pedagogy, poetically evoked in its final paragraph:

Learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labour for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality, even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (hooks, 1994, p.207)

These words are inspirational for many adult educators, with hooks' notion of 'paradise' conjuring up the type of adult education ethos that Brookfield (2005, p.112) describes as 'joyful self-actualisation.' However, hooks' pedagogy is firmly rooted in a challenging and disruptive pedagogy. It is rigorously demanding in its insistence on critical reflection by students of their oppressive thinking and practices. The critical and political nature of hooks' work cannot be underestimated in relation to power, feminism, class and race. Disruption of one's uncritical attitudes, and liberation from these will, arguably, always be a painful pedagogical process rather than a purely joyful experience. Brookfield (2005) presents political education of this type as a less than joyful experience. He discusses Gramsci's (1971, p.340) 'organic

intellectuals,' who arise from the masses and assist the working classes to learn the aspects of dominant culture which are needed to overthrow it. Gramsci (1971, p.42) viewed the study to become an organic intellectual as an apprenticeship, 'involving muscles and nerves as well as intellect....a habit acquired with effort, tedium and even suffering.'

Yet hooks' (1994; 2003; 2010) work is infused with spirituality and Freirean conceptions of love and hope (Freire, 1970). Her version of 'education as the practice of freedom' (hooks, 1994, p.207) contains a 'sacred' element in which her vocation is 'not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth' of her students (hooks, 1994, p.13). Her pedagogy is influenced by Thich Nhat Hanh's 'engaged Buddhism' and his conception of 'teacher as healer' (hooks, 1994, p.14). She manages to simultaneously convey a paradisiacal, and critically rigorous, political pedagogy.

Democracy

Giroux is a prolific and influential scholar in the field of critical pedagogy (Gottesman, 2016). Although deeply influenced by Freire, he has developed a critical pedagogy which addresses the complex relationship between structure and agency in the US. The conditions of domination in North America are subtly hidden, compared to those of Freirean contexts, where the nature of domination is relatively clear (Giroux, 1979). The conditions in North America are arguably similar to those of the UK.

Like Apple (1975; 2013), Giroux (1981) identifies the role of schools in the production and sustaining of dominant ideology, and the way in which this is concealed and inscribed in school practices and processes. He draws upon Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony to understand these processes, but also conceives of schools as sites of negotiation, resistance and counter-hegemony. Giroux (1983) argues that teachers and radical educators should make the school a public sphere, and involve marginalised parts of the broader community in shaping policy and school experiences.

Building on the work of Dewey (2016), Giroux (2011) emphasises critical pedagogy's role in upholding democracy. Along with Aronowitz, he promotes critical pedagogues as professional, potentially transformative intellectuals (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985; Giroux, 1988a), akin to Gramsci's (1971) organic intellectuals. The role of such teachers is to create a culture of questioning, and provide the knowledge and skills for students to participate in critical dialogue, question authority and relations of power. Through this process, teachers prepare students to be active and engaged citizens in local, national and global public spheres (Giroux, 2010). In a world where individual life is increasingly organised around market principles, Giroux postulates that education should continue to be inherently moral rather than commercial. Democracy places civic demands on its citizens and requires a form of education where students learn to become 'individual and social agents, rather than merely disengaged spectators' (Giroux, 2011, p.13).

However, Giroux's (1980) work is criticised by McNeil (1981), for being too removed from the everyday reality of schooling. She questions by what mechanism teachers are to become enlightened, and explains that such enlightenment does not necessarily lead to praxis, because teachers are caught in the very technocratic institutions Giroux criticises. Ellsworth (1989) critiques Giroux's conception of the critical pedagogue, or transformative intellectual, centring on the lack of any self-reflexivity or acknowledgement of the teacher's own internalised oppressions which they inevitably bring to the classroom. She highlights the fact that students do not participate in dialogue on an equal footing. Gottesman (2016, p.102) describes Ellsworth's (1989) critique, as 'scathing,' and subsequent attempts to dismiss her as both 'mocking' and ignoring of her central claims. Ellsworth's critique is discussed later in this literature review.

Giroux's politics have not always been popular and he initially found it difficult to secure publishers for his work (Gottesman, 2016). This may illuminate Darder, Baltodano and Torres' (2009) assertion that although US policy makers criticise critical pedagogy for being purely about politics and of little

practical value, these criticisms are made in order to obstruct democratic teaching practices which alter asymmetric power relations. Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009) also posit that the current rigid standardisation of the curriculum and high stakes testing in the US can lead to the delivery of a palatable version of critical pedagogy, which impedes an emancipatory educational agenda. They postulate that to counter this, some critical pedagogues extend their work into community venues beyond the school, in what Giroux (2011, p.7) terms 'public pedagogy.' His concept of public pedagogy has been criticised due to a 'lack of an ontological foundation for the term in anything other than an academic setting' (Burdick and Sandlin, 2013, p.142). Nonetheless, Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009) argue that political struggles in schools and society cannot succeed through individual voices alone and must be linked to wider collective emancipatory efforts.

Reproduction and hegemony

Like Freire (1970), Shor (1992) and Giroux (2010), Apple (1975; 2013) argues that education is a non-neutral, political act, which serves the interests of those in power. Schooling reproduces a system of social relations which perpetuate the structures of domination and exploitation in society, serve privileged groups, and disempower historically disenfranchised groups (Apple, 2000). Apple sees inequalities as being 'built within schools' (Apple, 1978, p.368), and extends the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976), who focus on the economic role of schools in terms of mobility, selection and division of labour. Apple examines the way in which these outcomes are created by schools. He posits that this creation takes place through the reproduction of cultural norms and dispositions related to one's position in a hierarchical society (Apple, 2013). Similarly, McLaren (2010) asserts that a primary role of schools is to serve as functionaries of capital and that education is reproductive of an exploitative social order, rather than providing a challenge to it, because it rests on the foundations of capitalist exchange value. Apple (1971) posits that the role of the hidden curriculum in schools, together with

Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony (Apple 1979), are key to this reproduction.

According to Apple (1982), the hidden curriculum corresponds to the ideological needs of capitalism. He characterises the hidden curriculum as 'the tacit teaching to students of norms, values and dispositions' which takes place simply by virtue of the fact that students live in and cope with school expectations and routines over many years (Apple, 2013, p.29). Schooling shapes students through the hidden curriculum, which includes standardised learning situations and agendas, the rules of conduct and classroom organisation, and through the informal pedagogical procedures used by teachers with specific groups of students (Brown, 2011). Brown (2011, p.5) asserts that 'Apple (1986) contributed to the discourse marking schools as internal mechanisms of sorting and legitimating.'

Alongside the hidden curriculum, Apple (1979) draws upon Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony to explain a further mechanism of reproduction. Hegemony refers to the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influences exerted by a dominant group, in which, as Brookfield (2005, p.43) explains, 'people learn to accept as natural and in their own best interests.' Gramsci (1995, p.157) states that hegemony is learned: 'Every relationship of hegemony is an educational relationship.' This educational relationship extends beyond the school. As Brookfield (2005, p.98) asserts, hegemony is continuously learned and re-learned throughout one's life: 'If anything can be described as lifelong learning, it is this.' According to Apple (2013, p.20), schools and other institutions hegemonically:

...create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination.

Schools are seen as agents of ideological and political hegemony, which process both people and knowledge. They achieve this through the legitimisation of certain types of knowledge, the hidden curriculum, and

educators' tacit upholding of these (Apple, 2013). Kincheloe (2008a) provides a counterbalance to this, positing that whilst on some levels schools pursue authoritarian, anti-democratic goals of social control, they also pursue democratic goals.

Although Brookfield (2005, p.45) describes Gramsci's (1971) hegemony as 'chilling stuff,' he notes that Gramsci did acknowledge the possibilities of opposition. Apple (1982; 1986; 2013) addresses these possibilities through the exploration of relationships between education and power which are embedded in the day-to-day rituals and activities of school. Educators are exhorted to be aware of curricula and evaluative systems which reinforce, reproduce and preserve inequalities, and the ideological and epistemological positions they tacitly promote through their practice (Apple, 2013).

Accordingly, Apple (2013, p.20) posits that our focus as educators should be on:

...the ideological and cultural mediations which exist between the material conditions of an unequal society and the formation of the consciousness of the individuals in that society.

As previously discussed, Giroux (1981) similarly highlights the role of schools in the reproduction of domination ideology, through the hidden curriculum and hegemony. However, he sees schools as potentially democratic spaces where both students and teachers can negotiate and resist in counter-hegemony.

Brown (2011, p.9) argues that Apple's scholarship has made 'a profound contribution to the analysis and description of hegemonic formations in classroom procedures.' However, De Lissovoy (2015) argues that the nature of hidden teaching itself still remains obscure and the depth of the regulatory force at work in classrooms has not yet been measured.

Knowledge production, representation and voice

Issues relating to the production of knowledge are a central tenet of critical pedagogical theory, according to Apple (1979; 1982; 2000; 2013), Kincheloe

(2008a; 2008b; 2008c) and Giroux (2010). Apple (2000; 2013) builds upon the work of Young (1971) and Bernstein (1977), who maintain that the way education is structured is related to social and cultural control in society. Apple (2013) questions the way in which knowledge is selected and taught, which knowledge is made available and unavailable to students, and which social groups such knowledge supports. He also posits that the way conflict is treated in the curriculum leads to a political quiescence which acts to maintain the distribution of power in society (Apple, 1971). Knowledge is seen as a form of cultural capital embedded within social and economic values, which are preserved in curricula, modes of teaching, standards, and evaluation methods. Through a complex process of social labelling, different types of knowledge are given to different types of people. The cultural capital of dominant groups results in the use of categories which blame the child rather than the schooling and society which are responsible for generating the conditions for failure and success (Apple, 2013).

The role of teachers as disseminators of predetermined knowledge rather than liberators of human potential is challenged by Kincheloe (2008a). His work underscores the fact that knowledge is contextual, that the knower is a historical and social subject whose knowledge is shaped by his or her experience (Kincheloe, 2005; 2008a). He argues that education should facilitate an understanding of this knowledge rather than simply an acquisition of predetermined knowledge (Kincheloe, 2005; 2008b).

Feminist scholars (Ellsworth, 1989; Gore, 1993) have criticised critical pedagogy in relation to the Enlightenment emphasis on the emancipatory power of cognitive learning, with reason being the ultimate sphere of knowledge creation and 'the foundation of classroom interaction' (Ellsworth, 1989, p.304). Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009, p.14) explain that in order to address this, feminist scholars have argued for the inclusion of personal biography, narratives, and engagement with the location of the 'knowing subject' in political and historic terms, which are seen to be essential in challenging patriarchy.

Arguments regarding intersectionality also contend that critical theorists' links to Marxist analysis and European philosophical roots are reductionist and ethnocentric. Kincheloe (2008a; 2008c) promotes a critical complex pedagogy which incorporates a diversity of voices, which he also refers to as multilogicality, and its researchers as critical bricoleurs. He highlights the omission of indigenous knowledge and proposes the further development of a critical bricolage as an antidote to such epistemological assumptions, stating 'I believe that a multi-logical critical pedagogy can lead the way to...new social, ideological, epistemological, ontological, and cognitive domains' (Kincheloe, 2008c, p.5).

According to Darder, Boltadano and Torres (2009), ecological scholars question the Western modernising notion of progress and criticise critical theory for its assumptions regarding humanity, freedom and empowerment. Critical educators are accused of re-inscribing dominant values, particularly when indigenous or non-Western knowledge challenges critical pedagogical definitions of the world. Bowers (1997; 2001) asserts that critical pedagogy appears to ignore the fact that human culture is nested in ecological systems. Bowers (1983) and Bowers and Appffel-Marglin (2004) criticise Freire's foregrounding of individual critical reflection through dialogue, as opposed to traditional community knowledge, the former of which, from an ecological viewpoint, is seen to fracture knowledge and alienate humans from nature.

However, critical pedagogy now engages with ecological critiques (Kahn, 2009), which Freire himself had become interested in before his death (Darder, Boltadano and Torres, 2009). A 'critical pedagogy of place,' which combines critical pedagogy and place-based education, is called for by Gruenewald (2008, p.308). In his conception, critical pedagogy attends to cultural decolonization, and place-based education to ecological re-inhabitation.

Neoliberalism

The current neoliberal educational model which foregrounds economic growth, is accompanied by an instrumental pedagogy focused on high-stakes testing, and is critiqued by many scholars including Giroux (2010; 2011). He asserts that the neoliberal model teaches students to conform to a wider market-orientated culture of commodification and standardisation, where they have become customers rather than a civic resource. Kozol (2005, p.31) characterises this as 'preparing minds for markets.' According to Giroux (2011), classrooms are often sites of social, political, and cultural reproduction, with a transmission model of teaching and the propagation of a culture of conformity and passive absorption of knowledge.

Giroux (2011, p.9) states that the Bush and Obama administrations 'embraced models of education largely tied to the dictates of a narrow instrumental rationality and economic growth'. This mirrors the UK New Labour government policy, where the purpose of lifelong learning became clearly linked to skills for economic prosperity (Department for Education and Employment, 1998; 1999; Department for Education and Skills, 2003), and subsequent Coalition and Conservative policies from 2010 to the present (Government Office for Science, 2017). The UK context is discussed later in this literature review.

According to Giroux (2011), in market driven universities, justice, the skills to hold power accountable, and a spiritual foundation through which students respect others' rights and develop moral and political agency, are increasingly irrelevant. He sees schools as having fared worse than universities, with teachers reduced to technicians (Giroux, 2011) and labelled negatively if they refuse to implement curricular based on standardised assessments (Giroux, 2010).

Apple (2001, p.ii) characterises the US education system as a being controlled by a 'new hegemonic bloc.' This comprises neoliberalism, where the role of education is predominantly economic, neo-conservatism which

calls for a standardised curricula and a return to high status knowledge valued by elite universities, managerialism and accountability through technical/business models, and right-wing religious movements. The first three are paralleled in the UK education system. De Lissovoy (2015) asserts that pedagogy is drowning in accountability procedures, which pre-empt the possibility of dialogic engagement. A central problem according to Apple (1993), is that when education is run according to a neoliberal agenda, those in dominance have the power to define what counts as needs and problems. They also have the power to determine the response according to their own agendas, rather than democratically and in response to local need. In higher education, as a result of the financial pressures on universities, there are limits to what counts as legitimate inquiry (Apple, 2001).

Like Giroux (2011), Apple (2001a) asserts that education is a commodity to be purchased and the citizen a consumer. Apple's (2001b) contribution in this realm includes mapping the business models, accountability measures, and right-wing religious movements involved in the education system, in order to understand the complexities of injustice experienced by students, teachers, families and communities. As Giroux (2014, no page) asserts, schools are no longer seen as creating dreams, extending the imagination or creating a different future. On the contrary, 'they are increasingly held hostage...to the market values embraced by the corporate and financial elite.'

Reflecting back, Giroux (2004) concedes that Freire and other leading educational figures could not in their time recognise that broader culture would extend, if not supersede, institutionalised education as the primary educational force. He posits that in neoliberalism, corporate power marks a new kind of public pedagogy, where the production and dissemination of ideas emerge from the educational force of the wider culture. In order to ameliorate this, Giroux (2004) wishes to reclaim the tradition of radical educational theory, whereby pedagogy as an oppositional practice is central to critical citizenship and democracy.

Capitalism

A former student of McLaren, De Lissovoy (2015, p.55), asserts that 'capital is a crime, everyday life is a crime, and the criminal has hidden his tracks.' While a Marxist orientation and critiques of the excesses of capitalism, in particular neoliberalism, influence much of critical pedagogy, McLaren (2010; 2013) now positions himself outside of traditional critical pedagogy, with an approach he refers to as 'revolutionary critical pedagogy' (McLaren, 2010, pp1-11; 2015). For him, the goal of critical pedagogy is the struggle for a socialist alternative to capitalism and he emphasises the regime of capitalism itself, as opposed to neoliberalism, as being responsible for the victimisation of the poor. His interests lie in forming a united front against capital and its 'attendant hydra headed antagonisms: racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, ableism, speciesism' (McLaren, 2013, p.25), with a view to its abolition (McLaren, 2015). McLaren positions revolutionary critical pedagogy as the development of critical pedagogy into a social movement, part of a wider system of political activism (McLaren, 2013). Ellison (2009) contends that McLaren seeks to use classrooms as social locations for fostering class struggle and global revolution. McLaren (2013) sees critical consciousness as an outcome of social practices rather than a pre-requisite for them, with the transformation of society coming through changes in the routines and rituals of everyday life.

McLaren (2015) agrees with Freire's positive utopianism, stating that we need a renewed optimism to educate students into a new vision for humanity. In this vision, he posits that we would not need to abdicate joy and happiness by adapting to the way the world is, if we are committed to changing it. He asserts that the dehumanisation of our youth is but a period in history and that instead, education will be overtaken by social justice. He sees revolutionary critical pedagogy as creating spaces where students can be educated to explore alternatives to capitalism (McLaren, 2015). He also asserts that because teachers are not immune to the ruling ideas of the society in which they live, they must be educated beyond these (McLaren,

2013). However, Ellison (2009) states that neoliberal educational reforms have assaulted teacher autonomy and agency in classrooms, claiming that teacher education has been realigned to produce technicians who deliver predetermined curricula, yet lacking in the critical insights and tools necessary to create revolutionary democratic spaces or challenge the logic of capital.

Although McLaren's work is supported by Allman (2001) and Rikowski (2007), Ellison (2009) has criticised McLaren's concept of revolutionary critical pedagogy as utopian and lacking connection to concrete realities. Ellison critiques McLaren's assumption, that students' and educators' voices will be univocal, and that their social location within the structure of capitalism will lead them to the same revolutionary conclusions. He describes this as an 'ideological leap of faith which is hard to justify' (Ellison, 2009, p.337).

2.4 The practice of critical pedagogy

Although critical pedagogy has been criticised for not providing an explicit set of methods (Gore, 1993; Breunig, 2005; Brookfield, 2005), its exponents emphasise the fact that there is no one method. As McLaren (1997, p.227) stresses, 'there is no one critical pedagogy.' Steinberg (2020, p.4) somewhat unhelpfully attempts to explain: '...critical pedagogy...it isn't a thing, it's a vibe.' Giroux (2011) cautions that critical pedagogy is not an a priori method, rather it is the outcome of particular contexts, students and communities. However, Brookfield (2005, p.10) is emphatic that given critical pedagogy is grounded in the desire to fight oppression and create a fairer world, 'a refusal by theorists to dirty their hands with the specifics of practice is epistemologically untenable.'

Although a number of writers identify some of the strategies and techniques they employ (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1987; 1992; 1996; hooks, 1994; Freire and Macedo, 1995; Wink, 2000; Brookfield, 2005), Shor's work (1987; 1992) in

particular provides compelling, practical and creative strategies, which, according to Brookfield (2005), have inspired many educators to try new approaches to their practice. Shor thus warrants specific attention in this literature review.

Shor (1987; 1992) has developed Freire's pedagogy in the post-compulsory classroom, which he terms 'empowering education' (Shor, 1992, p.15).

Brookfield (2005, p.9) astutely characterises Shor's work:

His vignettes of apathetic students, rundown premises, learners' hostility to participatory approaches, and teachers' depression in the face of these factors are immediately recognisable to any educator who has tried to act on the insights of critical theory.

Shor (1992) postulates that in traditional schooling, students learn that unilateral authority is the predominant mode of operation in wider society. Teachers and management hold dominant and unelected power, while students are simultaneously informed that they live in freedom and democracy. Shor posits that resistance in the classroom is a result of many students not accepting this system. Traditional schooling results in learned withdrawal, which he refers to as 'endullment' (Shor, 1992, p.14), with low performance of students being misjudged as low achievement. He states that unilateral teacher authority in a passive classroom results in a variety of negative emotions and that a lack of meaningful participation in schooling, alienates students, teachers and workers from civic life.

Building upon Freire's (1970) work, in Shor's (1987; 1992) pedagogy, problem posing is central to the curriculum and all subject matter is portrayed as an historic product to be questioned, rather than universal wisdom to be accepted. Like Freire (1970), Shor (1992) uses generative themes which are selected by students and represent their lived issues and experiences. He uses themes that are local, contemporary, and contentious, which gives preference to subjects nominated by students in a co-developed syllabus. He contrasts this with remote, abstract schooling which involves topics

unilaterally chosen by authorities (Shor, 2007). For example, when teaching literacy to students with low basic skills, he used their frustration with the college English entry test to generate discussion, followed by writing on the theme. The students then rewrote policy and published it in the college newspaper (Shor, 1992). This approach empowers students to question educational practices which they find oppressive and to exercise agency by transforming these to meet their needs. Reilly (2013) views Shor's empowering education as producing a more just and democratic educational experience, effectively subverting hegemonies of authoritarianism and teacher centeredness. Shor's (1992) problem posing pedagogy is dialogical and constructivist. He has made Freire's (1970) work accessible to teachers around the world. He uses a hybrid discourse in his classroom which merges high-status academic discourse with the colloquial usages his students bring to class.

Criticisms of Shor relate to his presumptions about the needs of working class students. As Greenberg (1997) postulates, Shor (1997) has little in common with the students he discusses, and therefore his stereotyping and assumptions that working class students are homogenous and need a curriculum focusing on political empowerment and cultural democracy, is criticised. The links to Ellsworth's (1989) criticisms of the dichotomisation and lack of self-reflexivity of critical pedagogues are clearly evident.

Shor (1992) acknowledges that participatory education cannot change society itself. Whilst Shor explains that Freire also acknowledges this (Shor and Freire, 1987; Shor *et al.*, 2017), he posits that through participatory education, students may become active citizens beyond it. He challenges teachers and students to change their world rather than adapt to it. According to Giroux, critical pedagogy aims to develop a meaningful life for all students and takes them 'beyond the world they are familiar with' (Giroux, 2011, p.6). Like Freire (1970) and Shor (1992), Giroux (2011) emphasises the importance of teachers linking classroom knowledge with students' lived experiences, and students and teachers transforming knowledge rather than

simply consuming it. He posits that critical pedagogy encourages students to act on this knowledge.

Like Shor (1992), Wink (2000) has also translated Freirean concepts into accessible language for teachers, along with practical examples, although she highlights the lack of set methods and urges practitioners to develop their own. She asserts that the practitioner's voice must be as strong as the theorist's voice, arguing that 'it is always easier to state a theoretical concept than it is to live with 30 to 150 students every day' (Wink, 2000, p.120). Her work merits discussion here because of the way she writes about critical pedagogical concepts as they take place in an everyday educational environment. She, interestingly, takes the term conscientization and uses it to refer to teachers developing the voice to question themselves and the confidence to select curricula autonomously. She also uses it to refer to students having confidence in their own knowledge, ability and experiences. This diverges from Freire's meaning of the term, where conscientization involves developing an awareness of oppressive social, economic and political structures, leading to social action which constitutes praxis. Wink explicates examples of where she has changed school practices to meet the needs of students and their families, which she views as praxis in the community. For example, she introduced bilingual parents' evenings in order to include families from all communities. Like Shor (1987; 1992), her problem posing approach derives from concepts that learners care deeply about and that directly affect their own lives, using Freire's (1970) concept of codification.

However, Wink (2000) purports that problem posing always ends with action extended into the wider world, a claim that is arguably often difficult to substantiate. She uses the terms critical pedagogy and transformative learning interchangeably, which is problematic, because although critical pedagogy is likely to include transformative learning, transformative learning takes place in many spheres beyond that of critical pedagogy (Mezirow and Taylor, 2009; Duckworth and Smith, 2019).

2.5 Critiques of critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy has been criticised as being formulated by academics in positions of power, with some critiques questioning the very ideals on which both Freirean pedagogy and critical pedagogy are based. Freire has been accused of creating an epistemological dichotomy between educators and the masses, with educators being seen as possessing a higher level of consciousness, lifting the masses from their position of relative ignorance (Berger, 1974; Weiler, 1991). Berger (1974) maintains that this is elitist and paternalistic. Weiler (1991) argues that Freirean pedagogy lacks self-reflexivity. Conversely, Roberts (2015) asserts that Freire did not believe he had a right to impose his ideas on others and that he maintained that all people are ignorant in some respects and knowledgeable in others. Giroux is similarly criticised by Ellsworth (1989) and Lather (1993) for lack of self-reflexivity.

Ellsworth (1989) challenges the underpinning concepts in practice-based critical pedagogy, including the belief that social justice can be achieved through classroom based activities. She contests the conception that equal and transparent dialogue can be facilitated in the classroom, the unproblematised power dynamic existing between the teacher and students, and the assumption that educators have the knowledge, ability or right to facilitate 'empowerment' among students (Ellsworth, 1989, p.297). Lather (1993) supports Ellsworth's claims. Ellsworth (1989, p.298) critiques critical pedagogy in terms of 'repressive myths' and Gore (1993, p.xii), drawing on Foucault (1977), in terms of the imposition of 'regimes of truth.' Brookfield (2005) echoes these criticisms, cautioning critical educators against forcing their critical perspective on students and colleagues in the belief that their perspectives are correct.

The notion of student 'voice' in critical pedagogy is also contested. hooks (1989, p.12) is an advocate of 'coming to voice' as an act of resistance and transformation, and insists on her students' participation in this. However, Ellsworth (1989) points out that silence does not equate to a lack of voice,

and can be a deliberate political choice, because the classroom is not necessarily a safe place to speak. As Brookfield (2005, p.328) explicates, 'critical pedagogues cannot assume they have the power to create speech safety zones in their classrooms which are free of prejudice and hate.' Similarly, the group discussion strategy much utilised by critical educators, is critiqued by Brookfield (2005, p.119), who describes his own experience of it as a student, as 'a competitive ordeal, the occasion of a Darwinian-style survival of the loquaciously fittest.' He discusses the reified 'circle' (Brookfield, 2005, p.31) in critical education, which he posits may be experienced by students as a form of surveillance, rather than a democratic practice. Both Usher and Edwards (1994) and Brookfield (2005), assert that the circle merely reconfigures relations of power, and Gore (1993) argues that for some students, it can be a painful and humiliating experience. A further critique relates to the nature of voice. Orner (1992) asserts that the concept of voice assumes a singular, context free voice that represents the student's authentic self. Although an avid proponent of the use of dialogue and voice, hooks (1989) shares this scepticism about the notion of a singular, representative voice.

These critiques can be viewed as context dependent and it would not be possible to apply this to all critical pedagogical practice per se, without observing each practice first-hand. For example, grassroots popular education programs such as Freire's (1970) may achieve greater equity in terms of power dynamics, particularly if they involve Gramsci's (1971) organic intellectuals. Giroux (1988b) makes this point in response to Ellsworth's (1989) critique, (prior to its publication), stating that she ignores the 'multiplicity of contexts and projects that characterise critical educational work' (Giroux, 1988b, p.177). Nevertheless, in relation to Ellsworth's central claims, Gottesman (2016, p.105) describes Giroux's comments as 'smug and dismissive,' and serving to illustrate the very point that Ellsworth (1989) makes about critical pedagogues' inability to be self-reflexive. As she asserts, 'critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change' (Ellsworth, 1989, p.310). Critical pedagogues

would do well to take heed of Brookfield's (2005, p.148) caution: 'If the Gramscian approach to adult education helps us name the enemy, a Foucaultian [*sic*] approach makes us aware the enemy is sometimes ourselves.'

The use of oppressively theoretical and abstract language in critical pedagogy has been critiqued as elitist and inaccessible, thus excluding the people most affected by social inequalities (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009). In Freire's later work, he attempted to produce works with a stronger practical focus and more readable language (Roberts, 2015). However the degree to which he achieves this is dependent on the nature of the reading audience, and their levels of literacy.

Critical pedagogy was originally led largely by male scholars, and has therefore been critiqued for being predicated on male experience, thus challenging patriarchy while ignoring the context of female experience and knowledge construction (Ellsworth, 1989; hooks, 1994). In the words of Lather (2001, p.184), the educational application of critical theory 'is still very much a boy thing.' Gore (1993) draws attention to a lack of self-criticality, and Kenway and Modra (1993) assert that male critical pedagogues fail to examine their gendered assumptions, or the significance and power of gender in education. They conclude that the failure of male critical pedagogues 'to engage with feminism casts considerable doubt on their authenticity' (Kenway and Modra, 1993, p.138). Freire's language has also been criticised for the use of the male pronoun (Brady, 1994), which he addressed in his later work (Weiler, 2001). However, whilst Weiler (2001) acknowledges Freire's claims to have embraced feminism in his later work, she suggests that his engagement with theory and the multiplicity of feminist perspectives is lacking.

As the majority of critical pedagogy scholars have also been white, critical pedagogy has been criticised for not explicitly addressing race, colour and indigeneity, nor doing so from racialised or colonised populations themselves (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009). hooks (1994) postulates that

classroom practices establish white, patriarchal perspectives which foster Freire's banking approach to education, ignoring the lived experiences of students and teachers. She asserts that discussions of class are generally from the perspective of privileged, white males and emphasises the importance of voice and personal experiences of the working class and poor across gender and racial lines. Freire's work is included in these criticisms, although Roberts (2015) points out that Freire's (1970) focus was clearly on social class and based on the poverty he witnessed in Brazil.

Such criticisms have led to accusations of 'essentialism,' and debates around identity politics and voice (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009, p.15).

Ellsworth (1989) highlights the intersectionality of students and challenges the notion of homogenous groups of marginalised students who share common experience and desire the same outcomes. However, Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009) see intersectionality and identity politics as having fragmented the organising power and political vision of disenfranchised groups of a similar social class.

While scholars critiquing critical pedagogy have raised issues relating to race, gender, indigenous knowledge, homophobia, and physical disability, learning disability appears to be largely absent from the discourse. Critical pedagogy is still predicated on the abilities and experiences of only some members of the population. Both Ellsworth's (1989) discussion of intersectionality and Kincheloe's (2007) call for a critical pedagogy which questions schools' role in the power dynamics of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, indigenous experience and physical ability, notably omit any reference to cognitive impairment and learning disability (LD) or learning disability with autistic spectrum condition (LD/ASC). Kincheloe acknowledges epistemologies that 'move in ways unimaginable by many western academic impulses' (Kincheloe 2008c, p.18), in relation to indigenous knowledge. He calls vociferously for a multi-logical, critical bricolage which encompasses knowledge from around the globe, and he emphasises the importance of the different ways of knowing of indigenous

peoples (Kincheloe, 2008c). However, like Ellsworth (1989), he does not include the potentially different ways of knowing of people with LD and LD/ASC. People with LD and LD/ASC are arguably some of the most disenfranchised people in society, with little power over their social, economic, political and health circumstances. There has been minimal discussion as to how people across the intellectual spectrum might develop the powers of critique and agency, and those with LD and LD/ASD rarely feature in the literature. This may be based on an assumption that they are lacking in the requisite ability to do so.

More recent criticisms of critical pedagogy have been made by Gur-Ze'ev (2003), who proposes that it has lost its ability for self-criticism, and, therefore, its capacity to evolve. In response to this, Guilherme (2017, p.4) concludes that critical pedagogues do 'face and respond to the criticisms and demonstrate that we remain a highly relevant force to be harnessed in the development and transformation of society.'

2.6 Critical pedagogy in the current UK context

The instrumental, high stakes testing educational climate in the US, critiqued by Giroux (2010; 2011) and Giroux and McLaren (1989), is mirrored in the UK by a tightly defined national curriculum, surveillance through the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspectorate, league tables, standard attainment tests (Harris and Ranson, 2005), and the marketisation (Elliott, 2012; Bathmaker and Avis, 2013; Duckworth *et al.*, 2016; Duckworth and Smith, 2018; 2019; Smith and Duckworth, 2020) and commodification of education (Duckworth *et al.*, 2016; Duckworth and Smith, 2018; 2019). In the lifelong learning sector, teachers are often locked down by prescribed and predetermined curricula, and the slavish requirement for metrics and data. As Rouxel (2015) explains, metrics and performance indicators now define teachers' professional worth and actively erode their professional identity. It is unsurprising that this can arguably allow little room

for alternative or progressive pedagogies which are flexible in matching students' needs and lived realities. As Bathmaker and Avis (2005) posit, in the pressured context of monitoring, inspection and accountability, notions of critical pedagogies and transformative democratic practices, can seem far removed from the world of practitioners.

A brief account of the current lifelong learning landscape follows, in order to contextualise the subsequent literature relating to critical pedagogy within the sector.

The UK lifelong learning context

As Tuckett (2019, no page) extols, 'the evidence of the value of lifelong learning is powerful for individuals, communities, firms and governments alike.' He explains that where employment is increasingly unstable and short term, those with skills and a willingness to learn new skills fare better. There is also a strong relationship between a culture of learning and innovation and improved productivity for businesses. Countries with high levels of participation in adult learning have higher levels of democratic engagement, citizens with improved mental and physical health, greater independence in old age, and greater respect for diversity. As Tuckett (2019, no page) asks, 'why then, do we do so badly in Britain, and in England in particular?' He asserts that 'if we had set out consciously to destroy adult learning opportunities we could not have done a better job' (Tuckett, 2019, no page). The answer largely lies in shifts in government agendas and policy regarding adult education, further education and higher education.

The New Labour government heralded *The Learning Age* (Department for Education and Employment, 1998), which proposed an agenda for employability, a unified society, personal independence, creativity and innovation (Department for Education and Employment, 1998; 1999; Department for Education and Skills, 2003). By 2006 this had been reduced to one of 'economically valuable skills,' following the Leitch review (Leitch, 2006, p.4). According to Thompson (2007), the New Labour government

effectively de-politicised adult education through reducing it to systems, structures, standards, targets, measurements and outcomes. However, she concedes that its emphasis on widening participation, combating social exclusion, and promoting social cohesion did lead to the development of adult education in a range of community settings. This gave rise to opportunities for popular education approaches and a politicised adult education which connected social issues and social change. Nonetheless, New Labour's early social priorities increasingly metamorphosed into concerns with value for money, systems of delivery, monitoring, quality assurance and targets. Brookfield (2005) depicts this in Marxist terms, whereby the exchange value of adult education has replaced the use value. As Thompson (2007, p.65) mourns:

It is as though the language of philosophy, social purpose, pedagogy and curriculum has been lost to this technical-rationalist nightmare. And with it any political awareness and critical debate about the organic connection between education, society and social change.

The economic agenda of lifelong learning has continued since Leitch (2006), through subsequent Coalition and Conservative governments to the present, as highlighted in the government's *Future of Skills and Lifelong Learning* (Government Office for Science, 2017). The emphasis on vocationalism, credentialism, instrumentalism and progression, mirrors the ideological and political paradigm shift towards competition, personal enterprise, meritocracy and individual responsibility associated with Thatcherism and New Labour (Thompson, 2007). This has continued apace through the Coalition and Conservative governments of 2010-2020.

In relation to post-compulsory education and training, Avis (2007) posits that educational processes are closely tied to the needs of capital, and thus education has become increasingly instrumental and commodified. As Bathmaker (2017) explains, the further education landscape constitutes a marketised model of education and training, where competition has replaced public good and markets have replaced social partnership, democratic

accountability and community needs. Colleges are focused on increased efficiency, with economic and financial considerations driving practice (Bathmaker, 2017). Provision has moved from a strong focus on vocational, second chance and part-time learning, to one where learning is driven to meet economic demands (O'Grady, 2013). Moreover, students themselves can be objectified and monetised (Duckworth and Smith, 2018).

The government priority of national economic growth and employability also operates in adult and community learning. According to Russell (2010), critical pedagogical approaches which provide an underpinning critique of structural inequalities are constrained by this model. However, it is even more difficult to incorporate critical pedagogical approaches within further education colleges, because instrumental, pre-packaged curricula are more tightly defined, and performativity and ongoing surveillance (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) operate in the same physical location as teaching and learning.

Prison education, predominantly funded and accredited through the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) further education contract until March 2019, was subject to the same narrow instrumentality, unless project based funding was sourced from charitable funding. However the Ministry of Justice review (2016) recommended some provision for arts subjects and higher level learning and its new contracts are in theory designed to provide greater flexibility (Prisoners' Education Trust, 2019).

Similarly, union education has been subjected to further education's instrumental constraints, coupled with the introduction of the Union Learning Fund and its associated skills-based education, '*Unionlearn*' (Unionlearn, 2020). These have reduced union education to instrumental skills and role based training, replacing the broader educational tradition of union learning (McIlroy and Croucher, 2013).

The higher education landscape has also been dominated by a financialised paradigm through the introduction of tuition fees, marketisation and the commodification of knowledge, with universities being viewed as businesses

and students as customers (Amsler and Canaan, 2008; Amsler, 2010; Cowden and Singh, 2013; Duckworth *et al.*, 2016). Duckworth *et al.* (2016, p.904) highlight the fact that 'since the 1980s, universities have been pressed to embrace commercial models of knowledge, skills, curriculum, finance and management organisation.'

Situating critical pedagogy in the UK

The theory and practice of critical pedagogy in the UK lifelong learning sector takes place within the context identified above. Amsler (2010) states that long histories of critical education in the UK are being erased from public memory. She postulates that the practice of critical pedagogy has become marginalised within mainstream education, leading to a 'double consciousness' of teachers and lecturers who hold out hope for it, yet choose to work in formal education (Amsler, 2010, p.22). She posits that abandoning critical theories and practices in education and dismissing their contribution to social change, may impoverish the transformational possibilities of education as a whole. Amsler's (2010) statement that the principles of critical pedagogy are now being reconstructed as threats to social and economic progress, echoes Darder, Boltadano and Torres' (2009) observation in the US.

Yet the theory and practice of critical pedagogy in the UK has not been extinguished, as the work of Amsler *et al.* (2010) and others attest. Critical pedagogy has spawned a plethora of scholarly and practice based works in the UK, which I needed to distil in relation to this literature review. The work of Amsler *et al.* (2010) and Cowden and Singh (2013) in higher education, and Daley, Orr and Petrie's (2015) accounts of teacher resistance to neoliberalism in further education, encompass the broad range of critical pedagogical concerns in the UK. Their work will therefore be foregrounded in this section of the literature review. Many studies in the UK have also taken place relating to specific aspects of critical pedagogy (Avis *at al.* 2003; Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Bathmaker and Avis, 2005; Lambert, Parker and Neary, 2007; Kadi-Hanifi, 2009; Clare, 2015). However a comprehensive coverage of UK studies is outside of the scope of this review.

Critical pedagogues in higher education are concerned with the commodification of knowledge in the contemporary university, which they propose threatens to distort the purpose of education. They see the egalitarian ideal of university education for critical citizenship and contribution to a more socially just society, as rapidly diminishing (Cowden and Singh, 2013). Cowden and Singh (2013) and Duckworth *et al.* (2016) posit that the neoliberal marketisation of universities as businesses, and students as customers, results in education being construed as an exchangeable commodity. This is characterised by student satisfaction surveys and league tables which Cowden and Singh (2013) assert have a negative impact on teacher autonomy, creativity, and confidence. The culture of performativity (Ball, 2003; 2012) is seen to be in danger of submerging criticality (Duckworth *et al.*, 2016) and silencing critique. Amsler and Canaan (2008) report that in the institutions in which they work, the rationalised economic agenda, marketisation, and commodification of knowledge, mitigate against the practice of critical pedagogy.

While Cowden and Singh (2013) broadly support widening participation and expansion of the higher education sector, they argue that its purpose is to secure economic advantage in a global knowledge economy. Unprecedented growth in student numbers has been funded to enable higher level skill development to support this (Elliott, 2012). Knowledge has become analogous with the acquisition of skills. The anti-intellectualism inherent in an instrumental curricula standardises and commodifies knowledge. This consumerist model of education is characterised as 'satnav education' by Cowden and Singh (2013, p.41), whereby students manage to get to their destination without actually knowing how they got there. Similarly students do not know where their standardised course of study comes from or why it is there, epitomised by the concept of learning rather than knowing. This can be likened to Freire's (1970) banking education, albeit with a more explicit economic agenda.

Cowden and Singh (2013) argue that a dangerous paradox is taking place, whereby we live in a world where new crises require new thinking, in order to address the global ecological crisis, widening class and gender inequalities, and the rise of religious fundamentalism. Cowden (2010) cautions that the conflation of education and training has undermined students' capacities to question the way in which the economy is organised at precisely the time we need them to be able to do so. He sees this as a reason to recover and reinvent critical pedagogy.

Similarly, Cutler (2010) calls for universities to support positive movements for change and prepare their students to deal with the realities of the world they are living in and devise sustainable alternatives. However, the neoliberal economic model of higher education casts students in instrumental terms, which impoverishes the level of knowledge created for students and for society as a whole. It stresses the exchange value of a degree. In the evaluation of quality, managerialism and performativity have shifted the focus from academics' subject expertise to technical aspects of teaching (Cheng, 2017). Cowden and Singh (2013) assert that education must be free from the constraints of financial and managerialist logic, including the abolition of tuition fees.

Critical pedagogy is important in challenging this because it conceptualises pedagogy as an engagement between teachers and students, based on an underpinning humanist view, rather than a financial exchange. According to Cowden and Singh (2013), an individualised society where consumption is seen to be at the core of the self leads to an alienated, marketised conception of human relations. They posit that in this context, critical pedagogy is crucial in enabling people to meaningfully connect with each other. However, Amsler (2010) argues that radical possibilities are regarded as suspicious and the hope of emancipation is dismissed as either naïve or oppressive. She asserts that intellectual and political communities are divided by competition and that education has been integrated both economically and ideologically into a

neoliberal agenda. Notwithstanding Amsler's assertion, Canaan (2010, p.6) highlights the fact that Amsler *et al.* (2010) work with critical hope.

Cowden and Singh (2013) are also optimistic, and cite research which reveals that for university students across the sector, the most important priorities tend to be intrinsic factors associated with their subject, and the desire to develop as a person. Extrinsic motivators such as gaining a qualification to obtain a good job are a lower priority (Ainley and Weyers, 2009). The students in Ainley and Weyers' (2009) research also reported a preference for deep learning over surface learning. Recent research by Universities UK shows that while approximately 50% of students do see themselves as customers, this is not their primary definition of their relationship with their university. They wish for a personal, collaborative relationship with their institution rather than the types they associate with other consumer transactions (Universities UK, 2017).

Cowden and Singh (2013) assert that we can resist the process of commodification and nurture critical consciousness, by examining the strategies that individuals and groups are using to transform education towards a more democratic imperative. They call for a new revolutionary praxis which defends the public university but also develops alternative forms of free popular education.

However, Duckworth *et al.* (2016) note that critical spaces in universities are becoming more confined. They assert that 'critical voices have been marginalised and silenced by a (self) surveillance culture in higher education that cultivates fear, suspicion and fabrication' (Duckworth *et al.*, 2016, p.906). They propose the development of alternative spaces and co-caring communities of both teachers and students to ameliorate this. They have developed these in relation to managerialist culture, which is arguably analogous to Freire's 'oppressor' (Freire, 1970, p.31).

Constraints to critical education are arguably the greatest in the further education sector, which is increasingly market driven and managerial

(Bathmaker and Avis, 2013), and its instrumental, prescriptive curricula are tightly defined. This is compounded by an anti-intellectualism. As Daley (2015) notes, academic boards have largely disappeared from further education colleges. She compares this with Freire's (2004) warning against education becoming reduced to technique and training. The further education environment is often unsympathetic to critical education, as Clare (2015) describes:

...the context in which I was now working was not actually necessarily sympathetic to critical approaches to education. In fact, I soon realised that the FE sector is extremely marketised, performative and instrumental, driven by policies based on a thoroughgoing neoliberal outlook.

Further education has long been considered the Cinderella sector. The metaphor is attributed to Baker (1989), and has been much used by subsequent policy makers (Petrie, 2015). This perception has arguably increased since the trenchant cuts of the austerity era, instigated by the Coalition government of 2010. A number of scholars and practitioners have spearheaded a move to overturn this perception and resist what Coffield *et al.* (2014) report to be the toxicity of the sector. The contributors to Daley, Orr and Petrie's (2015) work contest neoliberal governance practices in further education, and as such critical pedagogy and transformative learning thread through much of their writing. As Coffield (2015) describes, their language is angry and defiant, yet hopeful and heartening. He considers their writing to be an indictment of the policies pursued by all political parties. However, he depicts their words as offering strategies and examples of resistance, describing them as 'creative and courageous contributions, enlivened by hope, spirit of generosity, and human values which sum up education at its best' (Coffield, 2015, p.xxiv).

The work of Duckworth and Smith (2019) demonstrates such education at its best, capturing the transformative possibilities of further education. Like the contributors to Daley, Orr and Petrie's (2015) collection, they seek to contest

the negative conception of further education through their University and College Union (UCU) *Transforming Lives* campaign. Commitment to critical education shines through the voices of Daley, Orr and Petrie's (2015) contributors, with Daley (2015) drawing upon the work of both hooks (1994) and Freire (2004; 2005) in discussing the motivations of some further education teachers.

Nonetheless, the toxicity of the sector in relation to neoliberalism, is apparent in Clare's (2015) research on critical pedagogy in further education. It demonstrates that many teachers in the sector made a conscious and determined effort to preserve what they saw as real education within a marketised, neoliberal system. Her participants variously described the system as life denying and nihilist, reductionist, dehumanising, anti-personal and anti-individualist. They felt that education had been reduced to a tick box culture where knowledge was fragmented and atomised into meaningless lists, within a climate of surveillance. The participants contended that this made it difficult to teach in a critical way and those who had worked in management felt equally despondent and helpless. This can be compared with Freire's (1970) conception of the oppressor also being oppressed.

However, Hafez (2015) asserts that the subversion that some further education lecturers practice is a dangerous and ultimately failing strategy, because in subverting, they are conceding the loss of their autonomy, authority and trust, and are guilty of surrendering their professionalism. She raises the concern that the current educational climate is the only one that new further education teachers know. She cites the Freirean, empowering professional teacher-student relationship, and suggests that in further education this relationship has been redefined as a therapeutic one, or one where the teacher is reduced to a mere facilitator. She calls for further education tutors to move from subversion to revolution and reclaim expertise in their pedagogy.

The hostility of the further education environment is highlighted by Daley (2015) in relation to new teachers entering it. She recommends that they

consider Freire's (1970) work alongside the employability and skills agenda of further education. A difficulty with this is that the in-service Certificate in Education/Diploma in Education teacher training route can at times be light on theory, as evidenced by the curriculum specifications (Pearson, 2014), with trainees not necessarily introduced to critical pedagogical works. However, it must be noted that specific lecturers and institutions will utilise their agency to encompass a critical approach in these programmes. Like Daley (2015), Groves (2015) posits that initial teacher training must include critical reasoning skills, which she sees as vital to teacher autonomy and praxis, with a view to social justice.

Despite these constraints of working in further education, the work of Daley, Orr and Petrie (2015), and Duckworth and Smith (2019), remind us of the resistance and persistence of critical and transformative educators, and Bathmaker (2017) encourages us to continue to find the spaces where such work can take place. Duckworth and Brzeski (2015, p.13) posit that educators employing critical pedagogy can challenge:

...the reductive neoliberal influence of market logics, ranging from the discourses of privatisation and consumerism to the methodologies of standardisation and accountability, to instead provide a curriculum that is culturally relevant, learner driven and socially empowering.

In all practices of critical pedagogy, it is important to be mindful of Bathmaker and Avis' (2013) caution, that whilst there is a need for critical analysis and deconstruction of neoliberal policy, there is a potential danger of replacing this with an equally top down and imposed, radical discourse of critical educators. This caution aligns with the criticisms of Ellsworth (1989) and Gore (1993), in relation to the dichotomised assumptions of critical pedagogy. As such, critical pedagogy must be an aspirational practice which is uneven (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Bathmaker and Avis, 2005), fractured, filled with contradictions and tensions, and avoids an essentialist reading (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005).

2.7 The practice of critical pedagogy in the UK and Ireland

UK practitioners have also written about their practical applications of critical pedagogy. Clare (2015) discusses the ways in which educators in further education use critical pedagogy to question, resist and subvert the hegemony of neoliberalism. Some of the participants in her research, considered critical pedagogy to be more about attitude and values rather than particular techniques, while others used particular strategies. These included teaching beyond the exam, extracurricular activities, questioning, critiquing the views of teachers, discovering as many perspectives as possible, treating students as equals, sharing one's own journey of critical enquiry, time for students to reflect and consider their opinions, and addressing the wider context in which education is situated. Research with adult and community educators in Ireland undertaken by Connolly (2008), found that critical pedagogical practices used included group work, questioning, feminist and social analysis, writing, dialectical discussion and dialogue.

In higher education, Duckworth *et al.* (2016) also engage their students in questioning, critiquing and valuing alternative viewpoints, rather than the transmission of units of knowledge, with the hope of stimulating a questioning of taken for granted and hegemonic procedures and boundaries. This takes place through 'dialogue with other "authentic" individual voices within a co-caring community' (Duckworth *et al.*, 2016, p.915). This co-caring community is key and the authors encourage students to create communities of practice in their educational sphere and beyond, outside of the performativity landscape, wherein they question the social order and their role within it.

The use of challenging writings in higher education is discussed by both Cowden (2013) and Canaan (2013). For example, Cowden asks his students to read a passage about Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) symbolic violence, which they initially find difficult due to the language used. Cowden sees this as reflecting the symbolic violence of their own self expectations. In persisting they realise that they can read it, as Cowden (2013, p.142) explains:

The power of this exercise resides in the way it has a kind of mirroring effect in that it's the very power of symbolic violence in lowering people's expectations of themselves which is on the one hand what the passage is about, but also what is also being demonstrated through the exercise.

Similarly, Canaan (2013) teaches students to read difficult texts by deconstructing them collectively. Through this, students recognise that they are not alone in finding the text 'hard,' and together deconstruct 'hardness' (Canaan, 2013, p. 150). Students decomposing concepts and theories is taken a step further by Hammond (2017a; 2017b), who works with students to open these up to new interpretation, directly and subversively engaging with and challenging the authority of powerful hierarchies of knowledge. He also uses creative autobiographical activities, whereby students explore and write in non-legislated ways.

Like Freire (1970) and Shor (1987; 1992), Canaan (2013) asserts that we need to work with students' own experience, while demonstrating to them the additional insights they can gain through expanding their knowledge. She also shares personal information with students to demonstrate her own vulnerability and links this with theory, in the hope that students may learn to do the same. She discusses her activism with the class and uses her own political experiences to show students that they can indeed make a difference.

Employing critical pedagogical strategies can be problematic, as Clark (2018) found. She interviewed and observed self-identifying critical pedagogues, and experienced a range of different teaching approaches ranging from the very democratic, to more traditional, didactic ones. This reflects Breunig's (2009) findings, which identified a disconnection between theory and practice.

Motta's (2013) experience of introducing critical pedagogy in a UK higher education institution where the majority of students and staff did not desire

social and political transformation, did not result in a collective struggle, a political strategy, nor the formation of activists. However, a pedagogy of possibility emerged, fostering in students and teachers other ways of being, doing and thinking which transgressed the reproduction of the individualised and competitive academic, and the depoliticised, docile, consumer student (Motta, 2013, p.86). Resistance by students at times resulted in closure and rejection, characterised by anger or disassociation from the teacher and course, alongside positive experiences of knowledge creation and learning. Boorman (2011) also experienced resistance by some Access to higher education students, which he concludes results partly from the instrumental agenda and neoliberal context.

Resistance to critical pedagogy is by no means restricted to students, as Avis and Bathmaker (2004, p.308) report in their work with further education teacher trainees. They explain that ‘our trainees have a contradictory and ambivalent relation to critical pedagogy.’ They propose that this is a result of both the policy and practice environments in which the trainees work, and their concept of individualised pedagogical relations, underpinned by the neoliberalist individualism of society.

The criticisms of critical pedagogical principles and practices discussed earlier, necessarily apply to the UK and Ireland contexts also. Nonetheless, despite resistance by some students and teachers, the practice of critical pedagogy is still alive, as evidenced by the literature in this review. It is important to examine why this is the case.

2.8 Motivations to practice critical pedagogy: the ‘why?’

Literature relating to the motivations of critical pedagogues is largely in the form of interviews and essays with published and distinguished academics in the US, and some localised PhD theses with critical pedagogues in further education and adult and community learning in the UK and beyond. A commitment to social justice in education and in wider society underpins the

motivations and unites the intentions of all of the critical pedagogues featured in these works.

Eleven distinguished and eminent critical educators were interviewed by Torres (1998) in relation to their intellectual and political biographies. Apple (1998) postulates that Torres' work connects the deeply personal to the political, and that it is the personal quality of the narratives that makes them compelling. Whilst this is true, the narratives in most cases foreground the interviewees' political, academic, theoretical, intellectual and career influences, rather than an insight into their person. This is unsurprising given Torres' stated focus on the intellectual and political, and the academic status of the interviewees. They largely discuss their 'reading, research, writing and publishing' (Torres, 1998, p.11) and the influence upon them of other academics and key theorists. Torres asserts that his interviewees' critical educational work has been an existential demand, a political obsession, a responsibility, a pleasure and a personal and professional struggle for social justice. Apple (1998) purports that the work of Torres' interviewees is grounded in deeply held commitments to social justice and a society based on caring. He posits that biography, theory, politics and practice are combined in Torres' work, which helps to regenerate a sense of history and possibility in order to collectively continue educational struggles. The dialogues reveal the social, cultural, educational and intellectual contexts of the interviewees' work, alongside the personal and political dilemmas they experience in implementing a pedagogy of hope and praxis (Torres, 1998). Their relationship with students and the pedagogical process is less apparent in the interviews, although Giroux, (1998, p.156) does state:

My students have been for the entirety of my career, without any question whatsoever, the life-sustaining force that kept me going.....They have always provided for me an inspiration, and model of hope and learning...they represent a vision for the future.

The early formative influences cited by Torres' (1998) interviewees include student activism, anti-Vietnam protest, the civil rights movement and personal

experiences of marginalisation due to anti-Semitism and racism. Torres acknowledges that the interviewees selected are among the first generation of critical educators, and are predominantly white males, a criticism highlighted by Darder, Boltadano and Torres, (2009) of early critical pedagogy.

The narratives of seventeen notable critical pedagogues, brought together by Porfilio and Ford (2015), have a more personal tenor and a greater focus on the formative influences leading the narrators to critical pedagogy, and their motivations to practice it as theorists and/or teachers. Like Torres (1998), Porfilio and Ford (2015) highlight their contributors' concern for injustice, oppression and exploitation. The contributors cite a number of positive early influences, which include politically active family members, the influence of teachers and parents, the study of particular academic subjects, positive and transformative experiences of education, involvement in counterculture, protests and solidarity movements. They also cite negative experiences in their early lives which influenced their critical orientation. These include awareness of the struggles of fore-parents, race and identity crises, witnessing oppression, the effects of growing up in conservative suburbia, childhood struggles with authority, negative experiences of religion, experiences of suffering and isolation, having special educational needs, and negative and alienating school experiences. The contributors also identify the influence of a number of key theorists of critical pedagogy upon them. This was experienced through either meeting key theorists, through their writings, or through attending classes or being mentored by them.

Porfilio and Ford's (2015) critical pedagogues also discuss their motivations to practice critical pedagogy. It is important to explore these, given the constraints of practising critical pedagogy in the current educational climate. They identify a wide range of drivers, which include their personal politics, their commitment to social justice, humanisation and equality, and their perceived impact of neoliberalism on education and wider society. The contributors' intellectual and academic interests also serve as motivators,

which comprise influential writers, academics and social activists. Importantly, pedagogical issues such as the efficacy of critical pedagogy, dissatisfaction with the banking method of education, and witnessing student transformation are also cited by the contributors as underpinning their drive to practice critical pedagogy. The critical pedagogues also identify the influence of supportive, like-minded colleagues and of working in a like-minded institution, in supporting their practice. It is suggested that critical pedagogy be included in teacher education in order to encourage the practice of critical pedagogy, and that critical pedagogues embrace management positions, in order that they can bring their influence to bear at that level (Porfilio and Ford, 2015).

A series of essays summarising the work of key critical pedagogues, some of whom overlap with those in Torres' (1998) and Porfilio and Ford's (2015) work, is presented by Kirlyo (2013b). Like Porfilio and Ford (2015), Kirlyo (2013a) postulates that the critical pedagogues featuring in his volume are deeply influenced by their individual autobiographies. He also posits that they are influenced by the concepts that 'enlightened' them (Kirlyo, 2013a, p.xxi), the circumstances in which they live and work, and their personal beliefs. All have lived, experienced, or observed oppressive forces at work, prompting them to speak out and to resist. He reports that two groups loosely emerge; one who have personally experienced life threateningly oppressive circumstances and the other who live with the constant risk of losing their jobs for taking positions of resistance. Similar to Torres' (1998) and Porfilio and Ford's (2015) critical pedagogues, they are committed to social justice and actively work to 'be a light of hope toward facilitating a more humanising reality' (Kirlyo, 2013a, p.xxii). He asserts that an unwavering conviction to the promotion of justice and democratic spaces, a deep love for humanity and a strong sense of hope for the future is woven throughout their lives. He also acknowledges the enormous impact of Freire's work upon them, which he suggests is captured in Torres' (1982, p.94) declaration: 'We can stay with Freire or against Freire, but not without Freire.'

Research has also been carried out amongst critical pedagogues in the UK and Ireland, and the voices in these are more direct and heartfelt, possibly because they are in the form of PhD theses, and are less subject to editing by commercial publishers. Connolly (2008) carried out research amongst practitioners of critical pedagogy in adult and community education in Ireland. Her research examined the formative influences which led practitioners to critical pedagogy and the practices that they use. Her interviewees underwent experiences which directly or indirectly led to an 'epiphany' resulting in critical consciousness. These epiphanies comprised family ideology, difficult experiences as children, positive and negative experiences of the Roman Catholic Church, influential people who acted as catalysts, and exposure to knowledge, writing, thinking and practice. Clare (2015) investigated the motivations of further education lecturers in the North of England who practice critical pedagogy as resistance to neoliberalism. Her respondents cited a commitment to social justice, the impact of their own teachers upon them, the study of specific academic subjects, political activism and participation in religion, as factors influencing their critical pedagogical orientation. Like Canaan (2013), some respondents felt a sense of moral duty and responsibility to empower students to challenge injustices. They thought that honesty with students in terms of sharing of themselves and treating students as equals was important.

2.9 Mobilising critical pedagogy in the UK

Although critical pedagogy is by no means a normative position, it is reasonable to assume that its advocates at the very least wish to sustain it, if not expand its practice. The development of networks of like-minded people is seen as key to its sustenance and expansion. The Critical Pedagogy/Popular Education Group, constituted by Amsler *et al.* (2010) was constituted of an independent collection of academics, political activists, artists and popular educators in both formal and informal education. They aimed to enable people working in informal and formal education, who were

concerned with social transformation and political struggle, to pool their complementary knowledge and to contribute to the imagining and creation of a socially just education system. Their intention was to build communities of intellectual and political practice in which to nurture alternatives (Amsler, 2010), in order to inspire critical hope. They advocate the development, through dialogue, of a stronger and more complex network of critical educators (Canaan, 2010), including building bridges with non-academic cultural workers and activists. Amsler and Canaan (2008, p.10) posit that emancipatory education might be more fully realised by working 'not just within and against the university, but also beyond it.'

In relation to sustaining critical pedagogy, Clare's (2015) participants highlighted the role of unions, and the need for education to link to wider social movements and discussions, regarding social and political change. At a practice level, Crawley (2017, p.119) argues that resistance to the 'managerial vandalism' and process of destruction in further education could be effected through teachers carrying out joint acts of resistance. He denotes 'marginal learning gains,' where aggregating small gains leads to a significant overall improvement, to illustrate the potential of acts of connection. He proposes a framework for a 'connected professional,' to enable these smaller acts of connection to multiply, which like Amsler *et al.* (2010) and Clare (2015), involves active engagement with others in the wider community. Crawley, compares this to Dewey's (1916) notion of connecting and participating in joint activity in an education for democracy. A critical education forum in further education is also advocated by Clare (2015), in terms of practical use and support for teachers using critical pedagogy, along with research which produces knowledge that is translatable into practice. The use of digital platforms has been used by Weatherby and Mycroft (2015), to provide a network of critical educators in further education. In higher education, Duckworth *et al.* (2016) have created a co-caring community of practice, which operates as a place where critical educators can step outside of the masculinised managerial culture, into a critical, feminised, supportive

space, in order to develop dialogue and critical ideas. They, in turn, encourage their students to do the same.

2.10 Summary

This literature review discussed definitions of critical pedagogy, outlined its tenets, the particular orientation of its main theorists, and some practical applications. It examined critical pedagogy in the current UK lifelong learning context, and reviewed literature relating to critical pedagogues' influences and motivations to practice critical pedagogy. It also considered literature relating to the mobilisation of critical pedagogy.

The following chapter will explicate the methodology used in the research.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter details the methodology I used to answer my overarching research question: 'What gives life to critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector?' and to meet my research aim. My aim was to find out what inspires, motivates and sustains practitioners of critical pedagogy in the current educational climate. This was with a view to extending knowledge and hopefully inspiring others in the lifelong learning sector who might wish to work from a critical pedagogical stance, despite the constraints imposed by the current educational climate.

In this section, I recap on the reasons underpinning my choice of overarching research question and research aim. The subsequent sections present an account of my ontological and epistemological position in relation to the research, my personal stance and position as the researcher, and the reflexive strategies I used to address issues of bias. I then explicate my choice of a qualitative research strategy, and case study design. I detail my sampling strategy (purposive and snowball sampling), and my data collection method (face to face, semi-structured interviews). I explain the manner in which the interviews drew upon the life history method and the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), and my reasons for doing this. I explain the way in which my research choices are informed by the relevant theoretical literature, ensuring the coherence of my methodology.

Clarifying the research question

My research aim directly reflected my personal and professional interests. My studentship at the University of Worcester specified the research area of critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector in the West Midlands. I had taught in the lifelong learning sector for 16 years using some of the principles of critical pedagogy, but until I applied for my PhD, I did not know that critical

pedagogy was a named theoretical and practical philosophy and pedagogy, with a vast body of literature supporting it. This point was fundamental to my research because it drove my overarching research question, research aim, and methodological choice of a positive lens with which to answer my research questions. It was the human stories behind the educational practice of critical pedagogy that I was really interested in, reflecting Goodson's (1981; 2008) emphasis on the importance of this in relation to teachers and teaching. I wanted to know how and why other people knew about critical pedagogy when I did not. I also wanted to know what made them 'walk the walk' in spite of structural constraints. A review of the literature revealed that work regarding the motivations of critical pedagogues in the UK and Ireland was sector and geographically based (Connolly, 2008; Clare, 2015) and in other countries was either institution specific (Ramirez, 2011; Boudon, 2015), or was carried out with leading, published academics (Torres, 1998; Kirlyo, 2013b; Porfilio and Ford, 2015).

I had not found any research which addressed practitioner motivations from a 'positive lens' approach. I chose not to investigate the difficulties of practising critical pedagogy in the current educational climate, because I wanted to know why people did it, rather than why they did not. As Golden-Biddle and Dutton (2012, p.5) assert, 'application of a positive lens...begins with inquiry about what is generative, life-giving, and worth noticing and appreciating.' To effect a positive lens approach, I drew from the philosophy and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), an organisational development tool, which as Cooperrider and Whitney (2005, p.14) explain, discovers what 'gives life' to an organisation, through focussing on generative stories of success. The phrase 'gives life' to in my research question, is an AI term (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987; McNamee, 2003; Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005; Ludema, Cooperrider and Barrett, 2006; Bushe, 2011; Trajkovski *et al.*, 2013), and reflects my research aim, which was to find out what inspires, motivates and sustains practitioners of critical pedagogy. I could have chosen a research focus which observed critical pedagogy in action, in order to investigate practical strategies, which other teachers could draw upon. However, critical

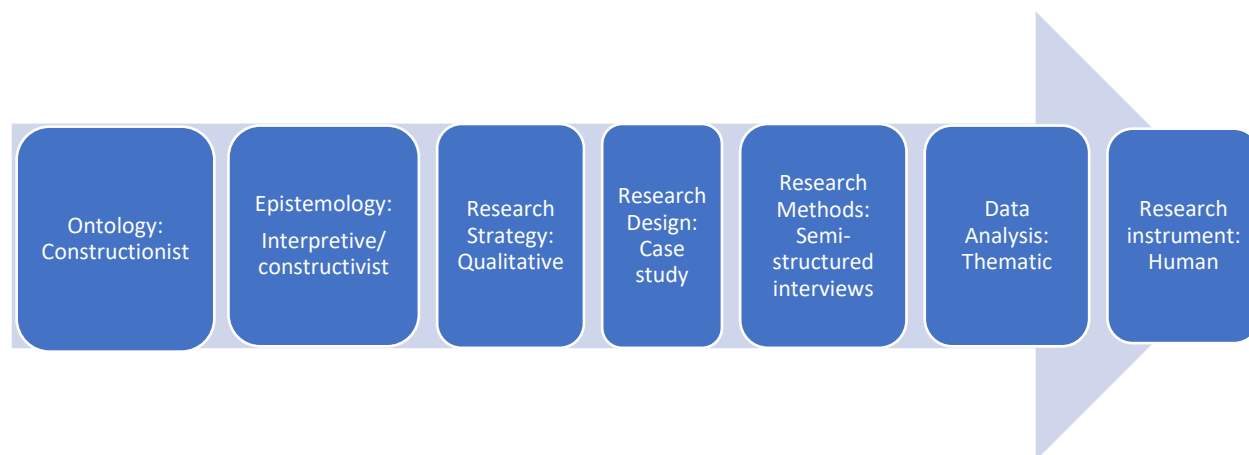
pedagogues warn against the 'methods fetish' (Macedo and Bartoleme, 1999, p.118) and see critical pedagogy more as a way of being as opposed to a set of methods (Macedo, 2007). In addition to this, the range of critical pedagogical teaching strategies and methods is large and diverse, and a representative investigation would be outside of the scope of this research.

Alongside my impetus to understand what led teachers to critical pedagogy, and what drove them to practise it in spite of the prevailing educational climate, I also hoped that the findings might inspire other people. Had I read any research regarding what drives people to practise critical pedagogy in the current educational climate, it would have been an inspiration and impetus to me. As Thrash *et al.* (2014, p.2) assert, people are inspired both 'by' an elicitor object (for example, a person, action, or scene), and/or 'to' actualise the inspiring qualities exemplified in the elicitor object. However, there are limitations to a positive lens approach. Critiques of AI have expressed concerns that a focus on positive stories and experiences could invalidate negative experiences and repress potentially important and meaningful conversations (Pratt, 2002; Egan and Lancaster, 2005; Miller *et al.*, 2005). Oliver's (2005) critique acknowledges that what is positive for some may be negative for others and social constructionists argue that behind every positive image lies a negative one, and vice versa (Fineman, 2006). I addressed this by ensuring that my participants were able to fully express negative experiences, particularly as these negative experiences were often what drove their orientation to critical pedagogy. Nonetheless, I did not encourage negativity nor allow the negatives to become the focus of the interviews. I gently guided them back to the positive through discussing the way in which negative experiences, or conceptions of structural systems, drove their positive praxis, reflecting Freire's (1998, p.70) concept of 'critical hope,' discussed in Chapter 1.

Figure 3 illustrates my methodology using Bryman's (2016) terminology, which I use as my overarching lexis for the section headings in this chapter. Writers use methodology terminology differently (Bryman, 2016; Cohen,

Manion and Morrison, 2011; Pring, 2015) and I wish to be clear and avoid conflation of terms. I have chosen to use Bryman's terminology because I find it the most straightforward.

Figure 3. Methodology



The reasons for the above choices are detailed in the separate sections of this methodology chapter, with my approach to quality and rigour threaded throughout the relevant sections and summarised at the end of the chapter.

3.2. Ontology and epistemology

Methodology often starts with the researcher establishing their ontological and epistemological positions, in order that the subsequent stages are congruent with these. I initially attempted to follow Hitchcock and Hughes' (1995) suggestion that ontological assumptions lead to epistemological assumptions, which lead to methodological considerations, which lead to issues of data collection. Although I have exemplified this sequence by using a directional arrow in Figure 3, this arrow is included purely to give visual coherence to the way in which the stages form a whole. In practice the process for me was not so linear, partly because of the difficulties I experienced as a result of the terminology being used in often contradictory, interchangeable and conflated ways. My difficulties reflected Pring's (2015, p.109) assertion that the varying philosophical positions 'are known by a

range of bewildering titles.’ He acknowledges that his own categorisation of the dominant philosophical positions could have been done differently, ‘making further distinctions and blurring others.’ It therefore took me some time to work out my philosophical position in relation to this piece of research. I was also unable to apply these abstract philosophical concepts without anything concrete to apply them to, and I therefore needed to use a bottom-up approach. Rather than determining my ontological and epistemological positions at the very beginning of the research, I decided what I wanted to find out, the way in which I wanted to find it out, and I identified my ontological and epistemological position from this (Crotty, 1998). This was an iterative process rather than a purely sequential one.

My ontological position in relation to this piece of research was what Bryman (2016) denotes as constructionist. The participants’ life events and inspiration, motivation, and sustenance in practising critical pedagogy represented constructed, multiple realities, rather than a single objective reality. The same was true of the ‘reality’ of my own experience in critical pedagogy. My epistemological position was interpretivist because my knowledge of ‘what gives life to critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector?’ came through interpreting its literature and the practitioners’ narratives. My epistemological position was also constructivist, in that participants constructed their individual meanings and understandings, and I constructed my individual meanings and understandings of these. This emic perspective (Savin-Baden and Howell-Major, 2013; Kadi-Hanifi and Keenan, 2015; Yazan, 2015) was the main focus of the study; the participants’ subjective meanings, concepts, beliefs, values and feelings attached to the ‘events’ which led them to critical pedagogy, and which drove their continued practice of it. I also used personal and professional reflection to construct meaning from my own experience of critical pedagogy, and enhance reflexivity (Berger, 2015).

The combination of my ontology, epistemology, and methodology combined to determine my research paradigm (Guba, 1990), which was interpretivism.

However, I also drew upon other paradigmatic and philosophical influences. For example, the educational climate with all of its constraints was an external reality in which practitioners operated, and as such sat within an objectivist ontology (Bryman, 2016). I could not ignore this reality because it impacted on the drivers and practice of critical pedagogy and I did not wish to fall foul of Stake's (1995, p.101) caution, that to ignore the reality of the outside world is 'a poor way to cross a busy street.' This external reality therefore features in my review of the literature and in my interpretation of the findings. I could have chosen to investigate the constraints of the current educational climate and the social realities of participants' life events through a critical realist stance, with these as generative, causal mechanisms producing social regularities. However, it was the construction and interpretation of a myriad of experiences constituting influencers and motivators that I wished to investigate. I wanted to remain open to what lay behind these, whether they came from social, political, historical, psychological, spiritual or other sources. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.112) affirm, 'many of the most useful pieces of research stem from complex issues, complex research questions and "difficult to answer" research questions.' Similarly, critical pedagogy sits within the critical paradigm, but the tenets of critical pedagogy were not the focus of my research. The aim of my research was to investigate the practitioners of critical pedagogy rather than directly address oppressive social forces, and it therefore drew upon the critical paradigm, rather than being driven by it.

To summarise, I took a constructionist ontological position and an interpretivist and constructivist epistemological position, resulting in an overall interpretivist paradigm. Because my paradigm was interpretivist, subjectivity and bias were always close at hand and needed to be addressed with rigour, and so I next explicate the ways in which I attended to these.

3.3. Personal stance, researcher position and reflexivity

This section examines the way in which I used reflexivity to address bias resulting from my personal stance and the position I took in relation to my research. It is crucial that I explain these because I was the research instrument (Pitard, 2017), and I was working from an interpretivist and constructivist epistemology. From the outset I was very aware that my beliefs and values were impossible to strip away from the research process, but accepting and positively embracing this was challenging in the early stages of the study. My original research training was in an entirely positivist paradigm, through studying for a BSc in Psychology in the 1980s, where qualitative research did not feature, and researcher subjectivity was something to be eliminated. I subsequently spent five years as a Market Research Manager where I became familiar with qualitative methods, although the majority of my work was with quantitative methods. I felt much more drawn to qualitative research and although I knew that I wanted to approach this piece of research qualitatively, I had concerns regarding potential perceptions of its academic rigour. I was soon reassured by the literature and realised that qualitative research was, indeed, academically valid. However, the concept of embracing my beliefs, values and potential biases in relation to the research took longer to accept. Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2011) contention that qualitative enquiry is not a neutral activity, and that researchers' own values, biases and worldviews are lenses through which they interpret the already interpreted world of their participants, was a new concept to me. They assert that researchers need to understand their part in, and influence on the research, and should acknowledge and disclose their own selves, rather than trying to eliminate researcher effects. Similarly, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018, p.14) argue that 'there is no such thing as unmediated data or facts; these are always the results of interpretation,' and that this interpretation does not take place in a neutral space by a value free researcher. They contend that this leads to the inclusion and interpretation of some types of findings and the suppression of others. I intuitively knew this to be true and started to understand that this was acceptable provided the

researcher illuminates these influences through reflexivity. I took comfort in Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2011) assertion that highly reflexive researchers are acutely aware of the ways in which their own selves shape the research, and proceeded to analyse my position in regards to this.

The terms personal stance, researcher positionality and reflexivity are used differently and in some cases are conflated by writers. I have been influenced by Savin-Baden and Howell Major's (2013) definitions here, because I find these to be the most coherent. Personal stance reflects the position I took in relation to critical pedagogy, which resulted from my deeply held beliefs and attitudes. Researcher positionality denotes the position I adopted in relation to the participants. Reflexivity comprises the strategies I utilised to ensure that my personal stance and positionality were not detrimental to the research, and to address quality and rigour in my research.

My personal stance derived from my beliefs regarding human potential and capacity for growth, flourishing, and self-actualisation, the emancipatory potential of education, the values of radical education, my left-wing politics, and my values of social justice. These beliefs came from my utopian thinking, early spiritual grounding, lived experiences as a school pupil and an adult student, early politicisation, and from my teaching experience. A detailed description of these personal, biographical events is given in Chapter 1. These events led me to critical pedagogy as a way of being and as a teaching practice, although I had never come across the term. Teaching through critical pedagogy had proven to me that engaging in participatory learning based on students' lived experiences, appropriately validated and challenged by the teacher, was pedagogically far more effective than what Freire termed banking education (Freire, 1970). It had also shown me that critical pedagogy was effective in facilitating conscientization among students (Freire, 1970). My experience was grounded in teaching students with learning disabilities and mental ill health, adult education students, undergraduates and teacher trainees.

Alongside my commitment to critical pedagogy, my personal stance was also that Freirean conscientization (Freire, 1970) was not necessarily the goal of lifelong learning and that student resistance to critical pedagogy, discussed by hooks (1994) and Boorman (2011), should be acknowledged and respected. Ellsworth (1989) compellingly contests the notion that social justice can be achieved through education alone or that truly equal dialogue can take place in classrooms. Power dynamics are always present between the teacher and students, and between students themselves. Like Ellsworth, I am uncomfortable with an assumption that critical pedagogues have the insight, knowledge, and ability to facilitate 'empowerment' among students, and indeed in some cases, the right to do so.

Personal stance links closely to the issue of bias, which some qualitative researchers consider to be a negative to be guarded against, while others seek to clarify their bias and at times embrace it. Again, I initially found it hard to regard my biases as acceptable, but had actively chosen to take the latter approach because I did not believe that it was possible to eliminate researcher bias in qualitative research. As Becker (1967) contends, research is always carried out from someone's point of view. I was biased because, in Becker's terms, my 'point of view' was that I believed critical pedagogy could contribute to social justice, but because this was not a normative position, I was biased. Gitlin, Siegel and Boru (1989, p.245) argue that 'the question is not whether the data are biased; the question is whose interests are served by the bias.' In Gitlin, Siegel and Boru's terms, my research data serves the interests of those who also believe in critical pedagogy as an emancipatory project, worthy of protection in a constrained educational climate. I also hope that the interests of those who do not experience social justice in their lives may ultimately be served, by expanding knowledge of a practice which promotes it.

In relation to the participants, my positionality was two-fold; as a fellow practitioner of critical pedagogy, and a teacher who was openly dissatisfied with the current educational climate. These positions were highly significant

in relation to the participants. Berger, (2015, p.220) sees the following personal characteristics as positions which can influence the research:

...gender, race, affiliation, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, personal experiences, linguistic tradition, beliefs, biases, preferences, theoretical, political and ideological stances, and emotional responses to participants.

Berger (2015) sees these as influential in three ways. Firstly, participants may be more willing to share their experiences with a researcher whom they perceive to be sympathetic to their situation. Secondly, the nature of the researcher-participant relationship will affect the information that participants are willing to share. Thirdly, the way in which the researcher uses language, poses questions, and selects the lens through which she interprets the participants' responses. These were all certainly at play throughout my research, but were subtly different with each participant, determined by their specific characteristics in interaction with mine. I was also very aware of issues of power (Kvale, 1996; Merriam *et al.*, 2001; Cohen Manion and Morrison, 2011). The power dynamic between the participants and myself during the interviews, as perceived and experienced by me, resulted from my perception of the amount of experience each specific participant had of critical pedagogy, and the context in which they were working. This is discussed in more detail in section 3. However, when analysing the data, I did not feel these power dynamics to be influential, although they may have been at an unconscious level.

I use the term reflexivity to denote the strategies I utilised to ensure that my personal stance and researcher positionality were not detrimental to the research, and to ensure quality and rigour. I used a number of reflexive strategies as follows: In the spirit of Miller's (1995) 'autobiography of the question,' I describe the biographical events (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) which led to my orientation to critical pedagogy and this piece of research in Chapter 1. I answered my own research questions in order to document my stance regarding critical pedagogy (Berger, 2015), attached in

Appendix 1. I kept a reflexive diary detailing my personal responses, to each of the interviews and interviewees, a reflexivity strategy documented by Ortlipp, (2008) and Berger (2015). I filled this in diary immediately following each interview, recording to what extent the participant's responses resonated with me, and the reasons why these did or did not. I also recorded my emotional feelings about the interview and the participant overall, to ascertain whether my responses to their replies were being influenced by these overall, more personal factors.

In my reflexive diary, I included the memos on which I had detailed the stages of data analysis and how I arrived at my interpretations, and my questioning of how my own experience influenced my interpretations, also documented by Ortlipp (2008) and Berger (2015) as a reflexivity strategy. As discussed in 3.8, I coded the transcripts at sentence or short paragraph level, and transferred the codes to a spreadsheet. Against each code, I recorded on memos, whether I agreed or disagreed with each of the views expressed, and why. I then collapsed the codes into a smaller number of themes, and entered these on to the spreadsheet. Again, I recorded on memos, whether I agreed or disagreed with each of the views expressed in the theme, and why. I then incorporated these memos into my reflexive diary. The reason I created the memos and the reflexive diary, was to ensure that when writing up my findings, I did not bias them by inadvertently giving more coverage or importance to those themes which resonated with me. Through this, I was able to ensure that all of the themes were included, irrespective of my concurrence or otherwise of them.

I compared my interpretations of the participants' responses through different modalities (aural and text), in order, as Berger (2015, p.221) advises, to guard against 'unconscious editing'. In my reflexive diary, I detailed the stages of data analysis and how I arrived at my interpretations, and my questioning of how my own experience influenced my interpretations, also documented by Ortlipp (2008) and Berger (2015) as a reflexivity strategy. I used personal and professional reflection to critically compare and contrast

my experiences with those of participants. I kept an audit trail of the research decisions made, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and documented by Carcary (2009), Merriam (2009) and Berger (2015), and indicated throughout the thesis.

To summarise, I used a number of reflexivity strategies throughout the research in order to address bias resulting from my personal stance and positionality. My actions reflected Dodgson's (2019, p.221) statement that 'reflexivity is a process that permeates the whole research endeavour.' I was very aware that my commitment to critical pedagogy meant that I was biased in every aspect of my research and I used the strategies detailed in this section to be as open and explicit about these as possible. This is particularly important in a qualitative research strategy, to ensure that quality and rigour are evidenced through trustworthiness, including credibility and dependability, as denoted by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

3.4. Research strategy

This section explains my choice of a qualitative research strategy, selected because I wished to gain an understanding of the participants' meanings and interpretations of what gives life to critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector. As Stake (1995) explains, qualitative research attempts to evoke empathetic understanding, sometimes through thick description, to convey to the reader what the experience itself would convey. Such thick description (Geertz, 1973) is a key tenet of qualitative research and Denzin's (1989) description of it underpins my rationale for selecting it as my research strategy:

It presents detail, context, emotion and the webs of social relationships ...evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience...the voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (Denzin, 1989, p.83)

Although qualitative research is sometimes criticised as being impressionistic, subjective, difficult to replicate, difficult to generalise to other settings, with the responses of participants being affected by the characteristics of the researcher (Bryman, 2016), such criticisms appear to be essentially criticising qualitative research for not being quantitative research. Qualitative research seeks to understand social realities as constructed and interpreted by its actors, rather than to explain and predict an objective reality. I chose to use a qualitative research strategy in order to gain such understanding.

My choice of a qualitative research strategy was consistent with my interpretivist research paradigm. Within a qualitative research strategy there are a 'baffling number of choices' (Creswell, 2007, p.6) and approaches (Merriam, 2009), and I identify and describe my choices in the following sections of this chapter.

3.5. Research design

This section details the process of selecting my research design, a case study. I was investigating what gives life to critical pedagogy in the West Midlands' lifelong learning sector and I expected this to vary between participants, subject specialisms and educational contexts. I aimed to reflect the variety of contexts and the complexities of the individual participants' contexts. Yin's (2018, p.5) statement that 'the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena,' and his recommendation to use a case study where contextual conditions are pertinent, reflects the diversity and complexity I wished to investigate. Merriam's (1988, p.xiii) statement that qualitative case study is particularly suitable for 'extending the knowledge base of various aspects of education,' affirmed it as an appropriate and positive choice of research design for my study.

Stake (1995, p.2) and Merriam (2009, p.40) cite Smith's (1978) conception of the case study as a 'bounded system.' My studentship stipulated that the

study be based in the West Midlands' lifelong learning sector which represented a natural boundary around my case in terms of geography. I was also aware that it would not be possible to access an unlimited or representative sample of critical pedagogues across lifelong learning contexts, due to the difficulties of finding practitioners of critical pedagogy outside of the higher education sector. This is because they are less likely to be in publication. I was also aware from my professional experience in further education and adult and community learning, that the number of critical pedagogues in these contexts would be limited due to the constraints imposed by the prevailing skills agenda on teacher autonomy. Practitioners in these contexts might also be less likely to identify as critical pedagogues, because critical pedagogy might not have been covered on their teacher training programmes. These sampling factors constituted a further boundary, and alongside the geographic boundary, lent my research to a case study design.

Once I had decided upon a case study research design, I considered single case study designs and multiple-case study designs (Bryman, 2016; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). I underwent a number of iterations in my decision making, revolving around the definition of my 'unit of analysis' (Merriam, 2009, p.41). Merriam sees the unit of analysis as the defining factor in case study research, and Bryman (2016, p.61) stresses that 'it is crucial to be clear about what the unit of analysis is.' I therefore gave considerable thought to whether my unit of analysis was one case of what gives life to critical pedagogy, or several cases of what gives life to critical pedagogy. Either choice would have delimited the case, because the unit of analysis can be an individual or a group (Merriam, 2009), but I was initially concerned about Stake's (1995, p.2) statement, that the case is an 'integrated system.' I did not see the participants and their contexts as integrated, and was unsure as to whether they could therefore be considered a group and be bounded as a single unit. Conversely, I had concerns about using a multiple-case study design, where each participant and their context represented a case, because providing a rich, thick description of each case might have compromised the anonymity of

the participants. This was important in relation to critical pedagogy because it can be at odds with institutional agendas, although I could have ameliorated this by using cross case analysis (Yin, 2018).

I gained clarity on which way to proceed when I eventually conceived of what gives life to critical pedagogy as a phenomenon. I was then able to view the phenomenon of critical pedagogy as the unit of analysis, the group of participants as 'an instance' of the phenomenon, and the case boundary being drawn around a specific geographic region and sampling affordances (Merriam, 2009, p.40-44). This conception of my case led me to finally choose a single case study research design as the most appropriate, because it was the overall phenomenon of enacted critical pedagogy, rather than each participant as a discrete case that I wanted to understand. This reflected Miles and Huberman's (1994, p.25) description that 'the case is a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context.'

Once I had decided upon a single case study, I considered my case study type and found Merriam's (1988) interpretive case study to be the most appropriate type. She differentiates between primarily descriptive, interpretive, or evaluative case studies. Interpretive case studies use the descriptive data to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support or challenge theoretical assumptions, with findings including the presentation of thick, rich description. My intention to both develop concepts and theorise about what gives life to critical pedagogy matched this.

I was initially concerned that some authors see a case study as including multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011), because my information came from qualitative interviews only. However, I soon realised that I was conflating data sources and data collection methods. My data came from the extant literature, the interviewees and my own personal and professional experiences. This could be conceived of as different data sources. More importantly, my case study was designed to reflect Merriam's (2009) conception of case study, which focuses on the unit of analysis, and the particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic

characteristics of the case. As Stake (1995, p.xi) affirms, 'case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case.' My case was particularistic in that it focused on a specific phenomenon, descriptive in that it provided rich, thick description of the phenomenon (Geertz, 1973), and heuristic in that it is intended to illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon and extend their experience of it (Merriam, 1988; 2009). Its complexity is reflected in the different lifelong learning contexts of the participants.

3.6. Sampling

This section details the selection of my sample and the reasons for the approach I used. I was very aware at the outset that sourcing practitioners of critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector in a defined geographical region would be challenging. I therefore carried out extensive professional networking in order to find such practitioners at the outset of my research. Nisbett and Watt (1984) confirm that case studies should start with a wide field of focus; an open phase without selectivity or pre-judgement, followed by progressive focusing (Stake, 1995) to enable a narrower field of focus to be established, identifying the foci for subsequent study and data collection. I found practitioners currently practising through online literature searches, contributors to books on critical pedagogy, a twitter call, snowball sampling, and through my professional contacts. I contacted each by email and arranged a telephone or Skype call. Following this, I arranged an informal meeting with those people who were potential participants (currently practising critical pedagogy in the West Midlands) to discuss their work. During this meeting I asked them whether they would take part in the research, which they all agreed to. I sampled three pilot interview participants in the same way. The purpose of these face to face meetings was purely exploratory and did not form part of my formal data collection, although there was nothing substantial raised in these informal meetings that was not later re-presented during the formal interviews. This could therefore be seen as

offering a degree of triangulation, recommended by Merriam (2009) as an internal validation strategy.

I deliberated over whether to use the term 'sampling,' because Yin (2018) cautions against using sampling logic in case study research and Stake (1995) clearly states that case study research is not sampling research. However, Merriam (2009) does use the term sampling and observes that in case study research, purposive sampling is most commonly used. The strategy I used reflected this, because I was specifically looking for practitioners of critical pedagogy in a variety of lifelong learning contexts in the West Midlands. For the reasons discussed, I knew I could not provide a representative sample of such practitioners, and was reassured by Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2011, p.157) statement that case study research 'is deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased.' They explain that in purposive sampling, the researcher hand-picks the cases to be included based on their typicality or possession of particular characteristics, as did I. I sourced my sample from a range of lifelong learning contexts in order to provide variety rather than representation, creating an example of Bryman's (2016, p.62) 'exemplifying case,' akin to Yin's (2018) representative or typical (common) case:

...the case may be chosen because it exemplifies a broader category of which it is a member. ..or... will provide a suitable context for certain research questions to be answered. (Bryman, 2016, p.62)

Although Merriam (2009) states that purposive sampling generally takes place before data collection, some of my participants were recruited through snowball sampling during the data collection stage. I used snowball sampling, because as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggest, it is useful where communication networks are undeveloped, which was the case in finding practitioners of critical pedagogy. They confirm that interpersonal relations are very important in snowball sampling, and as Noy (2008, p.332) observes, 'snowball sampling is essentially social.' The fact that it was during my

exploratory meetings and interviews that participants suggested other practitioners of critical pedagogy to me, reflects Noy's observation.

Within my purposive and snowball sampling strategy, I wanted to provide as much variety in lifelong learning contexts as possible, while being mindful that representativeness is not the goal in case study research. However, I was unable to source participants from every lifelong learning context, as detailed in Table 1. This does not mean that critical pedagogues do not operate in these contexts. The critical pedagogy participants selected constituted twelve practitioners from a range of lifelong learning sector contexts, reflecting the diversity and academic levels in the sector. Although my sample was selected to reflect this diversity, I did not have any preconceptions regarding potential differences in participants' responses based on their context, subject or programme level. The specific contexts and study levels taught by the participants are detailed in Table 1. I was not able to recruit from museums and libraries, University of the Third Age, work-based learning, sixth form colleges or private adult education providers. This could potentially be a weakness of the study, because practitioners in these locations may have had context specific insights and experiences, which would have added to the findings. However, the range of lifelong learning contexts and academic levels did provide substantial variety and breadth. As discussed in 3.5, this range of lifelong learning contexts can be conceived of as multiple data sources in the case study, which, according to Denzin (1978), constitutes a source of triangulation.

Table 1. Participant Context and Teaching Level

Pilot participants				
Participant code	LLL context	Subject	Programme levels	Sampling route
P1	Residential Adult Education	Initial Teacher Education: Post-Compulsory	L4-L6	Snowball sample
P2	Higher Education	Various	L3-L6	Twitter
P3	Residential Adult Education	Initial Teacher Education: Post-Compulsory	L4-L6	Snowball sampling
Participants				
Participant code	LLL context	Subject	Programme levels	Sampling route
M1	Trade Union Education	Union Representation	All levels	Snowball sampling
M2	Further Education	Access to Social Sciences	L3	Supervisor
M3	Higher Education	Social Work	L5-L7	Online literature search
M4	Further Education	Access to Social Sciences	L3	Twitter Snowball sampling
M5	Higher Education	Trade Union Studies	L6-L7	Old school friend
M6	Adult and Community Education	International Politics	All levels	Online search
M7	Residential Adult Education	Foundation Learning	E1-L3	Institution open day Twitter
M8	Higher Education	Social Work	L5-L7	Online literature search
M9	Higher Education	Initial Teacher Education: Post-Compulsory	L4-L5	Literature search
M10	Further Education	English for Speakers of Other Languages	E1-L2	Snowball sampling
M11	Further Education	English for Speakers of Other Languages	E1-L2	Snowball sampling
M12	Prison Education	Criminology	L4-L5	Online search Conference networking

3.7. Data collection

My data collection method comprised face to face interviews, to enable me to elicit rich, detailed descriptions of what 'gives life' to critical pedagogy. These drew upon the life history method and the philosophy and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). I collected my data through twelve face to face, semi-structured interviews with practitioners of critical pedagogy.

Life history method

The first part of the semi-structured interviews with practitioners of critical pedagogy drew upon Goodson and Sikes' (2001) life history approach, in order to elicit both the personal and wider social influences which ultimately led participants to critical pedagogy. I drew upon the life history method because I felt that it would have the potential to elicit the human stories that initially oriented practitioners to critical pedagogy, which was a key ingredient in understanding 'what gives life to critical pedagogy.' As Bullough (1998, p.24) asserts, 'to understand educational events, one must confront biography,' and Goodson (1981, p.69) professes that 'in understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is.' Goodson and Sikes (2001) postulate that the life history approach yields information which broadens our understanding of teachers' work, and can also be harnessed as a practical strategy for personal and professional development. This reflects my aim of extending knowledge. Goodson and Sikes (2001) posit that teachers' values, motivations and understandings have considerable influence on professional practice and state that 'when the focus of enquiry is... why they adopt a particular pedagogical style... the potential of life histories is enormous' (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.21). My choice reflected this.

A further reason for my drawing upon the life history method, was that I wanted others to recognise themselves in the life histories of the practitioners; that those who wish to practice critical pedagogy, but feel unable to do so due to educational constraints, might draw inspiration and

strength from this. As Goodson and Walker (1991, p.71) ask 'what would a project look like if it explicitly set out to change teachers rather than the curriculum?' Plummer (1995) affirms that reading life stories and histories of others in similar situations can be empowering and emancipatory because they show individuals that they are not alone. In addition, seeing how someone else has dealt with situations can provide models of ways to proceed. Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985, p.12) suggest that knowledge of how others have come to terms with the system, coped with the problems and made their individual contributions might 'increase the prospects for personal satisfaction, and the redefinition of situations more in line with personal aspirations.'

I aimed to illuminate this link between structure and agency, to both further our understanding and knowledge, and to affirm critical pedagogical practice as a real possibility for other teachers. Ojermark (2007) explains that sharing life histories, enables individuals to discuss themselves and their lives, and also the social, economic, and political spaces in which they live. She states that life history can therefore be used to 'communicate how structure and agency intersect to produce the circumstances of a particular person's life' (Ojermark, 2007, p.3). My aim similarly reflected Goodson's (1992, p.6) purpose of life history, which includes, 'locating...the teacher's own life story alongside a broader contextual analysis.'

The term life history is conceived of in various ways by different writers, and life history and life story are sometimes used interchangeably (Bryman, 2016). I therefore considered a range of approaches (Ojermark, 2007; Bryman, 2016) in order to identify the one which my research goals best reflected. I found Goodson and Sikes' (2001) conception of life history to be the most relevant to my research. It emphasises the crucial relationship between individuals' lives, and historical and social context and events. My rationale for using life history reflected their definition: 'The life story individualises and personalises; the life history contextualises and politicises' (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.88). My choice was affirmed by Kincheloe's

(2007, p.21) assertion, that 'a successful critical pedagogy for the future must be deeply concerned with the relationship between the socio-political domain and the life of the individual.' The events and influences which orientated participants to critical pedagogy, were located in historical, political and social contexts, and are a crucial ingredient in what gives life to critical pedagogy.

There are different methodological approaches and types of analysis in life history (Ojermark, 2007) and the specific way in which I used it as a method was in the first part of the interview, where I asked participants a direct question about which life events led them to critical pedagogy. This accords with the work of Laub and Sampson (2004), who examined the significance of turning points in their interviewees' lives in relation to the subject being studied. It also accords with Goodson's (2014) advice to Kadi-Hanifi and Keenan (2015, p.341), to focus on 'critical moments which changed perspectives and knowledge'. Goodson and Sikes (2001) explain that there are likely to be many influences, experiences and relationships within the teacher's life which have formed their philosophy of education and professional identity, which inform their work.

The remainder of the interview was concerned with the practitioners' inspiration, motivations, sources of sustenance, teaching strategies, and their ideas regarding the way in which critical pedagogy could potentially be harnessed to inspire others wishing to practice. In some cases, biographical details also emerged in relation to these questions. I use the term 'drew upon' the life history method, because I used it in the first part of the interview only, and only in relation to the life events which led the practitioners to critical pedagogy.

Although Goodson, in his 2014 meeting with Kadi-Hanifi and Keenan (2015), stresses that the life history method is a discussion between equals (albeit with agendas) and not a one-way interview, I ensured that the participant's experience was the focus of the interview, rather than a two-way exchange of life history experiences. This was because I wanted to minimise the impact of my experiences on what the participants revealed as significant. Their stories

were the focus of the interviews, mine came from autoethnographic reflections, although the interviews certainly had a conversational tenor.

I was mindful that the participants' life history was a construction and interpretation of the influences and events to which they attached meaning in relation to critical pedagogy. As Denzin (1997, p.5) states, 'language and speech do not mirror experience.' My interpretations and reporting of the participants' stories were similarly constructed and interpreted, reflecting Kadi-Hanifi and Keenan's (2015, p.343) caution that 'life history is also prone to misinterpretations by the researcher in the process of interpretation and contextualisation.' However, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) propose that reliability in life history interviewing derives from the identification of bias and utilisation of techniques to eliminate it, which I have done through ongoing reflexivity. Such bias is a concern in all qualitative interviewing (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Bryman, 2016) and indeed Goodson and Sikes (2001, p.25) contend 'we would argue that all human knowledge and experience as expressed through verbal accounts is in essence biased.' The ways in which I addressed issues of bias and misinterpretation are discussed throughout this methodology chapter.

Appreciative Inquiry

The second part of the interviews drew upon the philosophy and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008, p.xv) define Appreciative Inquiry as 'a philosophy that incorporates an approach.' It is an organisational development and change tool, which is based upon on the premise that the type of questions we ask and the discussions we take part in govern the direction in which we move and grow (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005; Ghaye, 2011). AI focuses on what gives life to an organisation, by engaging people in telling stories of success (Bushe, 2011). It is also used as a research method (Bushe 2012). I was examining the inspirations, motivations, and sources of sustenance of educators who practice an alternative pedagogy in the current constrained educational climate. My enquiry required a method of questioning which specifically

elicited these. Cockell and McArthur-Blair's (2012) AI work in higher education encapsulates the rationale behind my approach. They state that although there has been much work in critical pedagogy and transformative learning regarding profound issues of exclusion, 'a focus on what is working and how to get more of it is quite radically new' (Cockell and McArthur-Blair 2012, p.58).

I drew upon the philosophy of AI to determine and answer my research and interview questions, because as Bushe, (2011, p.4) observes, 'what researchers choose to study and how they study it creates, as much as it discovers the world.' Ghaye's (2011) framework for teachers' reflective practice incorporates AI processes, and underpins the positive lens approach I took, as does the paradigm of positive psychology. Cherkowski and Walker (2014) assert that positive psychology shifts the focus of research from deficiencies to strengths, from looking at what is wrong with a view to fixing or eliminating it, to looking at what is succeeding and trying to build on it. More specifically, Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008, p.9) contend that 'one can study moments of creativity and innovation or moments of debilitating bureaucratic stress. One has a choice.' They argue that we need generative forms of enquiry which help us to discover what could be, which my choice of a positive lens echoes.

My research links directly with the underpinning principles of AI philosophy; the constructionist, simultaneity, poetic, anticipatory and positive principles, devised by Cooperrider and Whitney (1999). The 'constructionist principle' (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008, p.8) proposes that we construct the organisations we inhabit through our day to day discourse and interactions. AI stimulates ideas and images that generate new, actionable possibilities. This was reflected in my research through the participants telling and reflecting on their stories of critical pedagogy, identifying what would enable them to use it more, and how we might mobilise it across the sector. The principle of 'simultaneity' (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008, p.9) posits that in enquiring into human systems we change them, the seeds of

change are implicit in the questions asked and that social systems move in the direction of the questions they discuss most persistently and passionately. I wanted to elicit the participants' positive stories and possibilities for critical pedagogy, in order to provide new impetus for them, for readers of the research and for myself. The 'poetic principle' (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008, p.9) professes that the life of an organisation is expressed in the stories people tell each other. This was reflected in the participants telling the human stories behind their practice of critical pedagogy. The 'anticipatory principle' (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008, p.9) contends that human systems project into the future and this acts as a mobilising agent. This was reflected in the participants discussing what would enable them to use critical pedagogy more and how we might mobilise it across the sector, which was intended to create mobilising ideas. The 'positive principle' (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008, pp.9-10) proposes that momentum and change require positive emotions and social bonding, with a belief that hope, excitement, inspiration and camaraderie lead to new ideas and cognitive flexibility. This was reflected in the positive feedback the participants' expressed regarding the process of reflecting on their practice of critical pedagogy.

I drew upon the philosophy and principles underpinning AI, but chose not to use its full methodology. This is because one of its methodological principles is the selection of an affirmative topic by members of an organisation or system, followed by a '4D' process, constituting four stages: 'Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny' (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, pp.15-16; Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008, pp.6-7) resulting in a collaborative vision and plan. I considered bringing together the participants and undertaking a full 4D methodological AI regarding 'what gives life to critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector?' However, I decided that this would be too risky in terms of being able to coordinate people's diaries, asking them to travel to a location that may be inconvenient for them in terms of work time, or asking people to give up time during the weekends. I was concerned with the risk of drop out at the last minute. I therefore chose to carry out

Cooperrider and Whitney's (2005, p.14) individual 'appreciative interviews' with participants, in locations convenient to them. Bushe (2012) explains that during the 1990s, Cooperrider emphasised that the philosophy rather than the methodology of AI was paramount, and he encouraged widespread experimentation and innovation in methods. As such, I was comfortable in my adaptation of method. Michael (2005) successfully drew upon AI for use with individual research participants by choosing to use appreciative interviews only, and not AI's 4D stage process, which supported my decision.

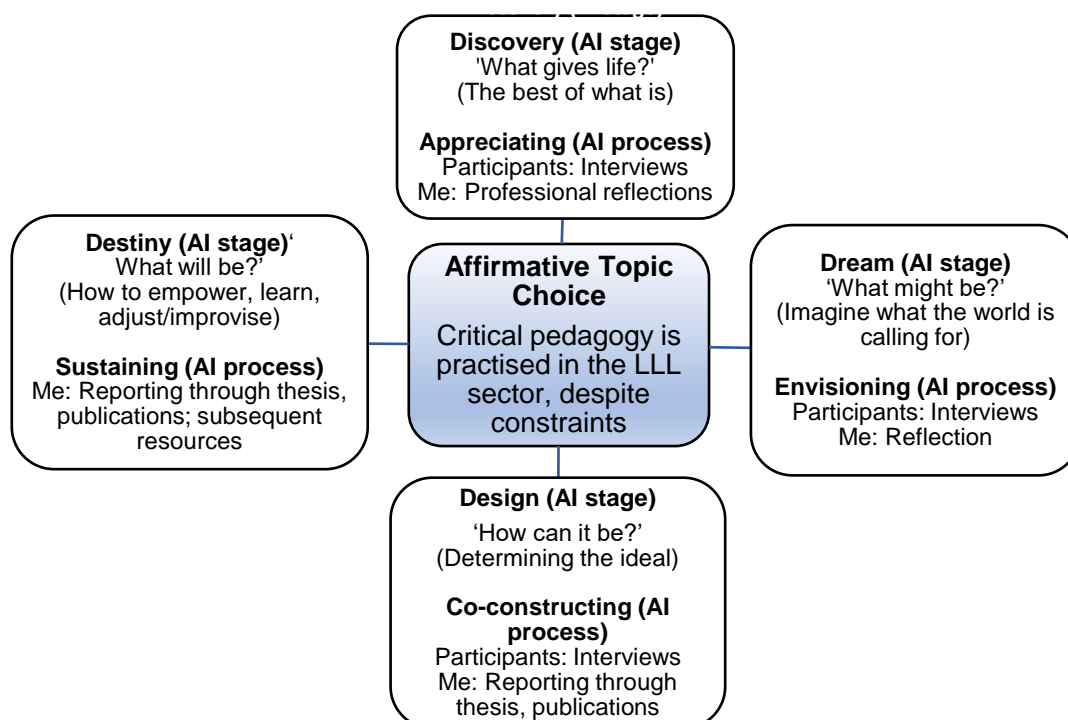
However, I did select an affirmative topic, and drew upon AI's 4D stages (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008) in devising my interview questions. The affirmative topic constituted the fact that critical pedagogy was being practised in the lifelong learning sector. In stage 1, Discovery, people share meaningful, personal stories relating to the affirmative topic. In my research this was reflected in the interview questions, 'what life events led you to CP?', 'why do you think CP is important?', 'what inspires you to practice it?', 'what motivates you?', 'what sustains you?', 'which strategies are successful?' In stage 2, Dream, people imagine their organisation at its best. In my research this constituted their ideal practice of critical pedagogy, reflected in the question 'what would enable you to practice critical pedagogy more?' In stage 3, Design, people develop concrete proposals for the new organisational state, in this case, 'what message would you give others wishing to practice CP?', and 'what can we do to mobilise it across the sector for those wishing to practice it?' The interview questions all reflected AI's 'unconditional positive question' (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005; Ludema, Cooperrider and Barrett, 2006). In stage 4 Destiny, people choose individual action commitments. In my research, this is the act of me reporting the findings in my thesis, and writing subsequent publications and practitioner resources.

The four stages of AI, (the 4D cycle) are also conceived of as four processes; appreciating, envisioning, co-constructing and sustaining (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008, p.5). I have adapted the authors' model (Figure

4) to illustrate the way in which the modified methods I used, link to the four stages/processes of traditional AI methodology. These modifications enabled me to adapt the AI 4D stage/process method to work as a research tool with individual participants, and stage 4 Destiny being carried out by me as the researcher.

Figure 4. Drawing from AI

Adapted from: Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008, p.5)



As discussed in Chapter 1, criticisms of AI relate to concerns that focussing on positive stories and experiences could invalidate the negative organisational experiences of participants, thus repressing potentially important conversations (Bushe, 2011; 2012). I therefore ensured that participants were able to express negative issues and waited until they had fully finished speaking before gently guiding them back to the research and interview questions, and the positive lens. This accorded with McNamee's (2003) principle that AI should not prohibit problem talk, and that the researcher should frame questions that help move from problems toward appreciation.

Issues regarding the validity and bias of positive lens methodologies such as AI have been raised by proponents of more traditional methodologies, but all constructivist and interpretive epistemologies and methodologies take place through a particular lens. Like Reed (2007), I considered positive experiences elicited through AI to constitute a particular research lens.

The interviews

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.409), state that 'the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life, it is part of life itself.'

Similarly, I saw the interview as embodying real life and thus life-giving to the subject under investigation, critical pedagogy. I felt that it was the only way that I could really understand what gives life to critical pedagogy. As Merriam (2009, p.88) asserts, 'interviewing is sometimes the only way to get data.' Kvale's (1996, p.1) description of the interview encompasses what I wanted to achieve:

The researcher listens to what people themselves tell about their lived world.... attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences.

Had I used written narratives, I would not have been able to follow up on themes, ask for examples or clarify points. I needed the flexibility that Bryman (2016) describes in qualitative interviews, where research ideas are more open-ended, focus on interviewees' own perspectives, and the interviewer can depart from the interview guide and vary the order and wording of questions. The appreciative nature of the interviews linked to critical pedagogy itself, in terms of affirming the agency the participants exercised. This is similar to the link Duckworth and Smith (2018, p. 535) draw between their 'research conversations' and critical pedagogy, in terms of affirming the agency of learners who had previously undergone negative educational experiences.

I carried out three pilot interviews prior to my main data collection phase in order to test whether my questions were workable. Prior to the pilot

interviews, I also carried out two interviews with people close to me regarding subjects that they were inspired and motivated by, to gain feedback on my interviewing skills, because I knew that they would be very honest with me. One suggested that I ask for examples in order to get the interviewee to expound upon the subject, and the other said that I interrupted too much. Practicing my interviewing skills was therefore a secondary purpose of the pilot interviews. In listening to the audio recordings of the pilot interviews, I felt that my voice still featured too often and I had not eliminated interruptions sufficiently. I was concerned about this when I entered the main part of my data collection. Kvale (1996) cautions that the interviewer needs to be gentle and allow subjects to finish what they are saying. I was aware that my enthusiasm meant that I jumped in too soon when respondents were speaking. However, I was also reassured by his confirmation that empathic listening to nuances and textures can be more important than questioning techniques, and I was confident of my ability to do this.

I was also concerned about Merriam's (2009) description of the interviewer-respondent interaction as complex, with both bringing biases, predispositions, attitudes and physical characteristics that affect the data elicited. Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2011, p.411) statement that a disadvantage of interviews is that they are 'prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer,' and Merriam's (2009) and Bryman's (2016) advice that the interviewer adopt a neutral stance, added to my concerns. I was concerned about asking leading questions and giving responses which were also leading. The texts I read reflect different approaches to this. This was actually helpful because it enabled me to be mindful of the way I phrased questions and responses, but also affirmed that complete neutrality is neither possible nor desirable. For example, Fowler (2009) suggests that the more the interviewer prompts and probes, the greater the chance of bias, yet Kvale (1996) states that leading questions can be necessary to elicit certain kinds of information. He suggests that they can enhance the reliability of the research and are probably used too little. He sees concern with leading questions as related to a belief in an objective social reality, and proposes

that the issue is not whether to lead, but where the interview question should lead to. This is determined by the project's research question, which should be made explicit. This made complete sense to me, particularly as I had made a very deliberate decision to ask questions which derived from a positive lens, Appreciative Inquiry approach. I was explicit about this with participants from the outset.

With regard to leading responses, I was very conscious that when I gave encouragement for the participant to continue, at some level I was potentially determining or confirming the direction of the answer, reflecting Kvale's (1996) observation that the interviewer's verbal and bodily responses can act as positive or negative reinforcers. However, I needed to ensure that my questions and responses were not wooden or formulaic, in order to create a natural and dynamic interaction (Kvale, 1996). It was my responsibility to motivate participants to discuss their thoughts, feelings and experiences (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011), which included giving appropriate verbal and non-verbal feedback. I was mindful of Gadd's (2004) assertion that an unsupportive, unsympathetic or negative response from the interviewer can discourage the respondent from proceeding. I therefore worked very hard to maintain a balance between rapport with the interviewee and neutrality in relation to the content (Patton, 2002). For example, I tried not to agree too enthusiastically about the difficulties of the prevailing educational climate. However, I knew that I could not be entirely neutral if I was to achieve a positive and dynamic interaction, and in doing so, at times I demonstrated my agreement with the interviewee's position.

A further, albeit lesser concern, was with asymmetries of power. Both Cohen Manion and Morrison (2011) and Kvale (1996) imply that the researcher holds more power than the interviewee because they define and control the situation. I would argue that the interview situation is often more complex than that. In my interviews, I felt that where the interviewee was a published academic in critical pedagogy in higher education, the balance of power rested with them. Where the interviewees were new to critical pedagogy as a

named theory and practice, I felt that the power balance rested with me. Where the interviewees were familiar with critical pedagogy and their employment status and experience was broadly at the same level as mine, I felt an equal power balance. These were my subjective feelings, and the participants may of course have felt quite differently. In order to assuage asymmetries of power, I deliberately commenced each with the question 'how did you find out about critical pedagogy?' using a tone of voice which implied 'how did you find out critical pedagogy was a "thing," with a name, because I didn't know it was?' The disclosure that I had not been aware that it was a named theory and practice until I commenced my PhD, even though I had often taught in that way, was a deliberate and conscious strategy to put participants at their ease. Some had not come across the term critical pedagogy until my initial contact with them, even though they had been snowball sampled to me as practising in this way, which they did. This was particularly the case in further education where, in my professional experience, critical pedagogy did not feature in our teacher training or in professional discussions between colleagues. However, I was mindful that this is not the case in all further education teacher education programmes. Kvale (1996, p.125) tells us that the interviewer must 'establish an atmosphere in which the subject feels safe enough to talk freely.' This strategy was very successful because my admission that I had not heard of critical pedagogy, immediately put the interviewees at their ease and set them thinking about their own professional biography. This enabled the subsequent questions 'what do you think critical pedagogy is?' and 'why do you think it is important?' to flow naturally, in a non-threatening way, which I hope made the participants not feel that they were being 'tested.' However, in retrospect, for the three respondents who were unfamiliar with the term critical pedagogy, although we discussed it in my exploratory meetings and I had given them a detailed briefing sheet about it prior to the interview, it might have been less threatening to introduce 'what do you think critical pedagogy is?' later in the interview, when they were feeling completely comfortable.

Following these questions, the interview then progressed to the life history events which had oriented participants towards a critical pedagogical stance, and at this point in the interview, all of the participants were relaxed and appeared to enjoy reflecting on and discussing this. This was followed by questions relating to what currently inspires and motivates them, their sources of sustenance, teaching strategies, and opinions regarding ways in which critical pedagogy might be mobilised across the sector for those wishing to practice it.

The research questions and semi-structured interview questions used with the twelve practitioners of critical pedagogy are detailed in Appendix 2.

Kvale's (1996) nine types of semi-structured interview questions comprise introducing questions, follow-up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct questions, indirect questions, structuring questions, silence, and interpreting questions. I used these interchangeably and ensured that all of the themes I wanted to cover were included and regularly verified my understanding of what the interviewees were saying.

The interviews took place predominantly in the participants' places of work, either in their own office, a teaching room, or a meeting room. Two of the interviews took place in participants' homes because they did not have appropriate spaces at work. Prior to the interviews, I sent each participant a covering letter and an information sheet explaining the purpose of the research, and the consent form. These are attached in Appendices 3, 4 and 5. Before each interview started, I revisited the contents of the letter, information sheet and consent form, received the signed consent form, and requested permission to audio record the interview, which all participants agreed to. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour.

When the interview was finished, each of the interviewees remarked that they had found the process of reflection rewarding. Kvale (1996, p.36) observes that a qualitative interview can be a 'rare and enriching experience' for the interviewee, because in day to day life it is uncommon for a person to be

interested only in seeking to understand another person's experiences and views on a subject. As Merriam (2009) notes, interviews are an opportunity for participants to clarify their own thoughts and experiences. It was very rewarding for me that the interviewees expressed this, and Kvale's (1996, p.35) suggestion that the interview might 'for both parties be characterised by positive feelings of a common intellectual curiosity and a reciprocal respect,' was evident in all of the interviews. This was certainly the case for me. This links clearly to Appreciative Inquiry's 'positive principle' where positive affect and social bonding lead to increased momentum (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008; Bushe, 2013). The interviews provided an opportunity for me to clarify my own thoughts and experiences and I compared these with the participants,' which I describe in Chapter 4.

Following the interview, I emailed a message of appreciation to each participant along with the interview questions on an editable, Word document, for them to add any further thoughts they might want to include. One participant added some further thoughts by email rather than using the interview question template. Another participant sent me a playlist of tracks relating to the biographical influences on her practice of critical pedagogy. This was as a result of how motivated she had been by the interview. It can also be seen as a reflection of the rapport we had built in a short period of time; a rapport that was also built with the other participants. I was so delighted with the playlist that I considered asking each participant to submit either a piece of music, a poem, a drawing or such like, expressing what critical pedagogy meant to them, to be included as appendices. However, I decided that doing so would require some sort of analysis of these artefacts and to learn how to analyse a range of media was beyond the scope of my research.

I followed Bryman's (2016) recommendation to audio record and transcribe the interviews so that I could attend to what was being said rather than be disrupted by taking notes. I transcribed the three pilot interviews myself and sent the twelve interviews to be used as data to a transcriber, which saved

me a substantial amount of time. An example transcript is provided in Appendix 6. I then listened to the audio recording of each interview while simultaneously reading the transcript in order to check for accuracy and adjust where necessary. As Bryman (2016, p.483) cautions, 'steps clearly need to be taken to check on the quality of transcription.' Unlike some writers, I did not feel that transcribing the pilot interviews myself immersed me in the data any more than those which were professionally transcribed. This was because the process of repeatedly listening to the interviews and reading the transcripts through different theoretical lenses, resulted in me being as equally immersed as with those I had transcribed myself. I sent the transcription to the relevant interviewee for information purposes, and to enable them to remove anything they were not comfortable with, which one participant did.

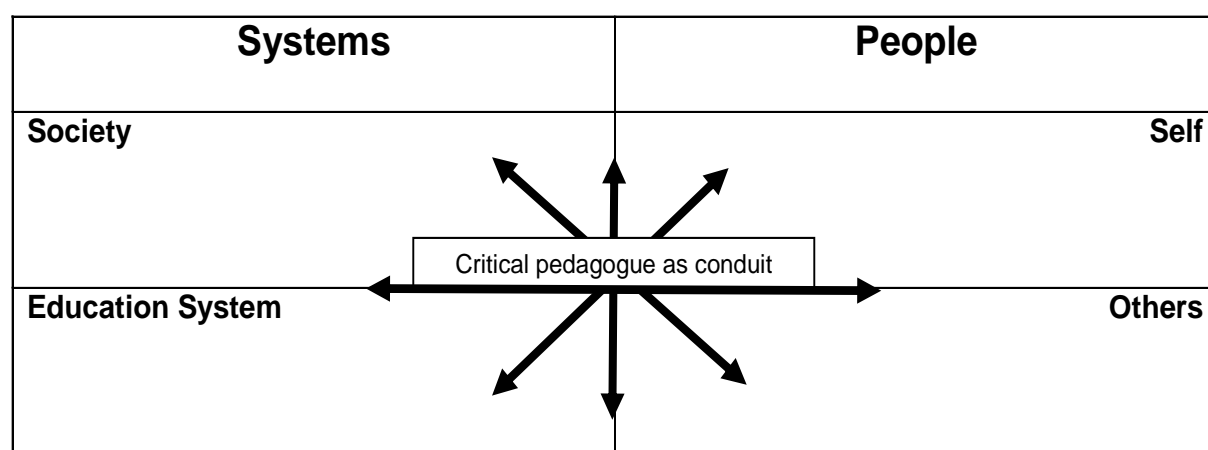
To summarise, my data came from face to face, semi-structured interviews, which were coherent with my interpretivist paradigm and qualitative research strategy. The interviews drew upon the life history method and the philosophy and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in order to answer my research question, 'what gives life to critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector?' They comprised twelve interviews with practitioners of critical pedagogy.

3.8 Data analysis

Throughout the data analysis process, my research question, 'what gives life to critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector?' remained at the forefront of my mind. As Merriam (2009, p.176) clearly states, 'the practical goal of data analysis is to find answers to your research questions.' To do this, I analysed the interviews thematically. First I re-listened to each of the interview audio files while re-reading the relevant transcription to check it for accuracy. I then re-read each transcript on three separate occasions, making notes of significant or recurring concepts. This reflects Maher *et al's* (2018) identification of immersion in the data as important in order to achieve Corbin

and Strauss' (1990) creative and imaginative insight into what the data are reflecting. From my reading and re-reading, I inferred that the participants' drivers related to four dimensions; wider society, the education system, the self, and other people. These four dimensions aggregated to two broader dimensions; systems and people. The individual critical pedagogue (participants) acted as a conduit between each of the four dimensions. I organised these concepts into a working model, illustrated in Figure 5, reflecting Bogdan and Bicklen's (2007) suggestion to use visual devices to bring clarity to analysis.

Figure 5. Analytic Model



In order to determine whether my model was a valid data analysis lens, I decided first to open-code (Merriam, 2009) the transcripts at sentence level using Nvivo, in case this gave me a different picture of the data. This resulted in a long list of codes and although this process moved me from immersion in the data to interaction with it (Suddaby, 2006; Maher *et al.*, 2018), the number of codes was unwieldy. In addition to this, the participant quotations populating the codes were too short and seemed disembodied and unrelated to each other. This echoed Bryman's (2016) warning, that coding can result in a loss of context, with the data becoming fragmented and losing narrative flow.

I therefore decided to adopt a manual approach to coding, in order that I could view the full transcript in front of me at all times. Maher *et al.* (2018)

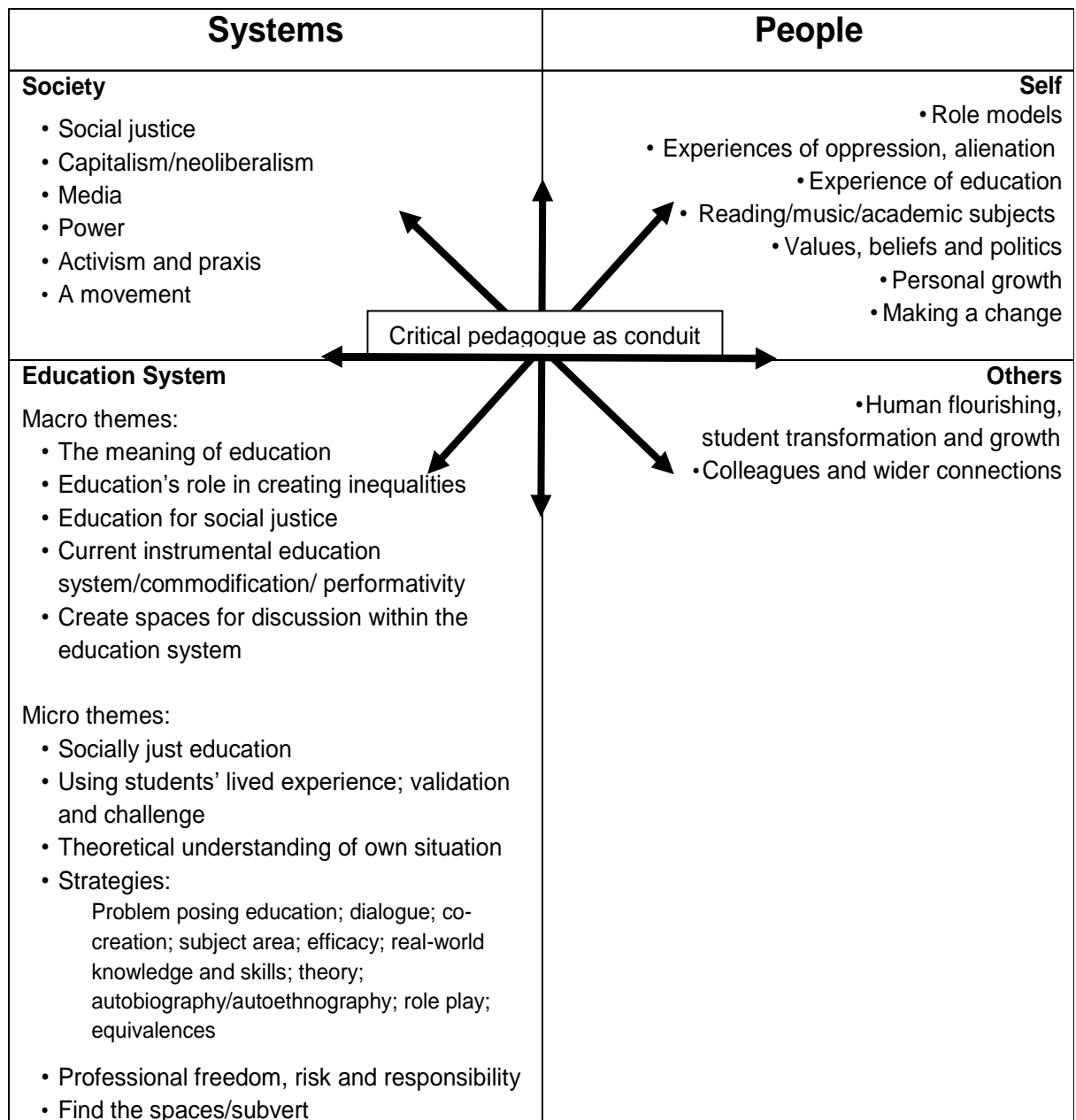
posit that coding using more kinaesthetic and visual methods, such as coloured pens and sticky notes, leads to slower and more meaningful interaction with data, than coding through Nvivo alone affords. I returned to my analytic model to ascertain what coding the data through the four dimensions might yield. I decided to start again, re-coding the transcripts on paper, according to each of the four dimensions, using four coloured highlighter pens. I coded on the paper transcripts because I wanted to be able to see and revisit the codes within the wider context of each interview. The majority of responses fell within one of the four dimensions. Where they did not, it was because the information was not relevant to the research or interview questions. I therefore concluded that the model was a valid lens through which to analyse the data, present the findings, and build my thesis. I then allocated a code name to each highlighted response on the transcripts. These were at sentence/short paragraph level. I produced a template for each transcript (Figure 6) and transferred the codes to the corresponding dimension on the template. This gave me a completed template for each participant, via which I could triangulate the data. I then compared the templates in order to merge certain codes and ensure that code names were consistent across all participants.

Figure 6. Example Template

Systems	People
Society	Self
Education System	Others

Following this, I transferred the aggregated codes onto an Excel spreadsheet. I then collapsed the codes into a smaller number of themes, illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Dimensions and Themes



Throughout the process, I heeded Bryman's (2016, p.583) advice to attend to:

...the significance of the coded material for the lives of the people you are studying, forging interconnections between codes, and reflecting on the overall importance of your findings for the research questions and the research literature.

I considered analysing each theme in relation to the similarities and differences between participants' responses and between the contexts in which they worked. Bryman (2016, p.586), cites Ryan and Bernard (2003) in suggesting 'similarities and differences' as an approach to thematic analysis. However, I was mindful of Green *et al's* (2007) assertion that the generation of themes requires moving from a description of categories to explanation, or preferably interpretation.

As a PhD student, I was apprehensive about moving to the stage of interpretation and theorising in terms of confidence in my academic voice. However, I had full confidence in my analytic model and therefore decided to heed Bryman's (2016) advice. He states that although the process of interpretation and theorising potentially contaminates participants' responses, findings acquire significance only when the data has been reflected on, interpreted, and theorised. He declares, 'you are not there as a mere mouthpiece' (Bryman 2016, p.584).

At this point I started to view my analytic model as a potentially theoretical model, reflecting Merriam's (2009) view that findings can constitute models and theories that explain the data, or description, themes, or categories that cut across data. She explains that these reflect different levels of analysis, ranging from simple, concrete description to high-level abstractions and theory construction. I had carried out Merriam's (2009) first two levels of data analysis. Firstly the concrete description of data, reflected in codes and code names, and secondly the development of concepts to describe phenomena, reflected in my themes and the concepts constituting the four dimensions of my analytic model. That is, drivers related to society, the education system, the self and others, with the critical pedagogue acting as a conduit between these dimensions. Merriam's third stage involves 'making inferences developing models, or generating theory,' and she cites Miles and Huberman (1994) as describing this process as moving up:

...from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape. We're no longer just dealing with observables, but also with

unobservables, and are connecting the two with inferential glue. (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.261)

In order to develop my analytic model into a theoretical model, I returned to the literature to examine my concept of the critical pedagogue acting as a conduit between the four dimensions of society, the education system, the self and others, and compared the participants and my own experiences with those of critical pedagogues reviewed in the literature (Torres, 1998; Kirlyo, 2013b; Connolly, 2008; Clare, 2015; Porfilio and Ford, 2015). I also examined the concepts of society, education, self and others, as depicted in the literature relating to critical pedagogy. I present this in Chapter 5.

The data through a reflexive lens

When I commenced my exploratory meetings with potential participants, I was struck by the fact that many of them knew about critical pedagogy, although like me, there were also those who had not heard of the term, but did teach in that way. This may be surprising given that my PhD is in critical pedagogy, but as discussed in the introduction to this thesis and this chapter, I did not know that critical pedagogy was a named and established body of theory and practice until I applied for my PhD. When I did find out about critical pedagogy, and more importantly started connecting with and meeting critical pedagogues, I felt as though I had previously been left out of a secret. How had all these people heard of critical pedagogy when I had not? I was immediately fascinated by how they knew about it, and compared and contrasted my own story with theirs. Thinking about my personal experience enabled me to understand why I had not come across critical pedagogy before and somewhat ameliorated my frustration that I could have been using it far more in my teaching practice. I then discovered that I could legitimately use my experiences in critical pedagogy as part of my research, with relevant autobiographical details adding additional reflexivity and rigour to my research, and a further interpretive layer through which to analyse my data. By comparing and contrasting my experiences in critical pedagogy with my participants', I could add depth to what gives life to critical pedagogy.

The linking of self to social reflects the underpinnings of Freirean critical pedagogy, whereby lived experience is linked to the historical, political and social context of such experience. My intentions were to provide an additional layer of analysis and interpretation to that of the participants, to describe the ways in which I have been able to use critical pedagogy within a prescriptive curriculum, and to enhance reflexivity and rigour in my research.

This additional layer of analysis provided a deeper understanding than my interpretation of the participants' experiences alone could give. My interviews lasted approximately one hour, whereas I had an incomparable time period to reflect on the personal, psychological, social, political, economic and spiritual aspects of my experiences in critical pedagogy and transformative learning. While this represented a very different type of data to that derived from the interviews, it enabled additional analysis in terms of comparison and contrast. It was also very illuminating in terms of my professional practice, enabling me to exercise greater reflexivity in relation to my educational philosophy and pedagogy. This also complements Goodson's (2008) conception that teacher's life history research illuminates the person behind the prescriptive curriculum and the managerialist culture, thus showing us that there are other choices and options. Personal reflection illuminated the reasons I had not used critical pedagogy to the extent I might have done, and I hope that this will resonate with readers. As Pereira, Settelemaier and Taylor (2005, p.50) propose:

By understanding deeply how historical, social, cultural forces are shaping their lives, educators may come to view their established professional practices with a fresh eye, feeling empowered to initiate transformative change.

Similarly, Stake (1995, p.7) observes that 'it startles us all to find our own perplexities in the lives of others'.

Roth (2005) states that if we want to know where the knowledge claims of another come from, we need to understand his or her history. My educational

philosophy, beliefs, values, and experiences, my commitment to critical pedagogy and passion for transformative adult education were inseparable from my research. This included my orientation as the researcher, my selection of literature, research questions, methodology, interpretations and conclusions. As Pereira, Settelmaier and Taylor (2005, p.56) affirm, 'many researchers now accept they are not disinterested but are deeply invested in their studies, personally and profoundly,' and as such I needed to be explicit about these influences and biases. However the fact that I was not an 'insider researcher' (Floyd and Linet, 2012, p.171) in the sense of not previously inhabiting the community of critical pedagogy in the UK, enabled me to observe and receive new constructs with fresh eyes. Comparing and contrasting my own experiences with those of my participants also enabled a degree of inter-subjectivity (Roth, 2005) and therefore enhanced the rigour of my research.

Analytic reflexivity enabled me to see my personal and professional experience, both prior to and as a result of my PhD, through a far more coherent lens. Like Schwalbe (1996, p.58), 'every insight was both a doorway and a mirror - a way to see into their experience and away to look back at mine.' Providing narrative visibility was the most challenging aspect of writing for me, in terms of accepting the validity of my own experiences and voice in my research, as discussed previously in this chapter.

An analytic comparison of my personal and professional experiences with those of the participants is presented in Chapter 4.

3.9 Quality and rigour

The strategies I used to address quality and rigour are detailed throughout this methodology chapter, and are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Quality and Rigour

(Adapted from Merriam, 2009, pp.213-228)

	Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria	Merriam's (2009) corresponding strategies used in this research	Thesis section location
Internal validity	Credibility	Triangulation	3.5 Research design 3.6 Sampling
		Reflexivity	3.3 Personal stance, researcher position and reflexivity
		Member checks	3.7 Data collection
Reliability	Consistency/dependability	Triangulation	3.5 Research design 3.6 Sampling
		Researcher position	3.3 Personal stance, researcher position and reflexivity
		Audit trail	N/A
External validity	Transferability	Rich, thick description Reader generalisability	4. Findings 5. Discussion 6. Conclusions

My immersion in wholly quantitative research methods in my undergraduate degree, and predominantly quantitative methods in my early career as a Market Research Manager, meant that I had not considered the concepts of validity and reliability in relation to qualitative research before. I had carried out small qualitative projects as a Market Research Manager, and for my dissertation in my MSc Practical Skills Therapeutic Education, but I had merely relied on my integrity as the research instrument. While I knew at a

semi-conscious level that I was biased and subjective, and was discomforted by this, I did not know that these biases, subjectivities and researcher positions were part of the methodological process which required addressing through specific strategies.

When I considered the terms validity and reliability in relation to my research, and to qualitative research in general, I was able to understand what they meant but not how they could be evidenced. However, I was assuaged by Bryman's (2016) statement that although qualitative researchers tend to employ the terms reliability and validity in similar ways to quantitative researchers, there is a recognition that a simple application of these to qualitative research is not desirable. Because a number of accounts of social reality are possible, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that rigour in qualitative research be assessed through the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity, with trustworthiness comprising credibility, consistency, dependability and transferability, replacing the concepts of validity and reliability. These terms initially seemed as abstract to me as the traditional terms of validity and reliability, but Merriam (2009) suggests specific strategies for addressing these, which enabled me to operationalise them. The strategies I used are detailed and discussed in the relevant sections of this methodology chapter, and in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. They are summarised in Table 2, and signposted to their location in the thesis.

3.10 Summary

The methodology I used to answer my overarching research question, 'what gives life to critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector?' fulfilled my research aim effectively. My aim was to find out what inspires, motivates and sustains practitioners of critical pedagogy in the current educational climate. My intention was to extend knowledge and potentially inspire others in the lifelong learning sector who might wish to work from a critical pedagogical stance, in spite of the constrictions arising from the current educational

climate. I have identified my ontology and epistemology in relation to the research, my personal stance and position as the researcher, and the reflexive strategies I used to address issues of bias. I have elucidated my choice of a qualitative research strategy, case study design, sampling strategy, and data collection method. My interviews drew upon the life history method and the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), and I explicated my reasons for doing this. I described my techniques and framework for analysing the interviews. I explained the way in which my research choices were informed by the relevant theoretical literature, ensuring the coherence of my methodology.

In the following chapter I present the thematic analysis of the findings.

Chapter 4

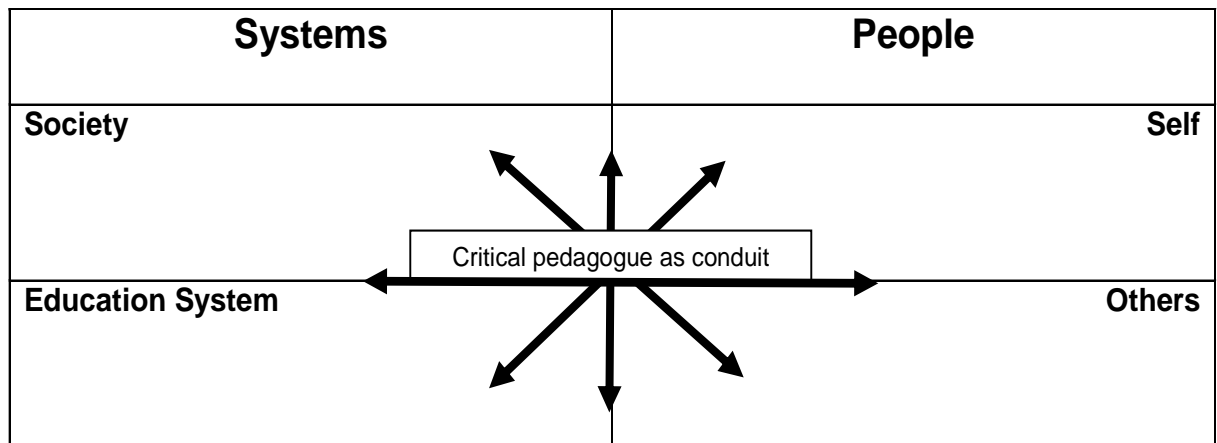
Findings

4.1. Introduction

The factors that originally led participants to a critical pedagogical orientation and those that currently inspired, motivated and sustained them comprised a myriad of drivers. This was permeated by a palpable passion for critical pedagogy as both a philosophy, a political project and an educational practice. As explained in Chapter 3, the participants' interviews were analysed thematically and in this chapter, those themes are presented. The findings are articulated through the model illustrated in Figure 8, reproduced below, as an aide-memoire to the reader. The model classifies participants' drivers across four dimensions: Society, Education System, Self, and Others. These four dimensions aggregate to two broader dimensions; Systems and People. Each critical pedagogue acted as a conduit between each of the four dimensions.

The findings presented in this chapter form the backbone of 'what gives life to critical pedagogy' for the participants' of this study. Explicating the themes, with detailed examples from the participants' narratives, brings their passion for critical pedagogy to life for the reader. It also provides transparency in relation to the content which formed the themes, and thus the themes that comprised the analytic model in Figure 8, and the conception of the critical pedagogue as a conduit between the dimensions. Similarly, it underpins both the synthesis of the themes, and the discussion of the findings in relation to the literature, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Figure 8. Analytic Model



4.2 Thematic analysis

I now present the analysis of each theme within the four dimensions. The four dimensions were permeable to a large extent, because the participants' motivations and responses at times incorporated or reflected more than one theme or dimension. Rather than disrupt the narrative flow by dividing short responses across more than one theme or dimension, the response was placed in the most fitting theme and dimension. The overarching research question 'what gives life to critical pedagogy?' is restated at the beginning of each of the four dimensions, reflecting Bryman's (2016) and Merriam's (2009) reminder that thematic analysis must link to the research questions. It also provides coherence for the reader. Figure 9 locates each participant within their professional context, in order that the reader can easily locate their responses in relation to this, where relevant. The names of the participants are pseudonyms, in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Following the presentation of themes within each dimension, I include a personal reflection regarding points which resonate with me (either professionally or personally), and those which significantly do not.

Figure 9. Professional Contexts

Name	Role and Subject	Context
Varinder	Academic in Social Work	Post-1992 university
Richard	Academic in Social Work	Post-1992 university
Alice	Academic and senior manager in Teacher Education	Post-1992 university
Maxine	Academic in Criminology	Post 1992 university; prison education
Nick	Academic in Union Studies	Pre-1992 university
Martin	Educator in union education	Union regional office
Sarah	Lecturer in Access to Social Sciences	Further education college
Ana	Lecturer in Access to Social Sciences	Further education college
Claudette	Lecturer in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	Community-based womens' centre, part of a further education college.
Deena	Lecturer in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	Further education college
Toni	Lecturer in International Relations	Pre-1992 university; adult education
Trish	Principal	Residential adult education college

4.2.1 Dimension One, Society

What gives life to critical pedagogy?

Critical pedagogy is, by definition, concerned with oppressive structures and forces at work in society, and in the education system itself, and this concern underpinned all of the participants' responses. Responses relating purely to the dimension of wider society were the least occurring discretely, but were implicit in participants' responses in other dimensions, particularly in relation to the current education system. This is discussed in Dimension Two, Education System. In this section, I present responses which related specifically to wider society beyond the education system.

Social justice

Social justice is a core principle of critical pedagogy and by definition was a fundamental driver for each of the participants, albeit expressed in many different ways. Social justice underpinned each of the four dimensions and the themes within them. However, definitions of social justice vary greatly across the political spectrum, and my interpretation of which participant responses constitute social justice, necessarily reflects my construction and understanding of the concept. In this theme, participants' commentary relating to issues of social justice in wider society is presented. Although these underpinned their motivation to use critical pedagogy, responses relating to critical pedagogy's role in contributing to social justice are discussed in Dimension Two, Education System, under the theme 'education for social justice.'

Participants articulated different aspects of systemic social injustice. For example, Richard asserted that 'we live in a very unequal society,' and Trish also spoke of this, stating that 'we are a very unequal society and becoming an even more unequal society, and the avenues for people's voices who are not powerful... are actually fairly limited.' Ana was impassioned by injustice in society, and declared, 'I can't stand injustice. I can't stand people being marginalised and... treated like dirt ...as if they're non-human beings, which I feel this government does.' Both Maxine and Ana posited that there was a hegemonic acceptance of such injustice. Ana conceived of this as people having been 'dulled into this sense of "be grateful for your lot,"' whereas Maxine attributed it to a lack of awareness of the structures underlying social injustice, which she saw as a form of hegemonic blindness.

Fears relating to the more sinister underbelly of social injustice, the rise of the far right, were highlighted by Martin, Nick and Richard, again from different angles. Nick feared that many young people were vulnerable to the far right due to their material exclusion from economic security, that they could become 'cannon fodder' for such groups. Richard feared the growth of fascist, far right, and religious fundamentalist movements, because he

perceived them as being 'very much opposed to critical thinking,' and wanting to 'close down space, impoverish the sphere of knowledge.' He viewed emancipatory, egalitarian education as important in countering this. On the other hand, Martin identified one of the ways in which the current promotion of social justice could be self-defeating, feeding right-wing populism. He saw the educational establishment as part of a wider, official culture which produced a 'non-dialogue' of political correctness. In the official culture, people were 'told off' for characterising others in a certain way, rather than engaging in dialogue which discussed and challenged prejudices:

You get a non-dialogue about loads of things...that are in working class people's heads... and which in turn feeds other right-wing populists...that's a huge issue because we've got a massive distinction between official culture and the way that's embedded in educational institutions as well, and working class consciousness. It's a much bigger gap than maybe 20, 30 years ago.

Many public and educational institutions do attempt to counter prejudice and discrimination, but as Martin cautioned, the shutting down of honest dialogue carries dangers related to the growth of populism and the far right, where prejudice merely finds another space in which to express itself.

A commitment to social justice in wider society was a key driver of what gives life to critical pedagogy for the participants. They used critical pedagogy in an attempt to address such social injustice. They did this by facilitating a critical awareness among their students, of the oppressive structures and forces in society, with a view to their students taking future action, praxis. This is explored in Dimension Two, Education System.

Capitalism/neoliberalism

Some participants opposed the excesses of capitalism and neoliberalism in society, which they related to social injustice and their motivations to practice critical pedagogy. Indeed for Nick, capitalism itself 'gave life' to critical pedagogy. Nick's academic background was in politics and economics and

he specialised in industrial relations from a union perspective. His views of capitalism and neoliberalism were grounded in academic expertise, which added a certain gravitas to his views from my perspective, as my own views derive from humanitarian values, rather than being based in political or economic theory. Nick viewed neoliberalism as 'the most disastrous form of international economy possible,' because of its impact on both people and the environment, and for 'creating, effectively modern slavery.' He highlighted the hegemonic assumption of capitalism and neoliberalism, that certain forms of inequality are natural, with no alternative to the current form of globalisation. He saw neoliberalism as negatively permeating every aspect of society, from creating consumerism, through to the creation of an education system which he perceived to be designed to prop up neoliberalism's beneficiaries.

Nick's academic analysis of the political economy and industrial relations drove his motivation to teach from a critical pedagogical stance. The hegemonic effect of neoliberalism was also identified by Maxine, who posited that it 'blinded people' to underlying structures and their resultant problems, by distracting them with individualism, and the hardships of daily living. She saw the beneficiaries of neoliberalism as fuelling this by feeding a society 'surrounded by bullshit' and a media which dealt in irrelevancies. Nick referred to the hegemony of capitalism as 'a massive conspiracy theory ...it's been hidden, and the nature of exploitation is hidden.' While this hegemony is true of capitalism and neoliberalism, hegemony is constitutive in all political, social and economic systems, where power is exercised without recourse to physical force and violence. However, Varinder ventured that resistance to the hegemonic nature of neoliberalism did exist. He professed 'I don't believe that capitalism and neoliberalism...it's not all-encompassing, I don't think it's all victorious.' Indeed Varinder saw critical pedagogues as having fought a 'war of position' in Gramscian terms (Gramsci, 2007, p.168) over the last 30 years of neoliberal capitalism, with critical pedagogy being the perfect weapon to do so. However, in spite of this resistance, he viewed teaching and social work professions as particularly having been attacked and

undermined by neoliberalism, for the very reason that they were ‘the last line of defence.’ In other words, teaching and social work are populated by professionals who critique underlying and unjust social structures, thus threatening the totalising effects of capitalism and neoliberalism and its beneficiaries.

The real and direct impact of neoliberalism and capitalism on people as individuals was highlighted by Martin and Nick, who, as a result of being union educators, witnessed the direct effects on low paid workers and marginalised members of society. Martin discussed neoliberalism in relation to private companies making profits in social care, which led to understaffing and therefore poor care, referring to the owners of such business as ‘parasites.’ Nick expressed a dystopian fear that the large segment of young people who were priced out of the education system and the housing market, with precarious jobs, needed to be engaged in an appropriate political struggle in order that they did not become co-opted by the far right. Both of these views reflected the context in which they worked, where they witnessed first-hand, the lived realities of the inequalities of neoliberalism and capitalism.

It was unsurprising that some participants expressed opposition to the excesses of neoliberalism and capitalism directly, as a motivating force in their practice of critical pedagogy, given critical pedagogy’s links with Marxism and critical theory. The participants were driven to resist its effects and this opposition was implicit in many of their responses in other thematic categories, particularly in relation to the current education system, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Media

The media’s role in creating, delivering and upholding the politics and hegemonic acceptance of a capitalist political economy is long standing. The importance of being able to critique the output and impact of this mass media, was a determining factor in the need for critical pedagogy for Trish.

She asserted that critical pedagogy and the ability to question and critically analyse were more important now than ever, because of the proliferation of media outlets by which 'we're just bombarded' and the way in which political issues were presented. Trish was concerned by 'the unfiltered-ness of social media' in particular. The use of social media by populist entities such as Donald Trump, and the production of fake news, validate Trish's concerns, and highlight the need for a discerning critical media literacy. Social media is often seen as a powerful campaigning tool. However, Martin highlighted the limitations of it as a political mobilising and organising tool because one tends to be communicating with like-minded people.

Power

Issues of power are central to critical pedagogy and the misuse of power in different contexts and guises drove participants to practice a pedagogy which contested these. The concerns expressed were related largely to their subject or their professional context. Nick, a union educator, discussed the way 'management' disguised moves to make people work harder and longer in their use of mystifying language such as 'employee empowerment,' 'engagement' and 'motivation,' in order to secure a form of hegemony. He saw critical pedagogy as important in deconstructing such mainstream concepts and illuminating what underlay them, in order that employees were able to speak to management without being 'out worded by terminology.' Martin, also a union educator, referred to the power of management as 'might not right,' and observed that it was management's organising method that permitted this. Speaking from the other side of the management divide, Varinder and Alice demonstrated a keen awareness of their own power in relation to their positions of seniority in the academy. Varinder identified the danger of academics slipping into the trap of symbolism and power through achieving titles and being published. He felt that self-growth through critical pedagogy enabled people to expand their humanity and thus counter this. He acknowledged that he was in a very privileged position and saw this as a responsibility, stating 'there is nothing wrong with having power as long as

you realise the more power you have, the more responsibility you have with that power.’ Keenly aware of her privileged position as a senior manager, Alice emphasised that she continued to teach in order that she did not become removed from the realities of students’ lives. While these two practitioners were aware of their power, as critical pedagogues they took steps to ameliorate its negative effects.

Participants’ concerns with power were fundamental to the way in which they worked with their students, and were addressed in the different ways they practiced their critical pedagogy. This is discussed in the later theme, ‘socially just education.’

Activism and Praxis

Praxis is a concept fundamental to Freirean pedagogy and emphasised greatly in critical pedagogical scholarship. A commitment to praxis was clearly linked to participants’ critical pedagogical orientations, for both the practitioners themselves, and for their students, the latter of which is discussed later in Dimension Two, Education System, under the theme ‘education for social justice.’ In this section, I refer to the activism and praxis by the participants themselves, which took place outside of the teaching situation, but which the participants identified as related to their critical pedagogical orientation and motivations. For example, in addition to her education roles, Toni held a high-level position in International Relations, which carried considerable risks to her safety, fully enacting her commitment to activism and praxis.

Eight of the participants disclosed membership of a union, and seven were or had been union activists. Sarah had been involved in significant and risky union action, truly living her praxis. The importance of breadth in union activism, and of praxis, was emphasised by Alice and Martin. For Martin, union activism was broader than workplace activism, and involved community campaigns and political action. He therefore included broader politics in his representatives’ courses to encourage this. Like Martin, Alice

felt that political activism through unionism was very important. They were also motivated by the results of their own praxis. Martin was inspired by being part of a 'bigger process and people winning things.' Similarly, for Alice, 'that sense that you are part of a bigger picture, a group of people that believe in the things that you believe in, and you can fight for the things that you believe in.'

The role of the union in bringing about change to the current educational climate was identified by Maxine, Nick, Richard, Ana and Sarah, the latter three being union activists. Maxine felt that stronger resistance to government measures by teachers was needed, stating that:

A lot of teachers think Ofsted is a nonsense, and the national curriculum is a nonsense. If all teachers withdrew their labour, for instance, then they couldn't be getting away with this.

For Maxine and Nick, the 2018 strike regarding changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme, had positively led to discussions about wider educational issues, which they had not seen in recent times. Nick was very keen to see these discussions continue, but felt that institutional systems, in terms of siloed disciplines, impeded this. Richard posited that it was the education trade unions that needed to keep pushing for an education that was emancipatory and egalitarian. He discussed the potential of critical pedagogy as a process leading to praxis within the union. He characterised it as:

...a fantastic methodology for trade unionism, because what you're doing all the time, is trying to engage people and trying to get people to move away from being passive. Just passively moaning about the situation, to the point where they can think about ways in which they might be able to be participants in a process of change.

Similarly, Claudette, also a union activist, declared that she would table a motion at congress regarding the use of critical pedagogy. She did not specify what form such a use of critical pedagogy would take. In hindsight

this would have been an interesting avenue to explore further, particularly given that she thought that this could be a way of mobilising it across the sector.

The above participants lived a wider activism and praxis beyond the classroom, whether through political or union activism, and they linked this clearly to their orientation to critical pedagogy.

A movement

Some participants felt that wider political, social, union and adult education movements were necessary to mobilise critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning sector. Sarah and Richard viewed this in political terms, proposing the need for a Labour government with the political ethos to realise the mobilisation of critical pedagogy. Richard explained that:

The destruction of the public sector is so great that it's very difficult to do... individuals can continue to struggle on but I think we've got to have a change at policy level....critical pedagogy is a bottom up approach, but there are times when bottom-up needs top-down to help it.

He posited that those who believe in critical pedagogy needed to argue for a Labour government, because this could provide a new way of reconstructing the lifelong learning sector, and a space to argue for the conscious adoption of critical pedagogy. He asserted that:

Critical pedagogy is not social inclusion. Critical pedagogy is a new system that's transformed by the people in it. And I think that a democratic, participatory, egalitarian philosophy can find a space.

Sarah believed that Corbyn's proposed 'cradle to grave' national education service (The Labour Party, 2017), was required to deliver a radical national education service underpinned by critical pedagogy. Like Richard, she considered New Labour's (1997-2010) lifelong learning agenda to have lacked the underpinning politics necessary to achieve its actuality. As a union

activist, Sarah declared that the unions in further and higher education needed to strengthen, with the political will to change coming from activism within both the Labour Party and the union.

Other participants spoke of social movements and alternative forms of educational provision. Trish believed that there needed to be a reinvigoration of adult education as a movement, in relation to both social justice education and critical pedagogy, and reaffirmed that 'lots of social, political movements have either grown out of or had adult education heavily involved in them.' Martin also proposed a broader social movement that 'put the case for critical pedagogy,' and a framework such as the Workers Education Association (WEA) was designed to do many years ago, 'or better than that, the Plebs' League, because the WEA was just a pale imitation of it.' Similarly, Nick proposed that an alternative model to the current system was necessary, such as the earlier WEA model, previous union and Labour Party models. He suggested alternative models of universities, a co-operative of trade union tutors, or alternative organisations such as the Co-operative College. However, he was concerned that people could not afford to carry out this type of work on a full-time basis because such alternatives were not funded. He considered that although there may be a demand for alternative models, there was currently 'no mechanism to make it worthwhile.' Like Sarah and Richard, Nick stated that a change of government was required to enable such changes. These responses highlighted a perceived need for collective action beyond that of individual activism and praxis.

Dimension One examined themes which related to society beyond the education system. Critical pedagogy is fundamentally concerned with oppressive structures and forces in wider society, alongside those in the education system itself. It was therefore unsurprising that participants' orientation to critical pedagogy was linked with their activism, and their views regarding the roles of political and social movements in mobilising critical pedagogy. However, oppressive structures and forces within the education

system itself were also of fundamental concern to the participants, to which I now turn.

4.2.2 Dimension Two, Education system

What gives life to critical pedagogy?

Participants' most impassioned motivations to practice critical pedagogy were expressed in relation to the education system itself. They discussed the education system across a number of themes, which I have categorised as 'macro themes,' which relate to the system of education in the UK lifelong learning sector, and 'micro themes,' which relate to the participants' practice of critical pedagogy.

Macro themes

The meaning of education

The 'meaning of education' has as wide a range of definitions, philosophies and politics as the people who hold them. While some of these are not normative positions, there is a hegemonic acceptance that education in itself is a necessary process. Added to this, the majority of people in the UK have been to school and as such arguably have a view on the 'meaning of education.' Some of the participants linked their orientation to critical pedagogy to their conception of the meaning of education. For Varinder, what gives life to critical pedagogy was 'an absolute belief that education is transformative' and that it was 'the power of pedagogy that opens up possibilities.' This power was also identified by Nick, who maintained that 'education is about the real meaning of empowerment of people.' However, he contended that this was currently a difficult position to hold in higher education. Yet what sustained him was that it was 'worth fighting for... this type of lifelong learning, widening participation, critical pedagogy...' Maxine also discussed the 'power and freedom that real critical education can bring,' and was very motivated by 'meaningful education,' which like Nick,

constituted the empowerment of people. She had experienced this herself when studying A level Sociology. The teacher had explained that the writers being studied represented particular views about society, rather than 'the truth,' and this enabled Maxine to develop her own way of thinking about the world. She gave a number of examples of 'meaningful education' in the work she had carried out in prisons, teaching campus-based students and prison-based students together. I describe these later in the theme 'strategies.' She spoke of her motivation to carry out such work:

It nourishes me... because this is real meaning. This is demonstrating what life can be... This is what education is as far as I'm concerned.

This other thing, on the other hand, where you get these sets of criteria, I don't know what that is, but I don't think that's education. That's something else... Training? I think that's training.

Sarah also considered critical pedagogy to be 'how real education works...otherwise it's just more kind of transmission.' This sense of the true meaning of education was related to concepts such as transformation, empowerment, intellectual stimulation and growth. Nick expressed it as transmitting one's passion to others, to 'infect other people, like a virus, to take it further.' Although these concepts are intangible, the participants' passion for them was viscerally alive. This contrasted with a palpable frustration, sadness and arguably depression in their depiction of the current system, which some saw as fundamentally altering the meaning of education. Maxine contrasted 'meaningful education' with the current accountability system, which emphasised 'training, the piece of paper, the admin, the tick boxing.' She believed that education's purpose was to develop people's capacity to change the world, and as such needed to be critical. Yet she felt that education as it stood:

...is for the most part, making us forget all of that... arguably, religion did that before... but education has completely taken over that role, by telling us what we are supposed to do, what we are supposed to think,

what we are supposed to judge as valuable... but it has the power to destroy all of that.

A similar shift in the meaning of university education, was also perceived by Nick. He saw it as previously being oriented to 'widening your education, understanding more about the world, and seeing the ways in which it can be changed.' He posited that the emphasis was now on an investment one makes to obtain a good job in the future. He also highlighted a shift resulting from what he referred to as the 'financialisation' of higher education. When he attended university it was 'a journey, a rite of passage and an opportunity,' and he maintained that this was because it was free. He saw the financialisation of education as 'creating a block to actually thinking what education is for and when it's appropriate,' and a 'growing consumerism of a transactional basis.' This customer/provider relationship was described by Varinder as 'tragic, because education is much, much more important than that.' Richard too asserted that:

We need to understand what knowing really is. We need to understand what learning really is. We need to understand what teaching really is. These are the things that are under threat by the neoliberal marketisation, which is all about branding and status, and not about the real substance of education at all.

Richard expressed the need to 'hold on' to critical pedagogy, because without it, 'we are severely impoverished as a whole society...it's too important to lose.' He thought that education trade unions needed to be 'pushing for a particular philosophy of education that is emancipatory and egalitarian...that has to be where we're going. The alternative is a dangerous one.' He went on to discuss the growth of far right movements, as discussed in Dimension One, Society, theme 'social justice.' Maxine took this need for change further, concluding that education 'needs to be abolished in its current form.' Frustration with the current system is explored further in the theme 'Current instrumental education system/ commodification/performativity.' Suffice to say, the participants' conception of

the meaning of education was an enlivening, enriching and liberating one, yet their perception of the current system was the direct opposite. Both of these motivated their continued commitment to critical pedagogy.

Education's role in creating inequalities

Some participants saw the education system as actually creating inequalities, as opposed to its often proclaimed purpose of addressing inequality and promoting social justice. Maxine identified the irony that critical education had the power to 'tear down inequalities' but that education was 'mostly about building inequalities.....it's about giving people a grade, in order that they are then sorted into appropriate roles.' She encapsulated this process as:

The point is to just tell us about those things we've told you. And then you will get your mark, and then we will tell you what kind of person you are.

Similarly, Martin contended that a substantial proportion of the working class were the victims of an education system that is designed to fail people. He saw the GCSE system as based on 'we've got to throw some away... We have a throw people away framework.' He professed that people internalised these messages at an early age, which created negative feelings about learning and classroom environments. He used a critical pedagogical approach in order to re-inscribe this internalised message. Nick elucidated upon the way the education system propagated capitalism's requirement for labour inequality. He saw the system as structured to 'prop up a certain group of people,' and to ensure the future compliance of pupils as employees. This hegemonic process was also identified by Maxine, who asserted that it was 'numbing the minds of people...they can't see what's happening. So ... they can't change it.' The awareness of the inequalities created by a sorting system, and the hegemonic part in this process motivated these participants to practice critical pedagogy in a bid to challenge this.

Education for social justice

This theme refers to social justice as an outcome of education, to student praxis, as opposed to the process of socially just education, which is addressed separately. Social justice is a defining principle of critical pedagogy and it was therefore, unsurprisingly a key driver in participants' practice of critical pedagogy. This was expressed in different ways, which related to the professional contexts in which the participants worked. Yet these expressions reflected a common goal, that of praxis in relation to social justice, a cornerstone of critical pedagogy. The participants wanted their students to be able to challenge oppressive structures and inequalities, in whatever guise or context they encountered them. They also wanted them to take action, praxis. To do so, the participants posited that their students needed to have a wider understanding of oppressive structures, the critical skills to recognise these, and the skills to take action. Critical pedagogy led to this wider understanding for their students, although some did not get to witness it being played out in students' longer term praxis. Others were fortunate enough to witness it.

The importance of understanding oppressive structures was highlighted by Trish. She saw critical understanding of the world as a way of people being able to 'grab their power' and challenge inequality. She viewed critical pedagogy as a philosophical approach to teaching and learning which used 'every possibility to think and expand critical questioning of truth.' However, like Nick and Martin, she also posited that for people to be able to challenge inequality, they first needed to understand how power works, why societies are unequal and the manifestations of this. Maxine also saw her role as encouraging students to see such structures, because 'once you see something it's very difficult to un-see it and un-know it.' The importance of a critical awareness of power structures also applied to knowledge itself. During her postgraduate studies in International Relations, Toni had become aware of the relationship between power and knowledge; 'Who has the power? Who decides what children learn? Who decides what books I read, or

I don't read?' As a result, she stated the belief that it was her duty as an educator to alert students to this, so that they used a critical lens whenever they read a text or listened to someone speak.

The desire for students to take action for social justice was a very important part of what gives life to critical pedagogy for the participants. Varinder explained that it was important that critical pedagogy connected students' personal issues with wider political and structural issues, stating that 'the personal has got to become political.' He thought that this understanding needed to lead to collaborative activities that enabled change to happen. Action in relation to social justice was Maxine's ultimate goal for both her Criminology students and her prison-based students. She always taught Sociology 'on the side' when teaching Maths to prison-based students, asking them, 'can you see what's going on around you? Because if you can then you've got a better chance of changing things for yourself and anybody else.' She asserted that 'by seeing it, you've got to know if you're not changing it, that you're complicit in it.' Arguably, illuminating such structures might induce concern, but not necessarily lead to praxis.

A number of participants expressed their desire for student praxis in relation to the students' future employment contexts. The importance of creating students who were critically aware and challenged power and inequality, was crystallised by Richard in relation to Social Work:

If we don't create critical thinkers in Social Work, we're going to create social workers...who are simply policing the poor... you've got to create people who can see how wrong that is. That's ethically wrong. It's also destroying what social work stands for. Social work is supposed to be about social change, creating agents of social change.

Richard practised critical pedagogy to achieve this because he intuitively felt that 'telling people what to do, a kind of political correctness,' was not the right approach. In contrast, he perceived critical pedagogy as having a

democratic and participatory element, which to him was ‘absolutely crucial, with knowledge coming from the people.’

In order to be effective trade unionists, Martin and Nick emphasised the need for their students to have an understanding of the wider political economy beyond their workplace. They also viewed trade unionism as ideally connected to wider political activism. However, they saw this as currently somewhat lacking, largely due to the diminution of union education in recent decades to issues of representation, and health and safety. Nick felt that this wider political understanding was needed at all levels of the trade union movement, because ‘if we don’t understand how that is structured and why it works the way it does, how can a coherent ideological resistance to it be driven?’ He therefore taught about globalisation, acknowledging that ‘it’s almost horrific the stories we tell them about the sweatshops, about the completely disposable people that the system creates.’ He hoped that giving a future cadre of people some political education might refresh the labour movement. Similarly, Martin reported that his students lacked wider political understanding and hoped that in providing this, their union activism might link to wider political activism. In relation to their specific workplace union roles, Nick also thought trade unionists needed to understand the wider political basis of structures such as the economy and the law, otherwise they would not be able to represent effectively, and would keep losing. He therefore used critical pedagogy to teach about such wider political issues. He also identified the need for his students to have a wider understanding of the ideology of management, in order to represent people more effectively.

Ana’s students were entering careers in health and education and she considered an understanding of the wider political issues surrounding their particular vocational area, and the policies which would impact upon their work, to be crucial. Such understanding would enable her students to make informed decisions about what they were prepared to accept:

Do I accept this sort of curriculum? Do I accept that...I’m being asked to do A,B,C when really my job is to look after patients?... But this

government has so under-resourced us that all I'm doing is filling out papers and chasing my backside.

She also felt very strongly that she needed to teach a wider understanding of justice and equality, for it to be enacted in both the students' day to day lives, and in their workplace. This wider perspective and hoped for student praxis was a key reason for Ana's practice of critical pedagogy. Similarly, Maxine felt very keenly that structural understanding was crucial for her Criminology students, stating:

There's no point in me helping them to get a Criminology degree if they haven't learned anything about the structures...they need to go into jobs with their eyes open as to what structures are around this job, in order that in the small spaces in-between they might be able to do something different.

An understanding of wider structures leading to praxis at a democratic level was a key driver in Claudette's practice of critical pedagogy. She was fortunate to witness the way such understanding and subsequent praxis played out. She came to critical pedagogy because she was teaching students who were asylum seekers and refugees, and was very concerned that 'they thought they had no power and no say.' She was also concerned that her students were not part of political discussions that related to them. She wanted them to know that that they could indeed exercise agency and she therefore incorporated content into her teaching that would 'make them realise that actually they can make a difference, even if it's a small one.' She educated her students in parliamentary processes, the way laws were debated and voted for, and facilitated them in campaigning and writing to their MPs. She gave an example of one of her students who thought:

...he would never be able to be part of society...because he thought that the only way you can talk is if your first language is English, and I said 'No, the only way you can do that is if you have ideas, if you can

engage people in, if you are passionate about what you do.' And now yes, he's an activist.

Claudette taught her students how to participate in the democratic process and campaign against cuts to ESOL programmes. She challenged students when they unhappily expressed their perceived inability to exercise agency. She gave the example of a student who had spent time in the refugee camp at Calais and was discussing the news coverage of fatalities when crossing the Channel. The student said 'it's really sad, because sometimes it makes the news, but what people don't realise is that it happens every day. And there is nothing we can do.' Claudette's challenge led to a dialogue about an issue that was very important to the students, and a discussion regarding the actions they might take. She posited that critical pedagogy was:

...the only way you can develop...critical views in terms of what is happening out there. In fact I don't think there is any other way that you can have students being able to make decisions... informed decisions.

'Voice' was also very important to Toni. She felt strongly that her students should adopt a position of speaking out and holding different views in their places of study, work, in their communities and with their families. She asserted that 'without this kind of thinking, nothing changes...and there cannot be any real progress unless people are willing to get out of their little safe bubble.' She acknowledged that challenging one's own attitudes and beliefs could lead to insecurity as one may no longer have the safety net of one's community. She related the discomfort of this to her own praxis as an International Relations professional:

When you realise that your nation is just an imagined community and there is nothing particularly valuable or real about what you regard as your nation. It's just a construction. That makes you feel a bit unsafe.... So, all these affect one psychologically.

In addition to democratic understanding and participation, Claudette was also deeply committed to her refugee and asylum seeking students understanding

the educational policies that impacted upon them. She had contested the Prevent strategy, stating 'I need my students to understand what's behind all of this. I can't let them think that it's just neutral.' She had been told to be aware of students who started to wear more traditional clothes than they had previously, but she rejected this, explaining, 'my teaching is all about making them confident enough to dress whichever way they want,' rather than feeling that they needed to blend with Western students at college. Claudette asserted that it was 'precisely that,' that gives life to critical pedagogy. She was also committed to wider understanding leading to praxis at a community level. She had taught students at her women's centre to cycle in their local community, which challenged the cultural norms of both the students and their wider community. She brought in a relatable, female speaker, who wore a hijab and cycled in the local community, to explain that cycling was not against their religion, that it was a cultural rather than a religious issue. As well as empowering the students to cycle, Claudette viewed this as community praxis, which meant 'we are more visible now... in terms of women being out there.' Claudette was involved in her students' praxis, and fortunate to see the way in which a wider understanding of structures led directly to praxis.

An understanding of underlying structures leads to awareness, but people often need to be taught tangible skills to enact praxis. This was emphasised by both Nick and Martin. Employees needed the skills to be able to successfully challenge management and they both stressed the importance of giving people both the confidence and skills to do so. For example, Nick discussed the way management used 'mystifying language' in order to secure a form of hegemony. He saw critical pedagogy as an important tool in deconstructing language, so that students, in their roles as employees, could communicate with management without being 'out worded' by them. Martin also emphasised the importance of giving students the confidence to see these challenges through. His strategy involved students role playing and rehearsing actual shop stewards' meetings, using real issues they were facing at work, which then gave them 'confidence for meeting with

management, meeting with the members.’ Clearly in union education, critical pedagogy exists at the direct intersection of theory and praxis.

Social justice arguably requires some sense of compassion alongside the understanding of wider structures, and the confidence and skills for praxis. Sarah’s students reported feeling ‘far less judgemental and more compassionate,’ as a result of becoming aware of the underpinning factors which lead people to be in certain positions. She gave an example of a student who early in the course had been ‘quite scathing about people on benefits ... with very, very, very strong opinions.’ Over the duration of course, this student became more understanding of other people’s experiences. Another student had voted Brexit because of concerns relating to immigration but ‘moved considerably’ as a result of Sarah’s critical pedagogical teaching. The student was eventually the first to oppose a blue plaque in commemoration of Enoch Powell. Like Claudette, in this example Sarah witnessed the student’s understanding of wider structures leading to praxis.

Education for social justice defines critical pedagogy and as such was a key component in ‘what gives life to critical pedagogy’ for the participants. While the themes reported above refer to explicit responses, a commitment to education for social justice was implicit and fundamental throughout each of the participants’ narratives.

Current instrumental education system/commodification/performativity

The term instrumentalism here refers to education’s direct link to the economic and skills agenda, and the related high stakes testing regime. Commodification refers to the financialisation of education through tuition fees and funding mechanisms, and the marketisation of education. Performativity refers to the surveillance and bureaucratic procedures imposed upon educators in order to meet accountability measures. Instrumentalism, commodification, and performativity are separate but closely intertwined concepts and processes in the way that they play out in educational settings. For example, tuition fees in higher education have

linked the purpose of gaining a degree to obtaining a 'better' job. This feeds an instrumental agenda among students whereby they focus on assessment rather than deeper knowledge and learning. The participants all expressed great concern, frustration and sadness regarding the way education had been colonised by a commodified and instrumental agenda. This had severely damaged the meaning of education for them, which informed their motivation for critical pedagogy.

Richard traced the increasing instrumentalism and commodification of education from the Thatcher years to the present. He included the New Labour widening participation initiative in this, given its link to the economy. The increasing instrumentalism in higher education led Richard to become involved in critical pedagogy, because he believed that it was very important to provide an alternative. He noted that Freire was critical of such instrumentality. Similarly, Varinder proposed that higher education had become 'too obsessed' with vocationalism in the curriculum, which 'ironically and tragically' may not actually be fit for the future. Skills learned would become redundant by the time the students came to use them. This points to the need for a broader, more critical education, where students are able to examine a breadth of issues through a range of critical lenses. This would arguably enable them to flexibly adjust to changing economic needs, rather than be competent in skills which have a short shelf life.

Trish also viewed further education as very prescriptive, affirming that 'you've got a list of 20 things you've got to embed before you even get to your bloody subject.' Interestingly, in relation to Access courses in further education, Sarah posited that 'Access is a bit of an outpost that hasn't been taken yet.' It may be that Access courses have a less rigid and prescriptive curriculum because they have to be very responsive to learners' prior educational experiences and attainments. But it was not only in Access courses that critical pedagogy was practiced in spite of the instrumental constraints. Both Deena and Claudette employed it in their further education ESOL courses,

with Deena stating, 'I ignore my scheme of work, number one. I'm not going to go into a lesson and teach something unless I'd want to do it myself.'

In union education, instrumental curricula had replaced political education, and had become dominated by *Unionlearn*. Nick explained that as the trade union movement suffered and the employment relationship became increasingly 'juridified,' trade union education largely became about preparing representatives to know the law, but not the rationale underpinning the law. For this reason, Nick used critical pedagogy to provide a wider political education, as did Martin.

Instrumentalism in schools was discussed, and it had discouraged Toni from becoming a school teacher, because she knew that she could not work in a system whereby, for example, pupils only read four chapters of a book rather than the whole novel, or two scenes of a play. Trish echoed this reductive approach to teaching, saying of the school system:

We're just churning out chimpanzees now as teachers... There's no fight left... There's no union left to be able to fight on behalf of teachers. Teachers have no power whatsoever, even when they're in senior management positions in schools... Where's the space for us to be professionals who can determine what's best for our students in the classroom? It seems a bit of a dying art I think.

The participants linked this instrumentalism in schools to instrumentalism in higher education, in relation to students' attitudes to assessment. Nick posited that because students had been ranked all their lives, their first question was always 'what's the assessment?' In relation to using a critical approach their attitude was 'this is really interesting, but what do I have to do for my essay?' Students have always been concerned with their marks, but the high stakes testing regime in schools will undoubtedly have channelled students further in this direction. Maxine clearly found students' attitude to assessment difficult, stating that 'increasingly all students just want their grades. Which I find very difficult, because that's not what it's about for me.'

When she explained to students that education was about what they had learned, not just the grade, they would say, 'Maxine, I just want a 60 or 70. I don't want to listen to what you're on about there. I just want my grade.'

Maxine posited a very interesting theory in relation to the link between instrumentalism in schools and higher education. She taught a programme where she took students from the university into a local prison and taught the campus-based students and prison-based students together. She found that the prison-based students were far more receptive to a less instrumental and more critical approach than the university students. She theorised that this was because they were 'generally uneducated in the formal sense, they were just able to think critically, think imaginatively, apply things that they were reading to their own lives.' The university students had come from a type and time of schooling that taught them to learn to the test, rather than for value and meaning. Maxine recalled teaching philosophy in the prison, where she gave all of the students a challenging, original, classical text. She asked them to 'just read it and say what you think about it.' The prison students were able to do this more effectively than even she and her colleague could do, and Maxine felt that this was because the majority had not been funnelled through the instrumental education system. She posited that the purpose of the school curriculum was to 'regurgitate' information in order to be ranked, and that this was carried out in a very prescriptive way. She described this as, 'your focus is on getting as higher up the grades as you can, and the way you do that is by doing what we tell you to do, in the order we tell you to do it.' At assessment, the prison-based students were creative and gained high marks. For example, two students performed a role play, bringing the ethics of a prison policy to life. Maxine recalled 'it was incredibly creative and believable. It was like watching a film.' She added, 'this nourishes me, doing this work.' This gives an interesting insight into the way the high stakes testing regime and rigid, instrumental curricula in schools shapes students' academic development; that those who had left the system earlier were able to think more flexibly and creatively than those who had undergone it for longer.

The link between instrumentalism and the commodification of higher education was also clear. Varinder deemed that the commodification of higher education led students to be preoccupied with assessment and Nick paraphrased the way his students expressed this: 'Yeah, that's all interesting stuff, but what is the minimum that I need to do in order to get the maximum mark here?' He acknowledged that there had always been a transactional basis to higher education to some extent, but posited that it was now more consumerist in nature. The impact of tuition fees in higher education contributed to its commodification and consumerism, and was seen to create a number of problems. In relation to union studies in higher education, Nick posited that access to higher education by mature students had been lost due to tuition fees, as had the lifelong nature of learning. The impact of this was that 'you have less time to get to people, it's very financially difficult to get to people, you probably get to them at the wrong time,' the latter referring to the students' ages. He also experienced a pressure to admit more students in order to generate income, rather than to teach smaller groups in a critical manner.

The commodification of higher education was also seen to be eroding the very nature of education. Richard postulated that it was 'destroying education itself. It's taking away what education itself should represent.' He asserted that neoliberal marketisation was 'all about branding and status, not about the real substance of education at all.' He perceived this to be getting worse, and it further motivated him to practice critical pedagogy. He declared 'if we don't hold onto it, it will go, and when it's gone, we are severely impoverished as a whole society... It's too important to lose.' Fighting the increasing consumerist nature of higher education referred to by Varinder, and 'seeing some victories in that,' sustained Varinder's use of critical pedagogy. He conceptualised it as fighting the ideology of customers and providers, which attempted to create binary relationships between the lecturer and students. He believed that fees had changed the relationship between students and teachers. Students now saw their education as a commodity, with them as

purchasers and lecturers as deliverers of a service. He stated that abolishing student tuition fees would enable him to use critical pedagogy more.

Funding also impacted upon the lifelong learning sector in other ways. Trade union education had been largely reduced to instrumental training, but Martin believed that the overarching union body had allowed union education to die through not understanding how to work with changes to further education funding. This was akin to Alice's declaration that in higher education and further education, educators needed to be able to 'play the game,' to protect the education they wanted to hold on to. Martin concluded that it was a 'really sad indictment on XXX (organisation redacted at interviewee's request), that they've allowed trade union education to collapse, essentially. Criminal.'

Performativity and accountability were also seen to be eroding the true purpose of education. Maxine postulated that universities wanted students to achieve grades that reflected well on the institution in order that they could continue to charge fees. This distanced lecturers from the education process and it became 'almost an administration exercise... and all kind of meaning, quality and value is stripped from it.' She highlighted the concerning situation that:

It's so much easier to do those things. It meets the requirements. It will give the students what they need in order to pass their tests... And honestly, sometimes I wish I could be more like that... Because I would be healthier... I wouldn't be working at 2 o'clock in the morning.

Maxine declared that the 'tick box stuff... is ramping up and up and up,' and she was concerned about the lack of resistance to it across the sector, resulting from the need for people to retain their employment. She referred to the difficulty of working in an institution where 'the people at the top are focused on the things that you don't think are the point.' She asserted that the tick boxing 'is not real. It's a dream. It's an illusion.... It's meaningless. It's arbitrary. It's bollocks.' She bemoaned the fact that in higher education, the emphasis was now more on administration, but 'in the prison, we just did

education.’ When discussing what motivated her to use critical pedagogy, Sarah described the non-teaching part of the further education lecturer’s role as ‘all the other nonsense that is also part of the job. And I couldn’t even tell you what it is, but on a day to day basis it fills all your time.’ Varinder posed an important counter to this. He stated that ‘the bureaucracy does wear you down,’ but theorised that ‘some of it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as well. It’s symptomatic of alienation,’ by which he was referring to Marxist alienation. Martin rejected the constraining nature of perceived institutional obstacles, saying:

Literally, you can subvert the most... some of the most irritating quality structures they try and put on you, processes, anyone...can subvert that and work around it, can’t they?

The degree to which accountability processes impact on lecturers arguably depends upon the extent and nature of such processes. This will vary to some extent between institutions, according to the level of institutional dictates and the professional role an individual holds. These will probably, to some extent, also combine with individual factors relating to attitude, expectations, energy and resilience. For example, Alice spoke about the way teachers deal with the ‘compliance driven...performativity’ agenda and knew that as a senior manager, she had to ‘play the game.’ She explained that if you understand the data and the business, ‘you can protect something else that you’re trying to grow over here.’ She cited a Principal whom she knew in further education, who she admired because she supported staff in being scholarly, while simultaneously understanding that she running was a business, successfully ‘playing the game.’ Alice postulated that this was also important for teachers. She recalled a colleague saying to her, ‘I’ve got a lesson observation tomorrow, but I know how to get a grade one...They don’t get my stuff. I know what they want to see, so I’ll just pull it out the bag tomorrow.’ Sarah encapsulated this:

When I have an observation, like everyone really, we're just performing monkeys, so we try and put in front of them what we think they're looking for this year. Of course it changes from year to year.

However, being able to play the game does not remove the alienation for all lecturers in the lifelong learning sector. Richard referred to people in further and higher education who 'find the world of neoliberal managerialism completely alienating.' In my experience of further education, this managerialism was removed from any real sense of education and became increasingly alienating for staff, resulting in a high level of attrition. Maxine expressed her alienation from the process of higher education in relation to her Criminology students:

I don't seem to be getting through to them... There's no point in me helping them to get a Criminology degree if they haven't learned anything about the structures. All I'm doing is drawing a wage to be complicit in the system that's just churning out people with a degree. For what reason?

Alienation from meaningful education is a persistent problem for many educators in the lifelong learning sector, and certainly was for the participants in this in this study. The instrumental, pre-packaged, prescriptive curricula in further and adult education was perceived to be at odds with meaningful education. In higher education, commodification had altered the student-teacher relationship, and students' approaches to the process of education. Yet the participants related these issues to what gives life to critical pedagogy for them. They were committed to resisting these instrumental, commodified and performative agendas, by practicing a critical education, which for them defined meaningful education.

Create spaces for discussion within the education system

In order to make room for critical pedagogy and mobilise it across the lifelong learning sector, Trish, Maxine, Nick, Richard, Martin and Alice saw creating spaces for discussion within the education system as fundamental to

achieving this. Some expressed consternation at what they perceived to be the current shrinking of spaces. For example, the closure of courses and spaces such as trade union centres, where wider debate could take place, was of concern to Nick. Richard also regularly saw spaces being closed down in his university, and Trish expressed concern relating to the future of critical pedagogy:

It's a bit of a lost art... Those practitioners don't exist anymore... The spaces in which people who practice critical pedagogy exist are really small... And they're getting on now. So where's the new radical practitioners coming from... How are they going to be nourished and able to have spaces where they can practice?

To counter this closing down of critical pedagogical space, Nick recommended that those interested in critical pedagogy seek out or join with others to create such spaces. He proposed that informal conferences, together with a coordination of existing activities would assist this. He posited that university should be the place where critical pedagogy is implemented, where 'there should be the battle of ideas won.' There was still positive critical work being carried out at his own university and he posited that people needed to seek this out. Like Nick, Maxine reflected that it was important to 'find the places where the good stuff is happening, because there are good things happening. There are people doing it.' She suggested that:

Maybe this counter storytelling needs to be told to uncover the positive. The stories of resistance, such as mine potentially... that are happening everywhere...to counter the stories of what we should be doing.

Spaces for teachers to meet and discuss were also important to Alice. She recommended that these be confidential spaces outside of the workplace, because within the workplace issues could be misunderstood and misconstrued. She maintained that teachers do not have such spaces where they can be 'critical and contradictory...the agenda is just so compliance driven; performativity.' Trish considered that creating such spaces where

critical pedagogical conversations could happen would be a way to mobilise it. However, she also deemed teacher education to be very important, in order to reach teachers early in their careers:

Because you have to learn your craft... if you can get in at that point and inspire new teachers... because once you've got it you don't lose it. You might have it ground out of you slightly but it's always there.

Creating spaces in education also related to the mechanics of critical pedagogy. Ana suggested that critical pedagogy might be mobilised through CPD workshops where practitioners could show others how they do it. In a similar vein, Martin invited others to 'come and watch us.' However, a brake was put on the potential for mobilisation through creating spaces by both Trish and Ana. Trish thought that critical pedagogy 'has to be part of you really, as well,' and Ana professed that potential practitioners have to be 'politically savvy' to be able to make the requisite connections. She questioned, 'Are they politically aware? Do they want to be politically aware? Do they want to do critical pedagogy?' Clearly they did not see creating spaces for critical pedagogy as enough on its own to mobilise others.

The union's role in creating spaces for the mobilisation of critical pedagogy was discussed by some participants. The 2017 strikes over the University Superannuation Scheme (USS) pensions provided an opportunity for Nick to meet other academics and students, and debate the future of 'the University.' This had been a positive experience, but Nick emphasised that the space for having wider debates beyond the context of industrial action was also very important, and he saw the union's role as being to continue such debates. In fact during our interview, Claudette made the decision to bring a motion for the mobilisation of critical pedagogy to her union. Martin reported that his union had created an agreement with a trade union education centre to bring back 'proper rigorous discussion about delivery, about curriculum matters, about how you run stuff that people haven't had for years.' He explained that there was currently an absence of fora to discuss best practice, and that

tutors often came into trade union education unaware of other tutors, and he spoke about trying to bring back spaces for discussion.

Creating spaces within the education system was a key recommendation by the participants for mobilising critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning centre. This recommendation links closely with the importance of connecting with other people in the practice and mobilisation of critical pedagogy, discussed in Dimension Four, Others.

Micro themes

'Micro themes' refer to the actual practices and processes of education and critical pedagogy. These themes were specific to the participants' individual practice of critical pedagogy, and often to their particular educational contexts. It includes the way in which their individual employment situations impacted on their freedom to practice critical pedagogy.

Socially just education

Socially just education refers to the processes of critical pedagogy, rather than social justice as an outcome of critical pedagogy, discussed earlier. It refers to pedagogical practices which are socially just and inclusive. As such, working with students from non-traditional educational backgrounds was very important to many of the participants. When Alice started teaching in further education as opposed to a Russell group university, she realised that she 'did not like the privilege' that had come with teaching at a traditional university. She described it as abstract, cerebral and very selfish. She recalled, 'you present a paper and it was like an academic bear pit. I don't want that.' She currently taught at a widening participation university and this was crucial to her in terms of socially just education. Maxine also chose to work in a widening participation institution. Although she posited that students were marginalised even within that system, she acknowledged that many people worked in such a way as to recognise their worth. This marginalisation was evident to Alice also, who wanted her students to be able challenge it and saw critical pedagogy as important in this. In her university there was an

attainment gap of 20% between BME and white students even though 50% of the students were BME. She also wanted the students to be able to 'challenge the language that's used about them,' because she perceived a deficit and blame culture operating within the university. Similarly, for Varinder, the very fact that more students from working class and minority backgrounds were entering higher education, meant that university was a really important space where critical pedagogy could be used to 'fight a war of position,' using Gramsci's term (Gramsci, 2007, p.168). This aligns with Alice's intention.

The students at Richard's university were predominately working class, and he posited that working class people often did not value the knowledge they possessed. He sought out critical pedagogy following a student saying to him, 'in the circles I move in, people don't have ideas.' He recalled that this was an 'absolute wake-up call,' for him to re-read Freire's work, in order to develop a particular strategy to work with his students. He spoke of:

Working class people who don't take seriously the knowledge and skills they possess and devalue them and see themselves as just functioning practically, without ideas...People always have ideas, they just don't think they have them.

The students Maxine taught in prison had been denied the opportunity of the type of education that she had experienced, and this motivated her. Her education had enabled her to connect to Marxism, feminism and theories which made her feel more valuable in the world, and this motivated her to practice critical education. She asserted that if anybody needed that kind of education, it was not Oxbridge students, but those in prison. She had previously taught in a job centre programme which she reported was very condescending and deficit based, premised on the attitude, 'the reason you're here is because you're useless. Now I'm going to tell you how to write a CV and get a job.' She realised at this point that people of very low status were given 'the worst possible education.' As a result, she drew upon people's strengths and facilitated the fostering of a joint identity. It was this

realisation that led her to teach in prisons, where students' negative school experiences were greatly multiplied compared to those of the job centre students. This motivated her choice of context and critical approach. Similarly, on trade union representatives' courses, Martin explained that there were high levels of people without qualifications and literacy skills:

On every course that I run for new reps, there'll be people with very serious literacy issues...you'd have probably one person that's practically illiterate on every course, at least. And people have a whole load of issues, or just they've had bad experiences at school.

Because of the experiences students had undergone in the school system and their resultant negative feelings about classroom environments, Martin very quickly had to create a learning environment where students felt that they had some power. This was necessary in order to engage people and enable them to overcome their initial hesitation. Martin used critical pedagogy to do this.

Varinder, saw critical pedagogy as rejecting a singular notion of IQ. He believed strongly in multiple intelligences and that 'people have different ways into the learning process.' Martin described this process, using the example of students role playing shop stewards' meetings, using current employment issues from their workplaces. He advised 'you've just got to let people's natural abilities shine out.' However, Richard saw critical pedagogy as more than a socially just method. He postulated that critical pedagogy created a space for the educationally excluded to enter the system, not simply in terms of social inclusion:

...but as people who can transform that system with what they bring. That's very important.... Critical pedagogy isn't social inclusion. Critical pedagogy is a new system that is transformed by the people in it.

This statement refers to the fact that critical pedagogy is premised on the co-creation of knowledge by students and teachers, and in doing so disrupts the power structures inherent in knowledge creation and legitimisation. In critical

pedagogy, students bring their lived experiences and material realities to the learning situation. This knowledge is both validated and challenged by the teacher, and placed in a theoretical framework. Students and teachers co-create knowledge together through this process. This is discussed in the following two themes.

Students' lived experiences; validation and challenge

Freirean critical pedagogy is centred upon working with students' lived experiences and material realities, to develop critical awareness and theoretical understanding of oppressive forces in society. This was a key component in what gives life to critical pedagogy for the participants. Varinder described it as giving 'credence to meanings and language from below.' This democratic and participatory element was 'absolutely crucial' to Richard, with 'knowledge coming from the people.' It was this which had brought him to critical pedagogy. However, like all of the participants, he also emphasised the importance of challenging students' perceptions, another key component of critical pedagogy. He expressed this as 'giving voice to the knowledge people have, but also challenging the interpretive framework that they've got.' Richard contrasted Freire's belief that knowledge must come through dialogue between the teacher and students, with that of many Marxists. He explained that through such dialogue, students gain confidence to articulate their real experience and views. He contrasted this with Freire's banking model and posited that critical pedagogy disrupted this model of passive absorption.

The purpose of relating content to students' lives defined the very purpose of education for Maxine. This was 'to enable us to develop or change or grow in our lives, not...a piece of paper that you put down once you've got your qualification.' She emphasised that teaching theory had to be carried out 'in a way that relates it to real life experience they can touch.' She also used students' experiences and strengths to validate them. In Trish's experience, students learning through using their own experiences was very important to their critical awakening. She saw critical pedagogy as maximising

opportunities to utilise students' experience, in order to develop a critical understanding of the world. Engaging students with issues relevant to their lives was, for Toni, what gives life to critical pedagogy. Similarly, Claudette considered critical pedagogy to always come from real life experiences. The content of Sarah's teaching was selected to resonate with her students' lived experiences, such as critiquing the current further education system which they were currently living through, and the sociology of psychology which:

...relates very directly to my students' awareness of the politics of their life experiences...high numbers who have been through...environmental issues which have led to psychiatric disorders...they have a very lived experience of the mental health system.

In a very practical sense, Martin saw critical pedagogy as creating a framework for people to discover what they already knew. Students on union representatives' courses did not realise that they already possessed certain skills. When taken through processes step-by-step by Martin, they realised that 'they have skills, they have abilities, they have tactics,' and that these could be generalised. He showed students how to transfer their skills to situations where they perceived themselves to be weak, or lacking knowledge. For example, a new representative might say 'I've never negotiated.' Martin would respond, 'but you're a mum. Last time I looked, being a parent is the most difficult negotiating role.' He emphasised the need to demonstrate students' existing knowledge very quickly in order to overcome such self-perceptions, particularly as many of his students had undergone negative educational experiences and possessed few qualifications. He gave the example of starting courses with a pub quiz format to demonstrate students' existing knowledge of working class employment history. When planning his courses, Martin identified the core concepts to be taught, but specific content always arose from students' current lived experiences in their workplaces. This contrasted with undergraduate level union studies, where Nick identified limitations in using

students' lived experience, because students did not yet have sufficient experience of employment.

Difficulties in using students' lived experiences were identified by some participants. Varinder cautioned that while critical pedagogy was about validating people's situations and helping them to understand why they may feel a certain way, it was not personal therapy. The concept of praxis meant that it had to link to wider political and structural situations 'because if it can't, then I think it gets stuck.' Drawing upon lived experiences with adult students could be demanding for both tutors and students when it involved difficult and painful experiences. Trish also observed that adult education was not therapy and therefore tutors needed to be able to manage the use of students' experiences very effectively, because disclosures could trigger negative responses in other students. Like Trish, Alice discussed the responsibility associated with students sharing difficult personal experiences, and that creating the spaces for this could be 'dangerous' as well as positive.

Using students' lived experiences to create knowledge is fundamental to critical pedagogy, but in addition to the validation of these, challenges to students' perceptions are an equally important tenet. Richard cautioned that, although critical pedagogy gave voice to the knowledge people had, popular knowledge should not be romanticised. He saw such knowledge as framed by the dominant order, reflecting Marx and Engel's (2011) proposition that the ruling ideas in a society reflected the ideas of the ruling class. The importance of challenging students' perceptions, was highlighted by a number of participants. As Alice described:

If they just use the concept of common sense and they haven't thought about where their ideas and assumptions, and their practices come from... that's the uncomfortable bit of it.

She gave the example of a peer observation scheme where students challenged each other around critical incidents. The language used around transitioning was being discussed and the students were unhappy with the

way the conversation was developing. Alice recalled, 'but that was the way it was going to go, and I wasn't going to stop it.' She felt that one of the greatest compliments she could pay to a new teacher at an observation was if 'there are challenges to power, and challenges to ideas, and it sometimes being uncomfortable for everybody.' This process of discomfort was described by Varinder as 'disrupting certain forms of alienation and trying to get them to claim their own subjectivity.' He observed that people found it more comfortable in the short term to function as objects and disrupting this was 'painful for you as well as for them.' For Nick it was important to get students to think differently, to 'reconsider some of the things they've always preconceived and hopefully change it.' This sometimes involved risk, as Deena explained in relation to teaching LGBT issues to her young asylum seeker and refugee students. But such challenges also had surprising results:

The biggest thing for me was doing the LGBT lesson because in a lot of their cultures, a lot of their countries, it's illegal and they accepted it more than I thought they would. I thought it would just be, "No, no, no,"... but they were quiet, they were thoughtful, and they were responsive when we were talking about it.

However, Deena emphasised the importance of dialogue when challenging students:

I've had some very intense ...discussions about the world, about what they think. And I think it's never about telling them that they're wrong...but it's about informing them of what the other side is and how people might feel, and, "What about if this was your sister?"

Whilst Martin also believed that it was important to challenge students' prejudices, he emphasised that this needed to be done through dialogue rather than by silencing them. He warned that in relation to working class consciousness and working class prejudices, 'the education establishment hasn't got a clue how to talk to them.' He was referring here to the type of

political correctness which he perceived as closing down dialogue. When teaching Pashto speaking young women from strict religious and cultural backgrounds, Claudette challenged conceptions about appropriate and permitted activities by bringing in a relatable speaker to do so. This 'made a huge difference...for my girls to see a woman that dresses and speaks the same language, was an eye-opener.'

The two way student-teacher relationship, a key Freirean principle which democratises knowledge, inheres the necessity of students also challenging teachers, which can be uncomfortable. When using critical pedagogy with older students in adult and community education, Toni experienced resistance related to her age, gender and nationality. Her students did not trust her lived experience and knowledge because of these factors and challenged this. She overheard one student say to another 'we need some more testosterone here.' The previous tutor had been an 80-year-old man and Toni perceived that they respected him more. This made her more determined to continue and use her critical pedagogical approach. She responded to their challenges, challenged the students and wanted the students to challenge themselves. Ana professed that she did not expect her students to hold the same views as her, and that she was pleased if they challenged her because it meant that they were thinking about the issue. However, she did wryly observe, 'we can't have other types of political views being bandied about as freely as I bandy about my political views. But mine are for the many and not the few.' She also emphasised the importance of learning from her students, saying to them "I can learn just as much from you as you can from me. ...What gives me the God-given right to be the purveyor of all knowledge? I'm not." This appeared to counterbalance some of the zeal with which she politicised her teaching. This sentiment was echoed by Toni, who explained to her students, "you can challenge anything I say at any moment... Please don't quote me in your essays... I'm not an authority on anything. I'm learning, like you." Alice also avowed 'I don't ever want to be the expert at the front.'

In addition to using and validating students' experience and knowledge, and challenging misperceptions, the critical pedagogue's role is to place this within a theoretical framework. This enables students to understand the wider structures underpinning their material realities and experiences, and ideally fosters a willingness and confidence for praxis.

Theoretical understanding of own situation

Through applying theoretical understanding to their own situation, and extrapolating this to wider systemic structures, students expand their critical consciousness. In doing so, they gain a theoretical understanding of their own experiences and material realities. Trish spoke of the way theoretical understanding combined with students' lived experience, resulted in the empowerment of students. When teaching different political ideologies and sociological perspectives in Sociology to students, she often saw 'real lightbulb moments,' when they 'just got it,' and started to understand the world around them. She recounted an incident when teaching the sociology of education. One of the students who had left school at 16 years of age and was now in her mid-40s, was struggling with critical pedagogy. She was the only girl in her family and her four brothers had all attended grammar school, while she had attended a secondary modern. Trish recollected that this had 'dictated her whole life...who she was, who she ended up marrying.' Trish explained to the class that the eleven plus exam was weighted in favour of boys. She recalled, 'I can still picture it now. The lightbulb went on in her head...She could see that the reason why she was sitting in this room, at this point in her life, was because of that particular fact.' Learning about the wider structures underpinning the education system 'just flipped her whole life... from there she flew. She got an A, she left her husband, because she just clicked.' Trish emphasised how important it was for students to understand wider structures, particularly for those students with complex needs and situations. She reported that when these students understood that they were a product of society, and they learned how society work, it was

...enormously empowering for those individuals really, because they can see there's a way out. You know, just because that's been their life, it doesn't have to be their life in the future.

Similarly, Sarah observed that the way in which she taught Psychology, to some extent enabled people to process their own history. Richard cited a student who fed back to him that:

"I could never see the way I was mentally enslaved... I see the people around me as kind of trapped and enslaved by the fact that they can't see what the forces that are governing their lives really are."

Such student responses inspired Richard to use critical pedagogy, and demonstrated its efficacy. Varinder also emphasised the importance of understanding one's personal experiences in a wider theoretical framework. He proposed that for students who had been used to a didactic and alienating experience at school, a participative learning experience where they could share their feelings, thoughts and reflections was a better educational experience, but it was not enough:

On its own it's not enough. I think it has to allow students to reframe their own theoretical understanding of their being and their self and the world around them.

Varinder asserted that in critical pedagogy, the personal was never separated from the theoretical or the political, that it was a dialectical relationship. He posited:

We are all philosophers, but there are different philosophies and I suppose one way to think about it is that we can equip people with new philosophical tools and theoretical tools to be able to develop a more sophisticated, nuanced understanding of their lives.

He perceived the critical element in critical pedagogy to be that of enabling people to understand structures beyond their personal realm. This included

economic structures, social structures, the structures of capital, and ‘the things that structure your life and your thoughts.’

Theoretical understanding in relation to an applied work related context was important for Nick’s students, because they had never previously had the opportunity to ‘sit back out of their union lives,’ and learn about the underpinning ideology of management. Nick reported that they knew ‘that there’s something wrong,’ but needed some ‘structure to understand what’s happening.’ He posited that in union studies, it was also important that students were able to understand abstract concepts such as ‘restructuring,’ in terms of what they meant in reality, for example, that ‘someone is going to lose their job.’

The participants viewed students being able to locate their lived experiences and material realities within wider underpinning social, political and economic structures as crucial to an emancipatory education. Seeing the fruits of this both inspired and motivated them.

Strategies

This theme explicates some of the strategies the critical pedagogues used to facilitate critical awakening in their students. The literature of critical pedagogy repeatedly emphasises the fact that it is a philosophical and pedagogical approach which cannot be reified or reduced to a set of methods. Some writers have criticised this and called for a less abstract and more practically useful critical pedagogy. As Martin pointed out, if the aim of critical pedagogy is liberation, some methods will be incompatible with this, such as Freire’s banking education. In this research, I asked participants which strategies they found most led to critical awakening, because it demonstrated their motivations in action. The practical enactment of critical pedagogy is a key part of what gives life to it, but the participants’ responses related only to their own practice of it. The strategies discussed included

Freirean approaches, theory and practice, and examples of specific teaching and assessment methods:

- Problem posing education

A key tenet of Freirean critical pedagogy is the use of ‘problem posing’ education as opposed to ‘banking education.’ The majority of the participants referred to these concepts at some point during their interview. For example, Nick expressed the importance of getting students ‘plugged in’ rather than ‘just talking at students.’ He did think that there needed to be some presentation of content, in order for there to be content to critique. Critical pedagogy does not preclude this. The use of problem posing education and students’ lived experience in critical pedagogy does not determine specific teaching methods. The use of lectures and indeed all teaching and learning activities can be used in a critical pedagogical approach. As Varinder stated:

I’d certainly still hold on to the value of the lecture. Some people think that critical pedagogy is about getting rid of the lecture. No. Because dialogue can happen between two people, dialogue can happen in a group but dialogue can also happen within yourself. So if you’re delivering a lecture that encourages students to dialogue with themselves, then that’s powerful.

Varinder’s observation that a critical lecture can stimulate powerful dialogue within oneself is a perceptive one. However, Nick encapsulated Freire’s banking education when he described what tended to happen at his university, whereby ‘the lecture...becomes, “this is where I tell you everything that’s great,” then in a tutorial, “we give you tasks and you tell me how great what we’ve just done is.”’ However, he highlighted the fact that his lectures to part-time adult students were much longer than his undergraduate lectures, due to questions, interactive dialogue and participation. This suggests that his adult students were more receptive to participatory methods, which may be due to their greater employment experience, as he had suggested earlier.

He identified the difficulty in practicing critical pedagogy with large cohorts of, for example, 250 students in a lecture.

- Dialogue

Dialogue is the fundamental component of Freirean pedagogy and the means by which new knowledge is co-created. Dialogue with and among students was a core component of all of the participants' critical pedagogical practice. This took place through group discussion and debate. Ana identified this as the most effective strategy leading to critical awakening amongst her students, and Sarah as what her students enjoyed the most. While 'a bit of exposure' to challenging content was an effective strategy, Sarah's students particularly liked to discuss, reflect, and 'piece things from their life' into this. Alice always undertook individual dialogue with students in relation to their growth and Varinder used dialogue to explore complex theory with students. A powerful vignette depicting the power of dialogue was painted by Deena, of her young refugee and asylum seeking students:

I remember having a session about Malala Yousafzai. It was on international women's day...quite a few Afghan students and Pakistani students, and there was a bit of turmoil there, but it was brilliant because they were speaking as people, they weren't my students...they were saying how they felt and...they were kids, this arena of people just saying how they felt, all in a circle, and it was amazing...it was a free space. And that's what I think are the best moments in my classroom, when they're allowed to be themselves and say what they think. And be challenged, as well, by each other.

Freirean dialogue, between students and between students and lecturers was the key strategy identified by all of the participants, and like Freire, was a core component of what gives life to critical pedagogy.

- Co-creation

Co-creation of knowledge by students and teachers is a key Freirean approach. Alice used it because it was important to her to shift the balance of

power between her and her students. Co-creation was also important to Varinder and he reported that collaborative productions, podcasts, posters, performances and poetry were powerful strategies in this. This was partly because they catered for multiple intelligences, but also because collaborative projects enabled a connecting, social dimension which he saw as crucial. For him critical pedagogy was about expanding one's sense of humanity: 'What makes us human is the fact that we are social beings. And so you have to enable those connections.' As discussed earlier, Martin planned the core ideas for a course, but the specific content evolved from students' current issues, and they effectively co-created the syllabus. He stated that 'ownership by the people participating on the course,' was very important. By the end of day one of a ten day representatives' course, the students had displayed their current workplace issues on flipcharts covering the walls of the classroom, and Martin then built theoretical content into these, such as aspects of the law.

- Subject area

While Ana thought that any subject could be taught through a critical pedagogical approach, some participants saw their subject area lending itself naturally to critical pedagogy. It was the traditional way that union studies was taught at Nick's institution and students were made aware of this at the outset. Martin reported that he simply knew critical pedagogy as 'the way they did stuff in trade unions.' He affirmed that it was the only approach that he was aware of for his type of education, and 'it's the only kind of methodology that made sense.' In teaching Access to Social Sciences, Ana considered critical pedagogy to be unavoidable, because health and education always contained political elements. She felt very strongly that she must share this with her students. Similarly Sarah, who also taught Access to Social Sciences, thought that the content lent itself to a critical pedagogical approach. For example, when teaching the sociology of education, she and her students critiqued the marketisation of further education, adult tuition fees and the removal of financial support. When teaching Psychology, she taught

anti-psychiatry and social constructions of normality/abnormality. Because Access was originally set up to overcome barriers to participation, Sarah theorised that it lends it to a more democratic structure for delivering education. She also avowed that she could not imagine teaching in any other way, would not know how to teach in another way, and envisaged that her students would struggle with a different approach.

- Efficacy

The efficacy of a critical pedagogy was highlighted by some participants. As Richard explained:

It really works. That's an inspiring thing about it. There are many ideas that are, kind of left-wing and progressive ideas that circulate around. You try them out. They don't work all that well, but critical pedagogy really works.

In practical terms, Martin related critical pedagogy's efficacy directly to praxis. His motivation to practice critical pedagogy was 'because it works. Completely pragmatically... And nothing else could possibly work.' He explained that because his courses involved teaching students multiple communication skills in a very short space of time:

I can't think of any way of doing it in a traditional, formal academic way. You can't. They've got to learn how to beat someone down in an argument. They've got to learn how to give somebody the bad news. You've got to...work on the fire in people's bellies.

The way in which he used students' lived experience to do this encapsulated critical pedagogy:

The only way you can even start to do that is to really focus on their experience, their environment, making sense of it and how they can change it, and making sense of what they themselves already know.

Critical pedagogy's efficacy inspired Martin because it empowered people 'to make wins.' He added, 'what gives life to critical pedagogy' was 'that you see

it working all the time. And it's magnificent to see it working.' This was on a practical level in terms of employment negotiations, but also in terms of it leading to some students progressing from union representative courses to academic study at Masters' level.

- Real-world knowledge and skills

Martin stressed the importance of providing union representatives with real world skills for praxis. He used real-life practical exercises rather than giving lectures. He gave an example of the way he taught about exploitation, which encapsulated the difference between Freire's banking method and problem posing method:

For instance... "I'm going to do a talk now on exploitation," or, "Right, shall we try and work out how much your gaffer makes out of you every year? Let's actually do the maths on it. Let's see. It's just going to be a back of an envelope, but it will give us a rough idea." And they love that. And you feed that into planning wage negotiations.

Martin's students wanted to learn concrete skills using real-life experiences. He emphasised that to achieve this, students needed to be placed in real circumstances where they learned processes from their mistakes. He saw critical pedagogy as representatives experiencing mistakes and triumphs for themselves, thus gaining concrete skills in confronting people in more powerful positions than themselves. He gave the example of using closed questions in disciplinary hearings, which afforded management no 'wriggle room.' Once the students had role played and thus experienced the success of this first hand, they were able to go back into their workplaces and put this into practice with more confidence than had they merely been told how to do it. For Martin, critical pedagogy partly constituted students discovering that there were simple underlying processes which they could master. He explained that working class activists who joined the trade union movement did not have a ready-made set of skills and they needed to learn these very quickly. For example, he simulated shop stewards' meetings, with different

students chairing the meeting and taking minutes, using live issues from the students' workplaces. Students discussed the issues and the way they had dealt with them, and Martin provided guidance and support. Alice also considered it important that teacher trainees learned real world skills for praxis. They needed concrete strategies to deal with conflict amongst their own students when teaching respect and understanding of difference. She acknowledged that this could be emotive work for them, and she needed to show them how to create safe conditions to do so. She used case study scenarios to do this.

Real world experiences also came in the form of external speakers. Claudette brought in speakers from the community to her classes, particularly those that were relatable to the students, such as the example previously discussed, of a woman from the local community who was from the same background as the students, who explained that the students were not prevented from cycling by their religion. Visiting speakers, who explained their story within the criminal justice system, or within the education system, were utilised by Maxine.

- Theory

At the other end of the continuum, Varinder believed in 'offering students theory that is complex,' and enabling them to understand this through dialogue. Maxine also gave her campus-based and prison-based students complex, original readings which initially appeared very challenging to the students. A university colleague who was new to prison education declared, "Maxine, I can't believe you've given this to the students...it's like giving steak to babies. There is no way that they can... What are you doing?" and she replied, "you will see." The students did find it difficult, but once they engaged in dialogue, they were able to co-create what they had taken from the reading, as a group. Maxine found that the combination of academic theory to

illuminate structures, alongside experiences in people's real lives to be 'a visceral combination.'

- Autobiography/autoethnography

In order to move away 'from the dominance of the text, and the tyranny of text,' Alice introduced a learning autobiography at the beginning of her students' courses. The autobiography constituted a piece of free writing, expressive writing, multimedia, an artefact or a scrapbook. However, learning autobiographies are used in many higher education courses, not only in critical pedagogical approaches. In order to be critical, they would need to address oppressive structures. Maxine also used autoethnography. To demonstrate how to do this, she shared incidents of oppression from her own biography. She gave students content about structural inequalities and intersectionality and they were required to position themselves in relation to these. Reflecting on one's own lived experiences in this individual way, as opposed to in small groups, is 'safe,' particularly if there is not a requirement to share this with the group or the tutor.

- Role play

As a specialist in International Relations, Toni taught about war and terrorism, on which students often had predetermined views. She challenged these using role play, which led to critical awakening. She gave an example of studying the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers, where she divided the group into the American President's camp, the Al Qaeda camp, and the relatives of those who had died. The students then had to tell their story from the relevant perspective. She recalled, 'what they produced was incredible. The third group, in fact was so good at what they did, the class was crying. It was so powerful.' Toni used this to demonstrate to the students the power of language and what happens to their views when they choose different narratives. She gave another example of teaching about the conflict in Syria, entitled 'The Crisis Game.' She divided the groups into the Syrian President, the American President, the British Prime Minister, a Kurdish group and a

Turkish group. Over a period of two weeks the groups researched and developed what they thought was best for their country, and their strategies. At the end of the course, the students reported it to have been the most effective learning activity they had carried out. With the adult education students who had resisted her, as mentioned earlier, she taught about the upcoming general election (2017) and used case studies depicting different members of society. The elderly, male student who had particularly resisted her, by chance picked the case study of a young, single mother. He was required to make a case for what the young mother needed from the Prime Minister, from the community, and from society overall. Toni reported that he actually did it very well, given the position he was coming from. She found that older people engaged and took such activities more seriously than younger students, but pointed out that it was harder to induce older students to trust her.

- Equivalences

The use of equivalences in assessment was cited as a critical pedagogical strategy by a number of participants. While equivalences are clearly democratic and participatory, they can be used in educational approaches other than critical pedagogy. However, the participants who referred to equivalences saw them as disrupting the imposition of the dominant assessment modality of a hierarchical system. While equivalences allow for individual means of expression, the system is always hierarchical because the lecturer marks the students' work, and issues of power are always therefore at play.

Professional freedom, risk, and responsibility

This theme addresses the relative amounts of academic and professional freedom participants experienced in their institution, and the impact this had

on their practice of critical pedagogy. It also highlights the risks involved and discusses issues of professional identity and responsibility.

All of the participants experienced the academic and professional freedom to practice critical pedagogy. There were none who were practising in a covert manner. However, a number considered themselves fortunate to be able to do so. For example, Nick acknowledged that he was 'in a very, very different position' to many academics and had the freedom to choose his teaching content and approach. He had been attracted to his department and university because 'the group had a more or less coherent approach...there was a political project going on here.' This political approach may have been because union studies is by nature political, and was the reason he remained at his university. Like Nick, Alice felt that she was fortunate in having the professional freedom to practice critical pedagogy in her university, which contrasted with her former role in further education. Through having time to read and the academic freedom to express her own ideas, she had found her academic voice, which she found very liberating. She was given the freedom to teach in the way she wanted to, particularly if she was able to support her approaches with relevant literature. In this context she was able to put into practice the pedagogies of Freire (1970) and hooks (1994). Richard also considered himself to be very fortunate in not being prevented from practising critical pedagogy in his university, and having been able to create enough space for himself to do so. He explained: 'I think a lot of people would see me as probably a bit of a nutcase, but they're not trying to stop me.'

Adult and community learning generally affords greater freedom in teaching approaches, and Toni experienced this when working for the Workers' Educational Association. She was allowed to develop her own courses and teach them in the way she wanted to. She attested that the trust the WEA put in her as an educator enabled her to deal with the resistance she met, recalling, 'I felt so grateful and responsible at the same time, this power that was given to me.' In relation to professional freedom and the curriculum in further education, Sarah considered that as an Access teacher, she had

more choice over the curriculum than she would if she were teaching A level. Although she could not choose the subjects she taught, she was able to choose the material she used and the points she emphasised. Because of this, she surmised, 'I suppose my politics informs my decisions around the curriculum.' For example, when teaching the sociology of education, she focussed specifically on changes to further education, including marketisation, tuition fees and the removal of bursaries and grants. Sarah considered that teachers generally had that freedom within Access courses, but suggested that a mobilisation of critical pedagogy should be preceded by some data gathering to find out where else such freedom did actually exist.

However Ana, also an Access teacher, had some concerns regarding her strong political beliefs around the subject she taught, in relation to her professional boundaries. She had recently found out that it was 'illegal for me to put my "markings on the post" to my students, without having the caveat of "these are my personal views."' This had disquieted her somewhat and prefigures the risks involved in using critical pedagogy, which were highlighted by some participants. Maxine reported that 'I often feel like I've got a target on my back.' She did not feel that she was being personally attacked, rather it was because she was challenging the status quo. She thought that she was more heavily surveyed than other people as a result of this. Nick cautioned that until there was a government that would consider alternative models of education that enabled the practice of critical pedagogy, 'the danger is lots of people get hung out to dry trying to do good things.' Although Richard was allowed to practice in his own way, he acknowledged that many people who want to bring about a progressive pedagogy in education were bullied, which destroyed morale.

Despite the dangers in practising critical pedagogy, the participants emphasised the need to take the required risks. As Varinder posited, for those wishing to practice critical pedagogy, 'I think you have to take some risks as well. And so that's important to be inventive, to allow things to happen. I don't think transformation comes by being passive.' Varinder

likened the critical pedagogue to a 'virus in the system that's sending all these antibodies to try and wipe you out. And so you're going to get opposition, but you have to be optimistic.' Alice also maintained that practising critical pedagogy involved being brave, 'putting your head above the parapet, and that's so hard to do.' In relation to mobilising critical pedagogy, Toni felt it was important to 'eliminate the fear factor... There has to be something that helps with the fear. Fear of becoming less secure, or less certain of how things are.' She felt that it was important for potential critical pedagogues to be brave, to be determined, and take action. Some participants highlighted the role of management in relation to the risks of using critical pedagogy. Alice emphasised the importance of protection by a management structure or group and cautioned, 'it's really dangerous, I think, to be on your own. I think you just get picked off.' When Sarah discussed the professional freedom of Access teachers she thought that this was 'still down to management,' and in her case, 'our manager is quite laissez-faire.' The management of Claudette's women's education centre was supportive and understood the need for her and her colleagues to show their students that they could have a voice. While Claudette encouraged those wishing to practice critical pedagogy to do so, she acknowledged that this was much easier with supportive management. The sense of risk and potential isolation in practising critical pedagogy was identified by a number of participants, but the circumstances in which all of the participants worked, enabled enough room for them to do so.

Maxine reported that as a further education lecturer in prison, she and her colleagues experienced markedly different conditions to others employed by her college and were treated as second-class lecturers. When she later worked in the prison in a higher education capacity, she had far greater freedom because she was not required to deliver an accredited course. Sarah considered that the current further education climate stripped people of their professional identity, reporting that ten years ago there were far more

people who were 'professionally confident.' She recalled a generation who had retired or moved on, whose self-image was one of 'professional agency:'

Whereas that is not what further education tells its workers they are now. It's nothing like that. You are part of a corporate structure. You're expendable. You are in a climate of redundancies and threat.... I think there's a new generation of people in further education who... don't seem to...imagine themselves as professional or having a professional identity.

This certainly mirrors my experience in further education, in the years of austerity from 2010 onwards. Sarah purported that the new generation further education lecturers did not see teaching as a lifelong career, because they were employed on zero hours or temporary contracts. She felt that this casualisation needed to be grasped by the unions in order for the restoration of professional identities in further education.

A number of participants discussed the responsibility of being a critical pedagogue. Nick felt that it was his duty to critique neoliberalism in his teaching and to make students aware of the wider political economy, different models of economics and the fact that economics affects people's lives. Alice was motivated to use critical pedagogy because:

I think it's our responsibility. The world is not neutral or vanilla, is it? I think we have to expose our students and our colleagues to the way that the world and language, and ideology... Even down to line management. That notion, the Fordist production line.

However, some participants expressed ambivalent feelings regarding their sense of responsibility. For example, Alice also discussed feelings of guilt as a critical pedagogue and social justice educator, in terms of creating an expectation that students emulate her way of working. In relation to her trainee teachers, she stated 'I wouldn't want them to think that they've got to walk my way' and expressed concern that she may be making people stay in teaching longer than they personally should. She posited 'if it's all political

act, then what about the personal is political as well? What about if it's too much? And I do struggle with that.' For Maxine, her ambivalence was in relation to making a positive difference to prison-based students, then withdrawing. She experienced this as 'a massive responsibility which weighs me down at times.' This caused her some difficulty; 'at the moment I can't go back. And that troubles me.' She also found it physically very difficult: 'I quite often don't feel up to the task.' The duty of care and responsibility was palpable in Deena, who taught young asylum seekers and refugees and felt very strongly that she had a duty to inform herself about their backgrounds, and what it was that they needed in the present:

To be so young and to be on your own in this country is just... I wouldn't know how I would have dealt with that. I can't imagine anybody I know going through that. So I've, I think, I've felt a duty, not a duty to care, but to inform myself so I knew more about them.

Varinder also viewed his position as a responsibility, but as a privilege too. He postulated that there was nothing wrong with power, provided that one recognised the responsibility of that. He felt that he should use the power he had to connect with students, colleagues and citizens, and disrupt people's conception of an academic. Because education could create 'possibilities in society,' he considered the responsibility of pedagogues to be 'huge.' He highlighted the fact that he was being paid for doing something that other people would pay to do, 'to gain knowledge and have access to wonderful resources,' which he viewed as both a privilege and a responsibility. Similarly, Martin saw working with the trade union movement as a privilege. This acknowledgement of privilege demonstrates the participants' appreciation of their academic and pedagogical freedom, but also of being in a position to foster change.

Issues of professional identity, responsibility, freedom, isolation and risk present a challenging balancing act, and it may be that many teachers do not feel able to do this and perceive the obstructive factors to be too great.

Find the spaces/subvert

Extending the concept of risk, the participants stressed the need to find spaces within the existing education system and curriculum, for those wishing to practice critical pedagogy. In hindsight, I could have found more spaces within my previous teaching and wish I had done so. Alice expressed hope that such spaces exist and I believe that they do. Maxine reported that she always found spaces and cracks to be able to change things. She stated that 'there are always gaps. And although people say "the curriculum is too restrictive," there are always gaps in between.' Of perceived obstacles to practising critical pedagogy, Martin echoed Maxine's view; 'see, I don't accept that... you can subvert the most irritating quality structures...processes. Anyone... can subvert that and work around it, can't they?' Subverting existing systems and finding existing spaces was also proposed by Nick. Richard's exhortation to those who wanted to practice critical pedagogy was to 'find those spaces, build them, develop them and find the space for yourself where you can learn about critical pedagogy.' Trish encouraged those who wanted to practice critical pedagogy to 'just crack on and do it,' as did Ana; 'just do it. Do what you believe in.' Both thought that critical pedagogy could be used with any subject, and that curriculum was irrelevant. Trish explained, 'it's just about creating spaces for discussion, introducing ideas, challenging, bringing in creative ways of allowing people to think, and just try to create those spaces where you can.' She viewed it as a mind-set. Claudette also exhorted those wishing to practice critical pedagogy to 'go for it.' According to Varinder, the education system had its weaknesses and contradictions, and 'working within those cracks' helped him hold onto his belief that capitalism and neoliberalism were not all victorious.

However, Alice emphasised the importance of being able to 'play the game.' She felt that it was important to be able to pick her arguments, be political and be able to talk back to people and policy. She thought that this needed to start at the level of teacher education in order to mobilise critical pedagogy,

but that teachers needed resilience to do this. Student teachers needed to understand what policy meant and ‘how you can play the policy games... that nothing is received that should not be criticised.’

Although the participants clearly identified the dangers of practising critical pedagogy in the current educational climate, they encouraged those wishing to do so to find the spaces that exist in the current system and take the opportunities to create a critical pedagogical practice within these. They acknowledge the risks but also exhorted potential practitioners to be brave and essentially to ‘go for it.’ Working the spaces gives life to critical pedagogy.

4.2.3. Dimension Three, Self

What gives life to critical pedagogy?

Dimension Three, Self, represents the inner person of the critical pedagogue. It constitutes the internal, more personal motivations which lay behind the participants’ critical orientations to the external dimensions of both the education system and wider society. This represents a crucial component of what gives life to critical pedagogy. The participants’ critical alignment often emanated from their early experiences, including family influences, experiences of oppression, educational experiences, and discovery through reading and music. These experiences oriented them to their current personal and political beliefs, and their values, and coalesced in the practice of critical pedagogy.

Role models

In developing a critical orientation, family influences during childhood were unsurprisingly cited by some participants. These were highly individual, as the following examples depict. Alice credited her grandfather with introducing her to the world of ideas and politics, and the ability to challenge. He was a miner and a trade unionist and she recalled that when, as a young girl, she

asked to read his war magazines, 'not an eyelid was batted...he let me read them, but he also educated me in politics...he fed me this stuff...he fed me ideas. He fed me the ability to challenge and say "no."' She recollected, 'he started me off, then I found it in books.' Richard's mother was 'an avowed feminist' which had a 'big impact' on him, as he grew up during a time of struggles around legal abortion in Australia. As a person who questioned truth, Toni's mother influenced her greatly. Both of Toni's parents were doctors and her mother was one of the few women of her generation who went to university. She met with a great deal of resistance in her career because Greek society 'is such that they didn't like that she was so educated...that she was speaking out.' As a result, Toni thought that 'everybody should be speaking out. I should be speaking out,' and she started to do so as a child, questioning teachers. On the contrary, Toni's father did not meet resistance in his career, and her mother was a role model to her because she persisted in spite of this resistance, becoming an intensive care specialist with significant responsibility. Radical politics was intergenerational in Sarah's family. Her parents were left-wing, she 'was brought up in the CND' and her father, grandfather and great-great-aunt were all unionist activists. Claudette also came from a politically involved family and she grew up 'going to meetings and conferences.' Although Martin's family was not explicitly socialist, his mother was unusual in being an early feminist who had not married until she was in her mid-30s. She had travelled around the world with her friends, and his father was put in 'the glasshouse,' the military prison, for disobedience in the army. He felt that he imbibed those values, although they were not made explicit. The participants believed that these family role models shaped their critical orientation either directly or indirectly.

Experiences of oppression, alienation

Childhood experiences of oppression and alienation were also early influences on some participants' later critical pedagogical orientation. Alice expressed this as an incongruity, through living in an affluent area but

knowing that 'we were working class, we lived in a council house. I knew we were poor...'

Being a member of a minority group led to a sense of alienation for Varinder and Maxine. Varinder became involved in anti-racist struggles when he was thirteen, through attending an anti-racist protest where he was forced to speak publicly. He experienced this as liberating, because 'my choice of words became very powerful.' He compared this with his experience at school, where he would have been disciplined for the words he had used. This 'real material issue' changed Varinder as a young teenager. He drew a connection between this experience and critical pedagogy, paraphrasing Freire:

One of the things that Freire writes about in his method, is that we are all thinkers and we are all trying to make sense of the world and we have our own language. We have our own means of communicating and one of the important things for critical pedagogues is to give credence to meanings and language from below.

As a youth, Varinder was aware of power in concrete terms, manifested in police officers, uniforms, schools and institutions. His desire to make sense of this led him to reading, which provided him with a more theoretical understanding. However this reading, which took place in public spaces such as left-wing bookshops, was accompanied by 'a fear of intellectuality.' Varinder explained that this was because 'at one level I was, as a working class lad from a minority community, I was put out of that sphere of what it is to be clever, intellectual.' His fear of intellectualism was a form of internalised racism and symbolic violence.

Maxine, a working class, black girl growing up in a white neighbourhood, was keenly aware of injustice; 'I used to feel like I was going a bit mad when I was a child, because I could see all this injustice that nobody else seemed to be able to see.' She described her experience of watching films:

As a brown child looking at these images, I knew what it was saying about people of colour. I understood when in Tarzan you had all these apparently savage looking Africans, or with big headdresses, that they were positioning them as somebody different. Backward, exotic, or whatever.

Maxine's awareness of injustice and the fact that other people did not appear to see it led to her feeling alienated as a child. She also experienced prejudice at school around being from a single parent family, expressed in the form of surprise that she was so bright and well adjusted:

I got all of these messages from the school that I'm exceptionally bright. Only exceptionally in the sense that I shouldn't be given the background that I come from. Not that I was the most clever child that they've ever seen, but that this was very, very odd.

Maxine and Varinder began to exercise agency early on. Maxine questioned teachers and raised issues of oppression, and Varinder truanted from school to read and educate himself about such issues. Their personal experience of marginalisation lay the ground for their later critical orientation.

Experience of education

Some participants' experience of education contributed to their critical orientation. They had negative school experiences, or experiences that indicated that the education system was flawed. For example, Maxine reported that she was a very engaged student who loved school and education, but she recognised discontinuities early in her schooling:

I recognised that there was something wrong with the education system because the teacher would tell me things that were apparently facts, and it was clear that they weren't. So the "Christopher Columbus discovered America." That's not factual. That's a political statement that's hiding all the stuff that's behind colonialism. I obviously didn't have that language at the time... But I had a sense of what colonialism was from watching things like Tarzan.

Maxine questioned the teacher regarding this, who did not know how to respond, and in secondary school wrote about racism, which again flummoxed her teacher. Maxine's sense that there was something wrong on many levels increased as she went through secondary school. She hated the prescriptive curriculum and the restrictive choice of subject combinations. She had a 'seesaw... relationship with education,' because she knew that it had the power to be transformative. Through it she had learned about Marx, and it had given her the language to understand the systems and structures she had witnessed, had empowered her, and made her feel connected to other people. The education system also demarcated her as a 'legitimate learner' because she did well, and she therefore had a positive view of herself as a student. However, she knew that others had a different view of themselves, and had been given a very different message. She described how one of her cousins had been in trouble at school and been in prison, and the family narrative was that it was because he was so bright and his school were not challenging him sufficiently.

This narrative stayed with Maxine and she contrasted it with her own experience, another bright child in the family who did well at school. When she subsequently started researching prison education, these differing experiences led her to think 'there's something that is happening in education that is...creating the inequalities.' She had experienced positive and powerful education, whereas her cousin had not. Her Sociology A level teacher's approach epitomised critical education to her. He asserted that 'what you're going to learn in Sociology is not what society is, but what some people who wrote about society thought about society.' To Maxine 'it was beautiful' because he presented sociological theorists as privileged people who had been 'credited with saying something interesting,' but that these were versions of the truth, rather than fact. She was motivated to work in prisons because the students there had been 'denied the opportunity to have the kind of education that I've had, that enabled me to connect to Marxism, and feminism, and...things that help me to feel more valuable in the world.'

Toni directly experienced the impact of such different educational approaches. She grew up in Greece where:

There was one textbook for everything. You have to memorise it and repeat it to get a good mark. We were not allowed to question anything, because the teacher is the authority, the book was the authority. Whoever produced that book was the authority, and who are we to question that?

Toni subsequently studied at university in the UK and contrasted this with her experience in her home country. At university she learned that there were differing narratives which she discovered were 'all worth examining' and worth understanding within their context. She had always been unable 'to accept anything as truth unless I have processed it myself and it has made sense to me.' As a child, she witnessed her mother speaking out, and thought that she should therefore also speak out. She recalled that at school, they were not allowed to question the Greek orthodox religion or the existence of God, but she did question it and received low marks as a result. When she said to the teacher that she thought that she did not believe in God, her marks went down further. At this point she thought 'this is not right. This is not what education is about.' She started critically questioning the meaning of education when studying for her Masters' degree in the United Kingdom in her mid-20s and explained that now, 'my whole life is about learning. Learning about the world, learning about myself, questioning myself.'

As both a pupil and a teacher, Richard found the banking method of education 'very boring and dis-engaging.' Because Freire's banking method and problem posing method resonated with his own experiences, he 'came to critical pedagogy as a conscious philosophy.' Varinder's school experiences also 'resonate with Freire's work around alienating education, around oppressive education as opposed to liberating education.' He struggled at school and truanted in order to read. He felt that school contributed to his alienation and that in truanting, he was trying to find 'alternative spaces in which to make sense of the world, as opposed to the classroom.'

The education system was also discordant for Alice. Because she was clever, her parents wanted her to take the local grammar school entrance exam, which she said was 'like reading ...a foreign language. I couldn't understand that verbal reasoning, stuff where things were turned round.' This was of significance to her because she realised that her idea of what constituted being clever was different to her parents, to the establishment way of thinking. She became alienated from the education system in her teenage years, only returning to it as an adult.

These participants' experience of education contained both positive and negative experiences, and in some cases this very combination that contributed to their orientation to critical pedagogy.

Reading/music/academic subjects

Reading, music, and later academic study were key components in leading a number of participants' to critical pedagogy. For some, a hunger for reading started when they were children or teenagers. Alice was a 'voracious reader' and the clever child in her family. She stated, 'I've always been the odd one out, and I like that.' All she wanted to do as a child was read and so she would misbehave, be sent to bed and then read. When she was discovered reading, she would be brought back down stairs again. She portrayed her relationship with books: 'I had a world. Books were my friends. I had this world I could go to for ideas.' Alice did not identify whether this early reading led to her critical perspective.

Trish started to research Irish history, because she wanted to understand the experiences of her grandparents. Brought up in England, but in an Irish family, Trish was immersed in Irish culture, a 'twin identity.' This brought her to 'colonialism, British Imperialism and gender inequality and religion.' Reading led to her critical perspective and interests, and she went on to study and teach Sociology.

Reading was a source of liberation to Varinder and linked directly to his developing critical perspective. As mentioned earlier, he became involved in

reading through left-wing bookshops, following on from his early experience of activist protest. It was an active, public form of reading, involving dialogue and the sharing of ideas. He also read in the library, truanting from school to read, which he acknowledged was ironic. However, as previously reported, school was contributing to his alienation and he was 'fighting that by looking for an alternative curriculum.' In retrospect, he identified this as a process of self-liberation where 'once I began to look at the theories, it all kind of made sense.' Similarly, for Alice as a young mother, 'the library was this amazing place I could go to and make up for all the things I'd missed at school.'

Critical engagement came to Maxine initially through music. As a teenager in the 1980s, she listened to hip-hop and connected to it in a way that she could not do with her neighbourhood or her education. She also listened to reggae, which was critical of capitalism, national and international systems, and to dance hall music which had a political commentary and was 'for the people.' She explained that there was something about this music that 'keys into a hard life... It speaks to the street.' She became interested in a radical, political style of hip-hop in the 1990s, which brought her to the 1960s black American struggle, Malcolm X, and Angela Davis. At this time she also studied Sociology A-level, which was 'a big influence' on her and she combined her musical experiences with Marxist theory and social divisions of gender, race, and class. As a child, Maxine had been aware of injustice, which she found 'outrageous,' but it was Sociology and hip-hop that gave her the language to explain such injustice. In Sociology she was 'amazed' to discover the existence of written historical work that reflected the way she had been thinking since she was a young child. She realised that "there's a whole history of people doing this. I'm not the only one." She recalled 'I felt that I had come home. I was like, "Thank God for this. I'm not mad. I'm not the only person."'

Theoretical understanding through later academic study also led participants to a critical pedagogical orientation. When Alice studied an Access course in Economics, she recalled, 'part of me thought "this is amazing," and part of

me was really freaked out by it.’ Through education, and ‘a thirst for something that brought me to these ideas,’ she gained an understanding of herself:

In these ideas, I found, “Oh, that’s that thing then. So, I’ve found that thing. I can name that thing why I’m odd, why I’m beginning to call myself a feminist. Why I don’t want to be married.” All of that then started to make sense, why I hadn’t fitted the family mould until that point.

Alice had always been interested in critical theory and her degree in American Studies enabled her to use ‘different prisms’ to study subjects. Her early postgraduate study exposed her to a range of theories. Her discovery of Freire and his concept of praxis resonated with her because she only enjoyed theorising when linked to practice. She did not like abstract academic work and described the redbrick university she studied and taught at:

I don’t like the abstract nature of working somewhere like X University. It was very cerebral. It was very selfish. You present a paper and it was like an academic bear pit. I don’t want that.

She came across hooks and other black women writers when reading for her first degree and ‘all of that stuff about recolonising, decolonising, was really important to me. I was very aware of “othering” and being “othered.”’ When she entered teacher education, she found that this enabled her to question who was and was not included on the syllabus and ‘whose voice needed to come through more.’ She found that she could bring her past studies into the present, by giving these readings to her students.

Richard was involved in left-wing politics as an undergraduate and therefore read left-wing books and pamphlets. He had heard of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), but did not read it until he was teaching Social Work students. He recalled, ‘I found it completely mind blowing...I thought it was the most incredible thing,’ and used Freire and Bourdieu in his PGCE in

relation to educational exclusion. Varinder's earliest recollection of critical pedagogy was also when he read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This gave him a label for his existing engagement in community education, dialogue and activism. The politics behind Freire's work resonated with this, and with him 'struggling and trying to make sense of the world.' Trish studied critical theory at university, discovered Freire and was 'completely inspired and read everything.' She also carried out a university placement at a Steiner school which she described as 'really amazing, in terms of a philosophical approach to teaching.' Through reading at university, she became 'politicised around feminism' and described herself as:

...a bit of a bookie. I am one of those perpetual students...I love Sociology and ...that kind of thinking, reading books that challenge my way of thinking...and make me think of the world in a different way. And I still love that now.

Toni's first degree in Philosophy had given her a critical orientation which brought to her to critical theory as a postgraduate. She questioned truth, fact and knowledge, the role of power in these and their political connections. Sarah studied social and cultural theory at Masters' level, following a first degree in Psychology and Sociology, which contributed to her critical outlook and teaching. Nick studied joint Politics and Economics A-level, and was politicised by the miners' strike, which was also covered on his A-level syllabus. He studied Politics at university and started to develop Marxist ideas, followed by an Masters' through which he developed his left-wing position. Following university, he became a workplace union activist and experienced both right and left-wing unionism. He then returned to education to study for a PhD in Industrial Relations and discovered different perspectives on the employment relationship. It was here that he realised that 'there was a battle of ideas going on.' He recalled, 'I'd never seen it written down in such a way... It was spelt out... embedded right in the very beginning of the key readings.' These resonated with his experiences as a union activist. Together with his political leanings, this informed the critical

view he brought to his research and teaching, and his choice to use critical pedagogy. This became formalised when he joined his current university, where there was a unified approach to teaching Union Studies from a Marxist perspective.

Reading beyond the formal education environment was a source of liberation for some participants, contributing to their early critical development, and academic subjects studied as young adults laid the grounds for most of the participants' later critical pedagogy.

Beliefs, values and politics

Personal beliefs, values and politics were central to the participants' motivations to practice critical pedagogy and were expressed in ways that were individual to each of them. What gives life to critical pedagogy was, for Varinder, 'a kind of absolute belief' that education has transformative potential, and that the 'power of pedagogy opens up possibilities' in all social systems. He explained why critical pedagogy was important to him:

I think it comes back to a personal creed really. I believe that all human beings have potential, they all have abilities. I often say that every human being has beauty and talent, but because of the nature of societal oppression, their talent is often unrecognised or unrealised, and their beauty is often, again, not recognised. And the reasons for that is because we construct ideas about ability, beauty, talent, in very binary ways. In kind of hierarchical ways.

Maxine was similarly driven by 'the power and the freedom that real critical education can bring,' but also saw it as being 'definitely about your authentic love of life.'

Optimism and hope were also factors motivating Varinder and Richard to use critical pedagogy. Varinder considered optimism to be very important for critical pedagogues, because 'you're like a virus in a system that's sending all these antibodies to try and wipe you out.' Richard expressed this as the notion of 'radical hope', citing the work of Amsler (2015). He asserted, 'we

can and must find ways of being hopeful and optimistic,' and referenced Bloch (1986), positing that 'we have to hold these kind of utopias in our heart...but equally we have to be practical, political people who can bring about these in the real world.' These notions of utopia, optimism and hope were also expounded as a quasi-religious concept. Varinder described his critical pedagogy as a way of life, and a personal creed. He identified 'that sense of utopia, I guess. That sense of possibility,' as being what sustained him. He described critical pedagogy as a utopian ideal and:

It becomes almost a religious ideal in some senses. It becomes a place that may be a conception of heaven. Which is what utopias often are. And so there is a realism that you might never get there, but I'd rather live a life of striving for that, than one which is taking the default position, which is the easier option in some senses.

Varinder referenced Catholicism as one of Freire's drivers. He reflected on the fact that critical pedagogy was popular in seminaries and conjectured that for some people it was 'a kind of secular creed, a secular faith.' Deena also compared her pedagogy to a faith, akin to a 'higher power.' A spiritual allusion was also drawn by Maxine, when describing what gives life to critical pedagogy:

I think it's something to do with values, and dare I say it, love... Some people call it God even... That's not something I would do, but it's something about the untouchable. It's something about the meaning of us even being here on this planet.

Maxine described her work as 'a sort of a mission... to help people see... the structures... in order that they can do something about it.' She explained how crucial it was to her that her work had meaning, emphasising 'it's got to have some fundamental, essential meaning. Otherwise I actually get depressed.' She discussed this in terms of her purpose in life:

What's the meaning of life? Why am I here on this planet, doing what I do, if there is not a point to it? I kind of feel there is a... going back to

this religion and stuff... I've got some sense that we don't just come here and live and die. The reason I think...and feel the things I do, is because I'm supposed to be doing something in particular... bringing some knowledge that I've got to other people... almost a mission...If I don't do it then I get very sad... there's no point in living if you're not doing anything that's meaningful.

Varinder also articulated the meaning of critical pedagogy in personal terms:

Critical pedagogy wasn't a project for me, it was a way of living. Freire talks about that. He said that if critical pedagogy is about liberation, then the more liberation you get, the more you realise you want and need it. It becomes a bit addictive and then it becomes a way of being and a way of life, rather than an event.

He proposed that liberation constituted an unravelling process, with himself 'still unravelling.' Seeing the fruits of such possibility within himself as well as within students, kept him energised. He saw critical pedagogy as 'an expanding,' as about growth, nurturing and developing, and posited that 'as you grow and nurture and develop, you expand your humanity.'

Together with personal beliefs, values were also important motivators for participants. Alice was motivated and inspired by critical pedagogy because it represented 'living my values of social justice,' and her desire for the world to be fairer. Toni insisted on living her values. When she started teaching International Relations in adult and community learning, she met with resistance from the students because she was female, young and from another country. However, her overriding personal conviction that she must challenge injustice, made her more determined. Of one student who particularly resisted her, she asserted:

I cannot give into something that I know is harmful...not just to that man...to learning, to progress, to anything that I stand for in my life... any more than... if he had made a racist comment about someone else in the group. I challenged him and I continued to challenge him.

Toni was driven and sustained in her critical pedagogical approach by her own belief system and values, as was Ana, who cited her beliefs as her inspiration and her sustenance. However, Ana acknowledged that 'it's a lonely place sometimes.'

Values were also extremely important to Deena. A community of practice in which to discuss one's teaching did not exist in her further education environment, and so she believed it was very important to 'cling onto what you think is right.' Her duty of care to her students was paramount and it was this, rather than a desire to be a radical teacher, that drove her critical pedagogical practice. She explained:

I don't want them to be hurt, I just want to gather them up. I don't want them to have any disadvantage, they've already got enough...because of people, what they assume about them.

Other participants identified political beliefs as motivating their practice of critical pedagogy. Some of these beliefs started to develop at an early age. Maxine had been political as a child 'without knowing what political is.' As discussed earlier, she questioned teachers when she sensed injustice. Richard was politicised at the age of twelve by the election of the first Labour government in thirty two years in Australia, and said it was 'an electrifying moment' for himself and those around him, and had 'a huge effect of me. That politicised me.' The government were only in power for three years but addressed issues that he thought were important, such as aboriginal land rights, women's rights, improved trade union situations and increased funding in education and health. Having these subsequently removed, 'left me with a huge feeling that you have to really fight for these things.' He grew up in what he described as a 'radical period,' from the same suburb as Germaine Greer, and recalled visiting friends' houses where *The Female Eunuch*, with its incredibly distinctive cover...was there' and he was keen to understand. As a child, Martin recalled playing the Vietnam War and choosing to be on the Viet Cong side. However, he did not know at what age he became consciously aware of political issues. He had always identified with the working class

movement and had been active in the labour and trade union movement since he was fifteen years old. He then became involved in solidarity activities in South Africa in his twenties, where he first experienced radical education methods. The activist training took place at the weekend and so radical education activities were put on for the children, such as performing *Animal Farm* as a play.

A number of participants related their current politics to their critical pedagogical orientation, and some also linked this to their union activism. Sarah, a union activist, had always been of a political mind set. She explained that 'my generation was the first...that was hit with Blair's tuition fees' and she was part of the student protests, which 'informed my views of the education system.' Similarly, her union activism and her politics 'informs my decisions around the curriculum'. She posited that her unionism might have given her the confidence to teach critically because, 'you have a stronger awareness of...what you will and won't put your foot down on.' Sarah reflected that 'all the really passionate Access people who do it the way I would do it are trade union representatives... Or certainly have strong politics.' Nick, also a trade unionist, stated that critical pedagogy fitted with his political beliefs. Claudette had always been politically engaged, but predominantly through the union. She was worried that her asylum seeker and refugee students were not part of the political discussions that took place about them, saying 'I'm pretty sure that most of our politicians never came into contact with people that I see every day,' and this motivated her use of critical pedagogy.

Ana, a union activist, was emphatic about her politics, particularly in relation to health, education and the justice system. She deplored injustice and the marginalisation of certain groups of people. She considered critical pedagogy to be part of who she was as a political and union activist. When political issues arose in her subject area, Access to Education and Health, she felt driven to share her beliefs with her students. She acknowledged that 'sometimes I get a bit carried away.' She declared, in relation to the

marketisation of education and the selling off of the NHS, 'how can I not illustrate to my students what this government and their ilk are trying to do to the future of public services?' Her politics arose from:

...my own strong feelings, my own strong beliefs...which... is all about justice. I don't like inequality. I didn't know I was practising equality and diversity, I just hate inequality.

Ana did not reflect on where her politics and critical pedagogy originated. She had not made a conscious decision to practice critical pedagogy. She saw it as 'who I am,' and, 'something I do because of my strong beliefs.' She asserted 'I don't have an agenda...I'm explaining something that means so much to me...I want other people...to be open to understanding that people matter.' Maxine also expressed a sense of disquiet at the idea of practicing critical pedagogy as a conscious choice. In discussing teachers who might want to practice critical pedagogy, she expressed ambivalence about the concept of academics wanting to practice critical pedagogy if it came from a place of privilege, or through thinking 'this looks either sexy or attractive.' Varinder ventured that he had known people, some from privileged backgrounds, for whom activism and critical pedagogy were 'events.' For him, 'it became an all engrossing way of being, and that's why I think I find it very difficult to withdraw from this project, even if it sometimes might be easier to do so.'

The politics that motivated the participants were seen by some as a necessary pre-requisite to engaging in critical pedagogy. Trish considered that 'it has to be part of you really,' and Ana professed, 'I think you've got to believe, and you've got to have political views.'

Personal beliefs and values were key components of the participants' motivations to practice critical pedagogy. Political beliefs were key, which is inevitable given the political nature of the critical pedagogical project. Some saw a political or critical orientation as a pre-requisite for those who might

wish to use critical pedagogy. This was also reflected in a mistrust of the potential use of critical pedagogy as an affectation.

Making a change

The desire to make a change in the world, to exercise agency, was an inherent part of the participants' lived commitment to social justice and praxis. This held true for the participants themselves and their intentions for their students. It underpinned their responses across each dimension. This theme reflects the direct articulation of that desire. Nick saw teaching in union studies as a 'chance to really do something.' He was inspired to use critical pedagogy, 'when you see you make a difference.' What sustained him was the 'notion that you're building something for the future.' He described this as:

That belief that you've got to try to do something. I'm not saying it's massive. But something that actually makes you feel better about being who you are and how you're trying to participate in society.

A dissatisfaction with 'the way things are' sustained Toni in practising critical pedagogy, together with her determination to make a change in the world. She recalled a friend who challenged her to take action regarding issues she was unhappy about. At first she found this unsettling, until she decided to do so. She now exhorted people to make changes in their personal lives, positing 'even if you think that you can't do anything on a global level, at least in your own life you can take action about the things that you believe are important.' Trish expressed a 'driving force in me that the world needs to change, and this is what I can do...that little minutiae of making that change,' which sustained her critical pedagogy. The importance of Maxine's work on a broader level inspired her. She described speaking about her prison work at an international conference on penal abolition, where some of the delegates were former prisoners. After her presentation, people commended her, asserting, 'what you're doing is changing people's lives.' She reflected that this nourished her; 'when I see people being lifted up by something that I've done, it inspires me to carry on.' Similarly, when

presenting her work to a group of prisoners, she realised that ‘there is a point to this,’ which also inspired her. Martin was inspired by ‘being part of a much bigger process, and people winning things, and people growing.’ Having taught his students how to do this was ‘brilliant. It’s really satisfying kind of work.’

The desire to make a change both directly and indirectly was articulated by the participants. It was implicit in many of their responses in a range of themes, together with the direct references in this theme. This is unsurprising given that an enacted commitment to social justice by definition includes making a change in a socially unjust world.

4.2.4. Dimension Four, Others

What gives life to critical pedagogy?

Other people, both students and colleagues, were a crucial component of what gives life to critical pedagogy for the participants. This was in terms of the inspiration derived from witnessing student growth and transformation, and the intellectual and supportive roles of colleagues.

Human flourishing, student transformation and growth

At a broad level, the concept of human flourishing is arguably a component of social justice. A socially just society can only exist if all members are able to fully flourish. The participants were inspired by the flourishing, growth and transformation they witnessed in their students. Whilst this is hopefully the motivation of all committed educators, it was the critical, liberatory and agentic nature of transformation through critical pedagogy that the participants specifically referred to. Varinder conceived of critical pedagogy as a broad theoretical base oriented towards human liberation. He cited Gramsci’s (2011) notion of ‘organic intellectuals,’ where all people are intellectuals and philosophers, all are intelligent and all have forms of literacy. Varinder considered critical pedagogy to disrupt the notion of binaries such

as literate versus illiterate. He posited that when we move beyond such binaries and see the world more horizontally:

...then difference becomes beauty. Difference becomes talent, not difference as representing deficits of capabilities. That's kind of where I come from in this. Then it means that you have to have a commitment to see, to help, to nurture and a mutuality.

For Varinder, critical pedagogy validated different forms of literacy, 'our own poetry, our own creativity.' He conceived of critical pedagogy as a 'sense of possibility'. He postulated that critical pedagogy 'seeks to expand people's own appreciation of their own humanity and others.' As well as critical pedagogy validating people, it was also about growth, nurturing, and developing all people. He believed that all human beings had potential, abilities, beauty and talent, but that this was often unrecognised or unrealised. Critical pedagogy was a way of honouring these. Deena expressed this as being inspired by her students laughing, 'because that means that we've gone through the boundaries of language.

All of the participants spoke of the growth and transformation they witnessed in students as a major motivating and inspiring force. Trish explained that the transformation in residential adult education happened very quickly, because it was so intensive. She was constantly inspired by the degree to which students travelled in a short space of time. Alice described the transformative change she witnessed:

...they can suddenly see themselves as you see them. You can see something in them that nobody has seen before, that they've hoped and dreamt was there.

Deena taught young refugees and asylum seekers and explained:

Watching somebody go from, "Hello." "Yes." "No," to be able to have a conversation with you five months later is the most rewarding and important thing, because you're giving them the skills to express themselves and tell their stories.

Whilst this would be true of all ESOL teachers, Deena used this to develop critical agency in her students, advising 'ensure that your practice is led by the possibilities of your student's lives.' Students' growth, 'the fruits' of critical pedagogy, energised and sustained Varinder. He particularly witnessed change in students who had been subject to Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) symbolic violence and Freire's 'internalised oppression,' such as some mature students, Access students and students who had not performed well at school. However, he highlighted that transformation also took place in privileged, white, middle class students:

Sometimes they break into tears and say, "look, I've just realised the whole other world I've either been excluded from or I've excluded myself from." And so they're tears of joy as well as tears of sadness. You do get that and that's very powerful. It's almost as if people begin to appreciate their humanity. It's that movement away from alienation...it's almost as if they're beginning to love themselves.

It was students' responses to critical pedagogy itself that inspired Richard. Each year he received emails from students, with comments such as, "this course has completely changed how I see myself. I used to feel that I just had to do what I was told. I could never see the forces around me." He attested that through critical pedagogy, many students changed, and he was inspired by facilitating their flourishing.

Some participants spoke of their students' growth and transformation directly in terms of their critical agency. Varinder explained that the nature of existing power structures required the ability to use certain tools to confront it. Being able to do so was empowering and required a critical pedagogical approach. Richard also expressed this crucial link between human flourishing and critical agency. He saw critical pedagogy as containing an ethical imperative which created the conditions for human flourishing, while also examining the material conditions which inhibit this. He saw this as the critical and 'sort of Marxist element' of critical pedagogy. He stated that:

There's a deeply political element to education, which is linked to a kind of ideal of a good society where there is human flourishing for everyone, regardless of their ethnicity or social class...It's an egalitarian and democratic imperative.

The development of democratic agency in her students inspired and motivated Claudette. She gave the example of an overseas student who originally thought that he could not participate in society because English was his second language. As a result of Claudette's critical pedagogy, the student was now a trade unionist, and a political activist. Martin was also motivated by growth in his students and witnessing their involvement in successful industrial action. He gave an example of a student who he described as developing from a young care worker into a very competent organiser, running a large campaign and being interviewed on television. Martin recalled, 'I knew her when she was a vulnerable kid, who was like "I'm not sure if I'm going to come back next week." So seeing people develop.' This sustained him also, 'seeing people develop, seeing people grow, seeing people meet challenges, seeing people win things.' Ana gave an example of a student who had come from a country with a right-wing government, who came to understand that there were other political perspectives. He told Ana that she had changed his outlook and perspective, which 'was amazing,' 'a real endorsement' and 'very humbling' for her. Like Ana, Sarah witnessed students moving further to the political left. She also spoke of the changes in students' thinking, who had reported feeling 'far less judgemental and more compassionate' as a result of her teaching.

Some participants were inspired by the academic progress their students made as a result of critical pedagogy. Varinder was inspired by situations where students struggled with academic content or assignments initially, but achieved good marks and:

On reflection, it's actually done something to them that they didn't even realise, or they've produced something that they feel incapable of;

they've come back and they say 'we really appreciate what you are doing here.

Meeting students years later who said, "look you don't remember me, but...this was really important," sustained Varinder. He affirmed that for him, the greatest reward in education was witnessing somebody who did not feel that they had much to offer, now feeling that they had. Maxine talked about the way prison-based students took hold of challenging content and produced 'amazing' assignments. She gave the example of two students performing a role play, as mentioned earlier. Maxine reflected that:

It was incredibly creative and believable. It was like watching a film...this nourishes me, doing this work... because this is real meaning. This is demonstrating what life can be when you really... This is what education is as far as I'm concerned.

The scale of students' academic progress as a result of critical pedagogy was inspiring to both Trish and Nick. Trish's students were:

...people who've come from nothing, people who've been living on the streets who are now doing their law degrees, and have ambitions to do their PhDs, and to set up a pro bono law firm... I just think that's incredible really.

Similarly, Nick's students entered courses with very few qualifications, and some progressed to Masters' level and then on to PhDs. He gave the example of a student who was a post office worker and militancy activist, who left school with one O level and had now gained a PhD. Helping students to achieve in this way inspired him.

Witnessing students' growth and critical transformation was a major source of inspiration and sustenance for all of the participants, and they spoke of it with a mixture of humility and pride. Being instrumental to this growth was the key motivating and rewarding aspect of it for all of the participants. Whilst this would be true for all educators, critical pedagogy led to a different type of growth, a growth in critical agency. It was clearly this that inspired,

motivated and sustained them in practising critical pedagogy, and a key component of what gives life to critical pedagogy.

Colleagues and wider networks of people

Each of the participants emphasised how important they thought it was to find and maintain connections with supportive people, whether colleagues, management or through wider networks. Other people were necessary for exchanging ideas, stimulation, support, and to ensure one did not operate in isolation. Other people were denoted as inspirational people, likeminded people, and networks of people. In Dimension Two, Education System, theme 'create spaces for discussion within the education system,' I reported on participants' exhortation to create the spaces where critical pedagogical discussions could take place. This was with a view to mobilising it across the sector. The current theme, 'colleagues and wider networks of people,' relates to the importance of the people within the networks, rather than the networks themselves.

In terms of inspirational people, Richard asserted that it was important to meet people who 'can inspire you as a critical pedagogue.' What gives life to critical pedagogy was 'the people who practice it. It's people who give it life, and people who want to humanise the curriculum.' Similarly, Varinder stated that:

When you take on unorthodoxy, when you're fighting a system, you do need...access to those other individuals who share your passion...and keep you inspired.

Varinder explained that 'committed individuals, people with passion' sustained him. Similarly, Maxine spoke of some of the teachers she had met in prison education who:

really inspired me, who I've never seen teaching of the like. You know, they were so committed to bringing a quality of education that these guys had never experienced before.

Maxine had met a key figure in the prison education movement at an event. This person had been especially inspirational to her: 'That meeting was inspirational...what she's doing is amazing. That's the kind of thing that I want to be doing.' She was also inspired by this person's integrity, and considered her success to be a result of her authenticity. They established a relationship and although she was not UK based, she continued to both inspire and support Maxine.

Like-mindedness was also important in these connections, and Maxine felt that if she had not seen people working and thinking in a similar way to herself, 'I don't think I'd be where I am now.' Alice affirmed that those wishing to practice critical pedagogy need to find likeminded people and Toni acknowledged that although most of her sustenance came from within, meeting people with the same views did help in terms of working together. Nick derived sustenance from his colleagues, who were a like-minded group, adding 'you have to work this as a team.' Richard discussed his co-formation and participation in a regional critical pedagogy group, which led to the publication of an academic text, which he described as:

An incredible experience... the amazingness of it occurs to me more in retrospect.... We'd spend most of the day together, talking about our experiences in education and the role that critical pedagogy played in... humanising the curriculum. The discussions were incredibly generative of ideas and thinking and practice.

Richard recommended that those wishing to practice critical pedagogy found 'political soulmates.' At the WEA, Trish worked with many similar thinkers, and she felt that her colleagues in residential adult education, were also similar in ways. She confirmed that:

You find people... I know lots of people who think that way really... so you pull those people to you... Build those kind of people around you that sustain you and keep you going, and who believe similarly to you.

The importance of situating oneself in professional networks was also highlighted. Richard had always tried to create alliances with people to facilitate critical pedagogical work and emphasised the importance of not being a lone voice. For others wishing to practice critical pedagogy, he considered that it was very important to find collaborators and collective contexts. This was to ensure that one was not isolated, and to try to 'win people over to the ideas; your colleagues, students, people around you.' He explained that there were still conferences taking place and radical educational spaces. He gave the example of a group he had been part of related to Marxism and education, where he had taken part in many stimulating debates and met people who thought similarly. He posited that it was important to put oneself in a space where one was nurtured and encouraged, and to build support for oneself. He thought that there were still people who believed similarly and who found the world of neoliberal managerialism completely alienating.

Varinder also considered it important to find and form networks with people who share one's passion and who inspire. Key to this was not confining oneself to one's immediate university. External networks and sharing of ideas had been crucial to him. He compared it to charging a battery, which he saw as necessary when 'fighting a system.' Maxine had recently attended an international conference, prior to which she had been 'almost at the point of giving up.' She found making connections with other people very supportive. She affirmed that to some extent these connections sustained her and enabled her to continue. Network building also enabled her to support others in developing similar programmes. This helped her to feel that she was still active at times when she was not able to run her own prison-based programmes.

Networks were seen as the key to mobilising critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning sector. Nick was inspired by the fact that through his courses, a network was being built. In contrast, Deena found the lack of a network or community of practice in her further education setting, to be very

difficult. She spoke at length about how isolating she found not having colleagues to discuss teaching matters with, and therefore greatly appreciated discussions with friends who were teachers. Maxine also experienced a sense of isolation, but partly blamed herself for this. She felt that she needed to seek out synergistic connections, because 'joining together with other people' was an important aspect of 'what gives life to critical pedagogy' for her. This was reflected in the visceral inspiration she experienced when meeting people at conferences who were involved in similar work. She acknowledged that she would 'do a lot more if I was connected to other people.' She posited that the encouragement of individualism in society isolated people from one another, and she likened this to the isolation she felt as a child.

Trish considered that mobilising critical pedagogy was partly about 'enabling people to come together...capturing that movement and inspiring people...and creating spaces...for those kind of conversations to happen.' She thought that inspiring young teachers was particularly important. Alice proposed ongoing CPD, to bring teachers together for honest and open discussion, describing this as 'that other space...which is confidential.' She stated that teachers do not have 'those spaces to be critical and contradictory' and purported that 'further education is really good for that...find them before they're so ground down they don't want to fight anymore.' This contrasts with Deena's experience, and with my own experience in further education, where colleagues were already 'ground down;' that is, overwhelmed by the volume of accountability measures, and the amount of curriculum content they were required to deliver in order to maximise funding. As a result, they became disinterested in pedagogical discussion. Alice's experience may have been different because she was working with teacher trainees, who might not have been employed for long in further education.

The importance of supportive management was also identified by many of the participants. As Alice highlighted, 'there has got to be a management

structure or a group to protect you. It's really dangerous I think to be one on your own.' Claudette was sustained by the management of the centre she worked in and by her fellow tutors. She really appreciated this and her experience in this regard was clearly different to Deena's, who was also teaching refugee and asylum seekers in further education. This may well be partly because Claudette taught in a community-based women's education centre, which had a clear vision of its purpose, and like-minded colleagues on site. My experience of teaching in a community-based adult education centre was akin to Claudette's, and in the host further education college, akin to Deena's experience.

The importance of other people in what gives life to critical pedagogy, can be summarised in Varinder's words. He spoke of the importance of collaboration with others on critical pedagogical projects because:

The social dimension is really important for critical pedagogy. Because it is about connecting, and because it is about affirming or expanding your sense of humanity...what makes us human is the fact that we are social beings. And so you have to enable those connections.

In a similar vein, Maxine encouraged those wishing to practice critical pedagogy to concentrate on the 'real and meaningful,' which she described as:

The human connections between people. The development that you can have. The communication and love of stuff that can help you develop other people and develop yourself in that exchange.

Dialogue is fundamental to critical pedagogy, and the participants also highlighted the importance of this communication between educators, and not only as a teaching strategy. They thought that it was very important in sustaining their practice and in mobilising critical pedagogy. This was in terms of the sharing of ideas, supportive management, and as an antidote to potential isolation, given that critical pedagogy can be at odds with institutions' agendas.

4.3 Personal reflection on the findings

In Chapter 3, I explained that I answered my own research questions in order to aid reflexivity and provide clarity regarding my personal stance. These are attached in Appendix 1. Once I had completed my data analysis, I also compared my own answers with those of the participants, and noted experiences and reflections which I had not included in my original self-interview. This section relates the reflections which are pertinent to the research.

In relation to the participants' responses in Dimension One, Society, I realised that I was far less politically active than those whose responses feature in this dimension. I was committed to left-wing politics and social justice, but I had never been a political or union activist. However, this did not affect my critical pedagogy, either in terms of my ideological commitment to critical and emancipatory education, nor my actual teaching practice.

The participants' responses in Dimension Two, Education System, resonated far more deeply with me. Like Varinder, I firmly believed that education had the power to be transformative, and that critical education could bring power and freedom, as posited by Maxine. I had witnessed such power and freedom amongst students, who made brave and potentially risky decisions related to oppressive supported living conditions, as a result of critical education. There was something deeply exciting and life-giving in witnessing people who had been totally powerless beginning to recognise that they could exercise some agency, and doing so. I was particularly moved by Maxine's conception of 'meaningful education' in relation to her work with prison-based students and her description of this as 'nourishing.' Breaking down the walls of 'othering,' including my own stereotypes and assumptions, was a profound experience for me.

The meaning of education for the participants was emancipatory and transformative. However, some considered the education system to actively create inequalities through its fundamental structures. The rhetoric of

inclusion seeks to ameliorate inequalities, but Martin and Maxine asserted that the education system existed to sort and rank people, and label them accordingly. To a large extent this determined their future earning potential and arguably their associated freedoms. I was of course very aware that the process of assessment and qualifications were later played out in our social and economic systems, but naively saw this a bi-product of the education system. Martin asserted that the education system was actively designed to fail some people for this very purpose. I reflected on this deeply, and concluded that it was true. We categorise people through qualifications into a hierarchy in order to serve the dictates of capitalism. This realisation, together with my newly discovered concept of hegemony, created an epochal transformation (Mezirow, 1978), which I still remain disquieted by.

The majority of participants expressed that the true meaning of education was thwarted by the current education system. Some felt that higher education had become largely commodified and instrumental, characterised by a customer-provider relationship. Those who worked or had worked in further education highlighted the alienation and loss of professional identity of its staff, due to its gradual erosion through funding cuts and the instrumental nature of its provision.

I agreed with the participants regarding the changes in the meaning of higher education resulting from the advent of tuition fees, and that the instrumental nature of the whole education system led students to be overly reliant on learning outcomes and overly preoccupied with assessment. I was fascinated by Maxine's re-telling of the difference between her prison-based students and her campus based students, in relation to the former's ability to think creatively and flexibly. However, I did not share some of the participants' disillusionment with the higher education system. This was because my comparatively brief experience of it was the diametric opposite to my thirteen years in further education, which at the time I left in 2013 and 2016, had become an instrumental system and anti-intellectual culture. The former at least had not always been the case. Richard identified the increasing

instrumentalism and commodification of education from Thatcherism through to New Labour and beyond. However in adult and community education, this only became a reality during the Conservative and Coalition governments, from 2010 onwards. Although New Labour's lifelong learning initiative was linked to economic growth, in its early years, community-based courses and widening participation programmes were well funded. These could be creatively adapted to provide a critical education, while meeting awarding body assessment criteria. Instrumentality was arguably far greater within further education colleges themselves, where programmes were explicitly vocational. From 2008 onwards, funding and accreditation became attached to pre-packaged, tightly defined curricula. I worked with these, using generic personal and social development awards to create a critical education with widening participation adults in community settings. However, as funding became further constrained during the Conservative and Coalition governments from 2010 onwards, an increasingly exhaustive list of funded units were required to be delivered in a very limited number of teaching hours, in order for courses to be viable. Therefore there was only time to evidence what students already knew rather than teach anything new. My ability to carry out critical education and associated praxis among students became increasingly difficult. Within the further education college itself, it was impossible. Trish explained that in further education, there were numerous non-subject based elements that also had to be embedded within vocational programmes. I shared the participants' sadness that education had become instrumental and commodified. I shared their conception of the meaning of education and how that had been eroded. Although this motivated them to practice critical pedagogy, they each were able to do so relatively safely within their setting.

As well as the constraints of the instrumental curriculum, the performative nature of some education contexts such as further education, could inhibit the courage required to assert professional identity and thus critical education. Although the participants were able to practice critical pedagogy in their settings, there were arguably many more circumstances where teachers

were not able to do so for either institutional or curriculum reasons. In further education, when I taught in the college itself, both the prescriptive curriculum and the performative culture created an alienation which stripped away my professional ability to employ a critical pedagogical approach. Such issues of professional identity, were significant for all of the participants who worked or had worked in further education.

In contrast to this, when I taught in community locations (still under the auspices of the college), I had the mental and physical space and energy to engage my professional identity and deliver the same curriculum using a critical pedagogical approach. This was due to the lack of surveillance when out in the community, and the effect of removing myself from the environment of alienation, disillusionment and low staff morale within the college. It was also for pedagogical reasons relating to having my own classroom, two learning support assistants, a wealth of resources including bespoke ICT facilities, and a dedicated minibus available for field trips. Nevertheless, I was still subject to college lesson observations and Ofsted inspections. I was lucky enough to be able to 'play the game,' which kept me safe. Alice and Sarah highlighted the fact that many further education lecturers were able to use a critical approach, but deliver the requisite type of lesson at observation or inspection; to 'pull it out the bag.' This was certainly my own approach in the community and I was awarded a Grade One Outstanding in each of my observations and inspections, because I knew how to do just that.

In spite of the constraints of the education system, the participants were all committed to their practice of critical pedagogy because of their unwavering commitment to developing a critical awareness and praxis in students. This was in order that they work for social justice both for themselves and for others in wider society. I shared this motivation wholeheartedly and also worked for this where possible in my teaching. Like Claudette, I taught many students to campaign and participate in the democratic process, and to take community action and assert their agency among those who held oppressive attitudes and behaviours.

The participants were also committed to socially just education as a process, and consciously worked in widening participation settings, which was something I shared. I also shared their absolute belief in using students' lived experiences, giving voice to the knowledge that they bring, challenging their assumptions and providing new interpretive frameworks. Maxine saw this as the very purpose of education and I agreed wholeheartedly.

Many of the participants' reflections on the origins of their critical pedagogical orientation, detailed in Dimension Three, Self, resonated with me. Although I have detailed mine in Chapter 1, there were some further experiences which were akin to some of those of the participants, which I will add here.

At a young age I had a sense of injustice relating to the way people of colour were denigrated by colonialism and the way this was taught. I had a similar experience, albeit that of a white child, to Maxine when she was taught about Christopher Columbus in primary school. I too remember being confused about this. I was aware that when the teacher asserted that certain explorers 'discovered' countries, they conceived of the existing population as not quite real, or worthy. Similarly when we were exhorted to raise money for children in the Catholic mission in Africa, 'Holy Childhoods,' I intuited the oppression of the missionary conversion agenda, and was disquieted by it.

As a child and teenager, my experience of growing up in England, but of Irish parents, was very different to Trish's. I envied the twin identity and extended families of my peers, but I was simultaneously slightly proud that my parents appeared to be sophisticatedly removed from the Nottingham Irish scene. I suspect that at some level I had imbibed the broader societal message that Irish-ness was not socially desirable. My parents were aspirational, were immersed in English culture and did not hold fast to their Irish identity. I did not develop any interest in reading Irish history, until my parents became interested in the 1990s peace process. It was only in old age that my father turned towards Irish history. Unlike Trish's 'twin identity,' I had a shadowy identity, neither English nor Irish, which left me feeling unrooted and slightly alienated as a teenager. I was not aware of this contributing to my developing

critical perspective at the time, but as an adult, a theoretical understanding of the political, social, economic and religious influences and pressures upon my family, and therefore on myself, elucidated aspects of my childhood and teenage years.

As a teenager, like Varinder, I spent a great deal of time in my local alternative bookshop. Although unable to buy, I was very drawn to radical literature and the wider radical movement. Since then I have loved radical bookshops, and for very many years frequented them, and libraries, like Varinder, seeking the education that was lacking in my intellectually restricted schooling. I began to engage in education when I started to study A level Sociology. Like Maxine, I too realised that society was constructed rather than a given, and this realisation initiated my critical orientation. Through this, like Trish, I became politicised by feminism. This set the course for my critical outlook, although the patriarchal aspects of my religious and family background had laid a fertile soil. My interest in critical and alternative educational philosophies began at this time, through reading Hansen and Jensen's (1969) *Little Red School Book*, and Neill's (1960) *Summerhill*, and like Trish, I became interested in Steiner education, which I later studied at Masters' level.

Although the patriarchal aspects of my religious and family background gave me a keen sense of injustice and an intuitive awareness of sexism, Catholicism also contributed to my vision of utopia on a spiritual level. When Varinder described critical pedagogy as a utopian and quasi-religious ideal, I underwent a Maslovian peak experience. Maslow (1968; 1993; 2001) variously describes peak experiences as exciting, exhilarating, oceanic, moving, elevating and rare, where 'the dichotomies, polarities and conflicts of life tend to be transcended or resolved' (Maslow, 2001, p.74). This experience touched a deeper source of my critical orientation and was reinforced by Varinder's allusion to Catholicism as one of Freire's impulses. Varinder, Deena and Maxine each compared their critical pedagogy to a form

of creed or faith, and this resonated with me because I too experience it in this way.

For me, the concept of utopia was inseparable from my concept of human flourishing, which I also experienced as a form of faith. Some participants also spoke of their absolute belief in human flourishing and human potential as concepts, which resonated deeply with me. All of the participants related witnessing their students' growth and transformation as a source of inspiration, and for many this was directly in terms of their critical agency. My inspiration operated at both a conceptual and student agentic level.

In relation to Dimension Four, Others, it was only through my PhD and my teaching in higher education that I had begun to discover like-minded others. Throughout my years in further education and adult and community education, I experienced the isolation described by Maxine and Deena. Becoming part of a community of critical educators was like water in the desert, and I shared all of the participants' views that it was crucial in mobilising and sustaining critical pedagogy.

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented the thematic analysis of the participants' interviews, followed by a personal reflection on my own experiences in relation to theirs. The participants' drivers to practice critical pedagogy were analysed to create a number of themes, each of which was located in one of four dimensions: Society, Education System, Self, and Others. These four dimensions aggregated to two broader dimensions: Systems and People. Each critical pedagogue (participant) acted as a conduit between each of the four dimensions, bringing life to critical pedagogy.

The experiences that led participants to critical pedagogy and the factors that currently inspired, motivated and sustained them were multifarious, yet were distilled into common themes and dimensions. Their motivations were

imbued with a vibrant and heartfelt commitment to the philosophy and practice of a social justice pedagogy.

The following chapter will discuss and synthesise the findings, and contextualise them within the reviewed literature.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the findings of the research are compared with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The analytic framework depicting the four dimensions of Society, Education System, Self and Others also serves as a conceptual framework to compare the research findings with the literature reviewed, because the literature maps to the four dimensions. At a thematic level, it was beyond the scope of this thesis to allocate each piece of literature to the corresponding theme, but this could constitute an interesting piece of research in the future. The findings are then further synthesised into the meta-theme of social justice, and similarly considered in relation to the literature.

Situating the findings within the reviewed literature enables them to be positioned within both the broad body of theoretical work constituting critical pedagogy, and within the literature relating to the UK context. Comparing the practitioners' motivations to practice critical pedagogy with local and international critical pedagogues, illuminates the similarities and discontinuities in relation to different geographical and professional contexts. The conclusive concept of the critical pedagogue operating as an iterative conduit in relation to the four dimensions of Society, Education System, Self and Others, is explored more deeply and crystallised. This chapter therefore locates the thesis within the corpus of existing literature and illuminates the conclusive concept, indicating its contribution to knowledge, which is further explicated in Chapter 6.

5.2 The literature

Dimension One, Society, comprised the participants' responses relating to society, beyond the education system. What gives life to critical pedagogy derived partly from the participants' desire for a more socially just world. Social justice is a core principle of critical pedagogy, and underpinned the participants' motivations to practise it across all dimensions. This mirrors Freire's (1970) desire for a more socially just world, beyond the educational contexts and individual lives of the students he taught. It also mirrors the commitment to social justice of several notable critical pedagogues, as recorded by Torres (1998), Kilyo (2013b), and Porfilio and Ford (2015). Clare's (2015) UK further education lecturers and Connolly's (2008) adult educators who practised critical pedagogy, also cited a deep desire for social justice as a motivating factor.

The participants in this research operated across the West Midlands, UK, lifelong learning sector, in a variety of educational contexts. The education system, including the lifelong learning sector, sits within a wider capitalist and neoliberal economy, and like Freire (1970) and McLaren (2013; 2015), some participants opposed the wider political and economic systems in which they lived and worked. Their opposition to capitalism was in some cases analogous to critical pedagogy's early roots in Marxism (Darder, Boltadano and Torres, 2009). According to Aronowitz (2013, p.2), Freire sought to 'abolish the capitalist system of exploitation.' The participants who opposed capitalism might have, if questioned, adhered to McLaren's (2013) revolutionary critical pedagogy, which seeks a socialist alternative to capitalism itself. However, this was not explicitly explored in the interviews. The hegemonic effects of capitalism and neoliberalism were highlighted as problematic by some participants. Nevertheless, the very fact that they were committed to a pedagogy of social justice demonstrated their belief in counter-hegemonic resistance, and fighting a 'war of position' (Gramsci, 2007, p.168). Freire (1970) too theorised that transformative change is possible, and that history can be remade by people in a counter-hegemonic

process. Brookfield (2005) posits that the very existence of The Frankfurt School, and of critical theory, demonstrates that the ideology of capitalism is not as all-encompassing as we believe. One participant expressed the very same opinion. Similarly, the participants who referred to the negative effects of capitalism and neoliberalism in wider society as motivating their critical pedagogy, were testament to this. They aligned with Clare's (2015) study in the North of England, which demonstrates further education lecturers' orientation to critical pedagogy, as a form of resistance to neoliberalism in wider society. Brookfield (2005) argues that critical theory keeps alive the hope that the world can be changed. Kincheloe (2008a), and Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009) express such hope. The participants' statements regarding hope and optimism in relation to the excesses of capitalism and neoliberalism clearly accorded with this.

Issues of power are central to capitalism and neoliberalism in contemporary society. Freire's pedagogy was concerned directly with issues of power in 1960s Brazil, which he referred to as 'the oppressor' (Freire, 1996, p.26). A parallel can be drawn between the concept of the oppressor and of 'management' in some contemporary organisations, among many other manifestations. The participants who taught union studies, witnessed the exploitative aspects of management, which are analogous to Freire's conception of the oppressor. However, Freire (1970) also emphasised the need for the oppressor to be humanised if all are to be genuinely free. Although the union educators did not identify this, two participants discussed how they, as managers, worked to ameliorate the impact of their positions of power. Ironically, critical pedagogy has been criticised for promulgating that which it challenges, being originally theorised largely by white males in positions of power (Ellsworth, 1989; hooks, 1994; Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009). None of the participants raised this issue directly, although some expressed discomfort at potential practitioners adopting critical pedagogy as an affectation, without a wider praxis.

The media is also a vehicle of power. The need for critical pedagogy as a response to the proliferation of media and the rise of unfiltered social media was identified by participants. Both the dangers and limitations of social media were discussed. As Giroux (2011) proposes, we may require a new kind of critical literacy in relation to new media and technologies, and the powerful role they could play as instruments of public pedagogy. The recent development of critical digital pedagogy (Stommell, 2014) reflects Giroux's call. It could potentially lead to a productive synergy between social media literacy (UNESCO, 2011) and social media itself, forming an instrument of social change.

In order to counterbalance the deleterious aspects of capitalism and neoliberalism, a number of participants were involved in political, community and union activism. Such activism beyond the education system, reflected the assertion that educational struggles must be linked to wider emancipatory action (Darder, Boltadano and Torres 2009), and Shor's (1992) exhortation to teachers to be responsible for changing their world.

Those participants involved in union activism linked this with their critical pedagogy. Like Clare's (2015) participants, some identified the union as playing a role in sustaining critical pedagogy. However, participants also proposed the need for wider political and social movements, or alternative models of education, to mobilise critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning sector. Cowden and Singh (2013, p.38) term this wider movement, a 'revolutionary praxis'; a proposed movement to seek alternative forms of popular education while retaining public universities. Alternative educational models were not examined in the literature review, but the development of initiatives such as co-operative higher education (Noble, 2019) and the former Social Science Centre, Lincoln, are suggestive of new models. The potential for further research into alternative models is evident. Such alternative models as these could potentially be fostered through the networks and connections participants proposed in Dimension Four, Others.

Dimension Two, Education System, comprised participants' responses in relation to the education system, in terms of the system itself (macro themes), and in terms of the processes of education (micro themes). These were key components in what gives life to critical pedagogy.

I will first address the macro themes, and then move on to the micro themes. The meaning of education to participants related to empowerment and transformation, and to contributing to change in the world. While the philosophy of education as an academic discipline was not included in the literature review, the meaning of education to a number of critical pedagogical writers can be clearly construed from their work. Freire's (1970) emphasis on both the empowerment and liberation of individuals, and the need for praxis and social change, was reflected by the participants. Where they spoke about empowerment and transformation, the energy expressed in their words was reminiscent of Freire's (1996, p.62), and hooks' (1994, p.207), conception of 'education as the practice of freedom,' and hooks' poetic and often quoted declaration, 'learning is a place where paradise can be created' (hooks, 1994, p.207). However, the participants did not assert, as Freire (1996, p.65) did, that the 'unfinished character' of people, and the transformational nature of reality necessitates that education be ongoing.

The participants contrasted their meaning of education with the current system, which they depicted as a sclerotic, tick box bureaucracy, characterised in higher education by a financialised, customer/provider relationship (Amsler and Canaan, 2008; Amsler, 2010; Cowden and Singh, 2013; Duckworth *et al.*, 2016). This had destroyed what the participants saw as the meaning of education. Their sadness echoed Thompson's (2007, p.65), that education had been lost to 'this technical-rationalist nightmare.' They were highly condemnatory of it in relation to its instrumentalism, commodification and performativity. Their views corresponded with key critical pedagogical theory, which opposes the current neoliberal educational model of economic growth, instrumental curricula and high-stakes testing (Giroux, 2011). They did not, like Giroux (2011), suggest that it created

student conformity to a wider market-orientated culture. However, they were deeply concerned about the impact of the current neoliberal educational model on education itself, and its meaning and purpose, which they discussed at length. This included union education, which had been reduced to skills and role-based training, as discussed by Thompson (2007). Although the participants were opposed to such instrumentalism, they did not report themselves as having been reduced to technicians, as proposed by Giroux (2011). This may be because Giroux is largely discussing teachers in schools, who are subject to greater constraints than those in the lifelong learning sector.

According to Amsler and Canaan (2008), Amsler (2010), Cowden and Singh (2013) and Duckworth *et al.* (2016), the financialised higher education system, characterised by tuition fees and marketisation, has led to the commodification of knowledge, a business/customer relationship between universities and students, and a focus on skills acquisition. Cowden and Singh (2013) caution that this potentially distorts the purpose of education and weakens the ideal of education for critical citizenship and social justice. In my personal and professional experience of education, I have not been aware of critical citizenship being a widespread ideal, although it has always been an ideal of mine. However, the participants shared these concerns and concurred with Amsler's (2010) posit, that education has been economically and ideologically assimilated into a neoliberal agenda. However, they did not mirror Amsler's assertion that competition is dividing intellectual communities. One participant did feel that the siloed nature of university departments and subjects inhibited interdisciplinary dialogue on subjects such as critical pedagogy.

In further education, Bathmaker (2017) states that colleges are focused on increased efficiency, and are driven by economic and financial considerations rather than social partnership, democratic accountability and community needs. Two further education participants indirectly referred to this, and my experience in further education certainly reflects it. From 2000 to 2013, my

college's substantive adult and community programme was eroded to almost non-existence, and college-based provision was wholly shaped by efficiency measures, funding cuts and redundancies. According to Russell (2010), the government priority of national economic growth and employability in adult and community learning, makes popular education programmes intended to facilitate social change, more difficult to effect. However, the participants in my research working in adult and community education, were still able to practice critical pedagogy in spite of swingeing funding cuts and the instrumental agenda. Nonetheless, the opportunities to do so have shrunk immensely. Although my own programme area in adult and community learning was gradually eroded, like the participants, I continued to use a critical pedagogical approach where relevant. It was much more difficult to subvert the instrumental curriculum and avoid surveillance in my college-based programme. It is arguably more difficult to incorporate critical pedagogical approaches within further education colleges themselves, as opposed to in the community, because instrumental, pre-packaged curricula are tightly defined, monitored and surveilled on-site (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015). In my experience, this constrained creativity and risk-taking, because at any point an informal, 'on the spot' lesson observation, known as a 'learning walk' might take place. More importantly, students were objectified and monetised (Duckworth and Smith, 2018), which meant that the very notion of education, teaching and learning were reduced to marketing straplines. In addition to this, as one of the participants highlighted, critical pedagogy can be difficult to use in further education, because there are so many areas to embed, over and above the actual subject, in a very tight timescale. As Smith and Duckworth (2020, p.127) assert, 'a curriculum that is orientated towards social justice has an important temporal element. It is not "packed."'

Like Daley (2015), a number of participants discussed the hostility of the further education environment for new teachers. In my experience, the difference between the further education and higher education environment is immeasurable in this respect.

Nonetheless, like Daley, Orr and Petrie's (2015) contributors, the further education participants in my research continued to resist the current agenda. They were hopeful, heartening, creative and courageous (Coffield, 2015). They were able to hold a double consciousness (Amsler, 2010) of the contradiction between neoliberal discourse and practices, and the progressive alternative of critical pedagogy. Daley (2015) reports having worked with further education teachers whose educational ideals echo hooks (1994). That was certainly the case with one of the further education participants in my research. Sadly, when I was a further education lecturer, I did not meet any further education lecturers who spoke of paradise, self-actualisation or love (hooks, 1994), and I craved this philosophical depth in my work and in my colleagues.

Like Kincheloe (2008a), the participants challenged the current model of teachers as purveyors of pre-determined knowledge, rather than liberators of human potential. Their meaning of education was much more aligned with Freire's (1970) emancipatory, liberatory, transformative pedagogy. Their commitment to practice critical pedagogy was testament to this. They consciously worked to preserve what they saw as real education, within a marketised, neoliberal system, akin to Clare's (2015) further education lecturers. Their critical pedagogical practices and intentions were not thwarted by this system.

Although the participants themselves practised critical pedagogy with a view to social justice, some participants professed that the education system itself actually created social inequalities. This contrasts with the rhetoric surrounding the current UK system, which relates to inclusion and equality of opportunity. The participants' opinions on this reflected critical pedagogical theory, which maintains that the structures of domination and exploitation in society are produced and reproduced by the education system. Apple (1979; 2013) proposes that educational institutions create a hegemonic mind-set which enables covert social control by dominant groups. This hegemony, and the hidden curriculum which teaches certain norms, values and expectations

(Apple 2013), was highlighted by participants in relation to school practices which covertly train people to conform to future capitalist employment practices. It was also highlighted in relation to the way the exam system functions to sort and categorise people to fulfil capitalist labour requirements, which are based on hierarchical inequalities of income and opportunity. Teachers themselves are part of this hegemony. As McLaren (2013) postulates, teachers, as part of the educational establishment, are subject to the ruling ideas of society. This was exemplified by one participant in her early education experience, in relation to racially stereotyped experiences. Another identified a chasm between the 'political correctness' of educational establishments and the consciousness of the working classes. He perceived that this political correctness closed down discourse and thus the opportunity to challenge prejudicial thinking.

Although the participants reflected critical pedagogy's concept of the hegemonic processing of people (Giroux, 2011), they did not directly identify or contest the processing and legitimisation of certain types of knowledge by educational institutions. Apple (1979; 1982; 2000; 2013), Kincheloe (2008a; 2008b; 2008c) and Giroux (2010) see this as a key critical pedagogical issue. However, the fact that all of the participants emphasised the importance of knowledge creation based on students' lived experiences, demonstrates their commitment to the democratisation of knowledge.

One of the motivations of the participants in using critical pedagogy, was that it would lead students to promote social justice in wider society. This reflects Shor's (1992) postulation, that although critical pedagogy cannot change society by itself, it could potentially lead students to become more active citizens. This was exemplified by participants who wanted their students to either become more politically or democratically active, or to link to wider community projects. With the exception of one participant, their intentions regarding this were aspirational rather than didactic, reflecting Avis and Bathmaker's (2004) and Bathmaker and Avis' (2005) view of critical pedagogy as an aspirational practice. This contrasts with Wink's (2000)

declaration, that problem posing education always ends in action in the external world, a claim which is difficult to substantiate. Nonetheless, the two union educators in my research directly observed their students, sometimes on television, going on to taking successful union action. The participants perceived this as resulting from their critical pedagogical education. Similarly, one participant described her students becoming involved in democratic and political action, and in emancipatory projects in the community. Like Freire (1970) and Giroux (2010), the participants wanted to provide their students with the knowledge and skills to question authority and power relations, participate in critical dialogue, and become individual and social agents. Praxis by students, in terms of working for social justice and equality, was a key motivation in the participants' practice of critical pedagogy. Some, like Freire (1970), actively incorporated social agency and democratic participation into their teaching practices. Unlike Giroux (2010), they did not identify the upholding of democracy as a moral imperative of education.

In order to mobilise critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning sector, the participants thought that it was very important that spaces for discussion were created within the education system itself. This recommendation also links closely with the importance of connections with other people, discussed in Dimension Four, Others. It mirrors Clare's (2015) participants' call for a network of critical educators in further education. Work has already taken place in this area, through Amsler *et al.*'s (2010) Midlands Pedagogy Group, Weatherby and Mycroft's (2015) network of critical educators, and Duckworth *et al.*'s (2016) co-caring community of practice. These demonstrate the success of such spaces, and continuation of these can only be a positive move for the mobilisation of critical pedagogy.

Micro themes represent the participants' responses regarding the processes of education. Most of the participants operated in widening participation contexts and with non-traditional learners. Processes and practices which honoured all students were thus vitally important to them. For the participants, these processes needed to be socially just and include the

histories, experiences and contributions of all people, reflecting a central tenet of critical pedagogy. Freire (1970) posited that adults bring lived experience and knowledge to class, and that it is the teacher's role to both validate and challenge this, and place it in the appropriate theoretical framework. His pedagogy is predicated on this, actualised through dialogue. The majority of the participants identified the use of students' lived experience as a crucial part of their critical pedagogy. However, a lecturer in union studies highlighted the difficulty of being able to do this in a subject where younger students did not have lived experience of the employment situation. Participants' emphasis on the centrality of students' lived experiences, reflects that of critical pedagogy theorists. Theorists invariably emphasise this as a fundamental tenet of critical pedagogy, alongside teachers' challenging and theoretical framing of this experience and knowledge (Freire, 1970; Ellsworth, 1989; Shor, 1987; 1992; hooks, 1994; Wink, 2000; Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009; Canaan, 2010; Giroux, 2011). As Kincheloe (2005) proposes, knowledge is contextual and shaped by people's experience, and the role of education is to enable understanding of this knowledge, (Kincheloe, 2005; 2008b).

In line with critical pedagogical theory, participants were also committed to challenging students' perceptions, even when that created discomfort and tension in the classroom. Such challenges to students' perceptions are essential, and participants highlighted the fact that popular knowledge cannot be romanticised. Some participants identified the challenge of students sharing personal stories of difficulty, and they were clear that education was not therapy, as warned against by Macedo (Freire and Macedo, 1995). However, if this process was managed well, it could be very restorative for students. They did not go as far as hooks (1994), who views education as a potentially healing practice, with the teacher as healer, albeit healing through theoretical and structural understanding. As Avis and Bathmaker (2004, p.309) posit, engagement by lecturers with the structural, enables them to sustain a politics of care which 'avoids the twin dangers of pathology and therapy.'

One of the tenets of critical pedagogy is this discussion and validation of students' lived experience and knowledge, challenge to their perceptions, and the placing of these in an academic and theoretical framework. The purpose of this is to enable students to gain a broader theoretical understanding of their lived experiences, knowledge and perceptions (Freire, 1970), and to act upon this knowledge (Giroux, 2011). Freire (1970) considered a critical awareness of the social, economic, political and material forces which inform students' material existences, as essential to their self-liberation. Students gaining a theoretical understanding of their experiences was crucial to the participants of my research, and each one highlighted the importance of this. Like Shor (1992), they understood and respected the fact that students arrived with diverse experiences and that their role was to develop students' critical understanding of their personal experience and knowledge. The participants witnessed the liberating moments when students realised that some of their difficulties were a result of structural conditions, and that they were not the cause. This was a major motivating force for the participants. As Brookfield (2005) notes, this realisation is vital to our well-being. In addition to this, he posits that theory can provide a form of radical hope, as we understand how the world might be changed for the better. hooks (1994) emphasises that theory and theoretical understanding are important alongside praxis. Action alone can be blind action, and theory alone cannot change the world. This reflects some members of The Frankfurt School's emphasis on both theory and practice (Darder, Boltado and Torres, 2009). The participants also highlighted the importance of theory in students' future praxis, and of practice rather than theory alone.

The participants discussed a range of strategies they used to bring together students' lived experience, academic and theoretical understanding, and the subsequent co-creation of knowledge by students and teachers. Critical pedagogical theorists stress that critical pedagogy is not a set of specific methods (McLaren, 1997; Giroux, 2011), for which it has been criticised (Gore, 1993; Brookfield, 2005; Breunig, 2009). Like McLaren (1997) and Giroux (2011), some of the participants in Clare's (2015) research considered

critical pedagogy to be more about attitude and values rather than particular techniques. One participant in my research questioned whether critical pedagogy was about aims and approaches, or a methodology, and felt that the methods and intent must work together. However, Cowden and Singh (2013) propose that exploring the strategies used to create a more democratic education helps us resist its commodification. The strategies used by participants were a key component of what gives life to critical pedagogy, and I therefore decided to investigate and record these.

Freire (1970) did use a methodology, which comprised of students' lived experiences, dialogue, and co-creation of knowledge. These were used by all of the participants, in different ways. The participants all opposed the transmission or banking method (Freire, 1970) of education, as do the theorists and practitioners of critical pedagogy reviewed in the literature. As discussed above, the participants all used Freire's (1970) approach of using students' lived experiences. One union educator used these to generate syllabi. He used generative themes, akin to Freire (1970), which were chosen by students, represented their lived issues and experiences, and formed the basis of the syllabus. The other participants used students' lived experiences within their syllabi. This took place predominantly through dialogue. Dialogue is a central component of Freirean pedagogy (Freire, 1970) and of the critical pedagogical theory and practice reviewed in the literature. Dialogue is not only crucial in students utilising their lived experiences to gain critical and theoretical understanding, but is also essential for the creation of new knowledge. As Giroux (2011) explains, students and teachers must transform knowledge rather than simply consuming it. A Freirean tenet is that students and teachers co-create this knowledge. In order to do so, teachers arguably must also share of themselves in the classroom. This concept is not discussed by all of the writers reviewed in the literature, nor by all of the participants. However, that does not mean that writers and the participants did not practice it. If it is not practised, then a non-critical pedagogical power dynamic could come into play. hooks (1994) advocates the teacher sharing of his or herself, as do the participants of Clare's (2015) research. One of the

participants in my research felt strongly that she should do so, because she was asking her students to do so. However, the co-creation of knowledge in the form of new theoretical understandings, was a key process and outcome of all of the participants' use of students' lived experiences. Some participants were explicit about this co-creation in terms of actual practices and outcomes, such as collaborative artefacts. They reflected Brookfield's (2005) claim that critical adult educators envisage students and teachers engaged in a process of collaborative co-creation, which embraces a diversity of perspectives.

A range of strategies were highlighted in the literature review, including the work of Freire (1970), Shor (1992), Wink (2000), Connolly (2008), Clare (2015), Canaan (2013), Cowden (2013), Hammond (2017a; 2017b). Many of these were also used by the participants. Like some of Porfilio and Ford's (2015) critical pedagogues, one participant discussed the efficacy of critical pedagogy, which he described as the only method that works in union education. In addition to using students' lived experiences and dialogue, the most occurring strategies used by both participants in the research and practitioners in the literature, were questioning, discovering as many perspectives as possible and highlighting unequal social structures.

The use of challenging writings and theory was identified by three participants and is discussed by Freire and Macedo (1995), Canaan (2013), Cowden (2013), and Hammond (2017a; 2017b), in higher education. It merits noting here, in relation to the participant who taught university students and prison-based students together and used such readings. She recounted the fact that prison students who had not been educated through the current instrumental education system, were more able to manage difficult philosophical readings than university students. This is arguably a sad indictment of the current system. Future research among higher education students who disengaged with mainstream education at a formative age, might provide an insight into which abilities are being lost by a skills-based, instrumental system. Some of these could be those that we need for the

future, the needs of which we cannot yet predict. One participant discussed the use of lectures, observing that a critical lecture can stimulate powerful dialogue within oneself. This has resonance with Marcuse's belief, as discussed by Brookfield (2005), whereby inner revolution resulting from a separation from the collective is sometimes a necessary precursor to outer revolution. Freire's (1970) early work omits the lecture but he instigates it and its value in his later work (Shor and Freire, 1987; Freire and Macedo, 1995).

Much of the pedagogical literature and the participants' intentions related to students enacting agency and praxis in the wider world. Shor's (1992) approach empowers students to question oppressive educational practices themselves and to exercise agency, by transforming these to meet their needs. The majority of the participants did not raise this, although they did want their students to be able to question and disagree with them as the teacher. One of the participants did discuss the need for students to be able to challenge negative language that was used about them by the university. Another challenged the Prevent agenda and wanted her students to understand and resist its impact upon them. Empowering students to challenge the very system that provides the teacher's employment is a bold and brave move, and may carry considerable risk.

The risk and isolation of practising critical pedagogy was discussed by some participants. However, the fact that the participants were all practitioners of critical pedagogy indicates that they had a relative amount of academic and professional freedom to do so, which they acknowledged. They retained enough agency to be able to navigate the bureaucracy, instrumentalism, and institutional agendas, while still practising critical pedagogy. They continued to work within the system and expressed the importance of being able to do so. They did not openly resist the system and therefore were not labelled negatively, as the teachers in Giroux's (2011) depiction were, who refused to implement curricula based on standardised assessments. Unlike Clare's (2015) participants, they did not report that the performative system made it difficult to teach in a critical way. In further education, they viewed the

performativity system more as a meaningless hoop to be jumped through, rather than a particular form of obstructive surveillance. Those who worked in management did not appear to feel despondent and helpless, unlike some of Clare's (2015) participants. This may be because my research used an Appreciative Inquiry approach, focusing on positive accounts of what gives life to critical pedagogy. The participants did inevitably raise negatives, particularly in response to the current educational system, but they were undeterred in their commitment to enacting critical pedagogy and critical education within this system. This does not undermine the experiences of Clare's (2015) participants, who were also committed to enacting critical pedagogy.

Amsler (2010) claims that in the current UK higher education environment, radical approaches are seen as suspect, and emancipatory hopes are viewed as naïve or oppressive. Some participants experienced such suspicion, and they discussed the dangers of isolation. They did not suggest that they were seen as naïve, although one did posit that his colleagues viewed him as 'a bit of a nutcase.' However, they all had the freedom to practice critical pedagogy without too many negative consequences. Again, this may be because my research was eliciting their positive experiences, rather than their negative ones; what gives life to critical pedagogy rather than the limitations. Like the renowned critical pedagogues in the works of Torres (1998), Kirlyo (2013b), and Porfilio and Ford (2015), the participants were aware of the academic and professional freedom that they had. However, they experienced infinitely less isolation and far fewer negative consequences of practising critical pedagogy than the renowned critical pedagogues. As Kirlyo (2013a) highlights, half of his critical pedagogues live with the constant risk of losing their jobs for taking positions of resistance. This was not the experience of the participants in my research, nor identified by Connolly (2008) or Clare (2015), whose participants were working in the fields of adult education and further education respectively. However, many of Torres' (1998), Kirlyo's (2013b) and Porfilio and Ford's (2015) critical pedagogues were in very senior, longstanding academic positions, were also

widely published, and largely public-facing. For this reason, they may be considered more of a threat.

As well as their academic and professional freedoms, like hooks (1994), some participants also discussed the great sense of personal responsibility they felt towards their students. One participant's duty of care to her young asylum seeking and refugee students was palpable, and like Avis and Bathmaker's trainees (2004), this formed a key part of her professional identity. However, her duty of care manifested in a very robust commitment to teaching her students a critical understanding of the political and social forces which formed their material realities. As a comparatively new teacher, she reflected Avis and Bathmaker's (2004) proposal that trainees need to locate themselves in this wider structural context.

I was able to sample practitioners who had the academic and professional freedom to practice critical pedagogy. However, there are many more educators who do not, and therefore were not there to be sampled. The participants did, however, offer messages of great hope and encouragement to those who might wish to practice critical pedagogy. They reflected Bathmaker's (2017) exhortation to find the spaces in between, where alternative practices can take place. Although some participants witnessed spaces being closed down, they felt strongly that spaces do still exist, and opportunities to use a critical pedagogical approach in most subjects was still possible. However, Hafez (2015) asserts that the subterfuge that some lecturers have to practice in further education is a mistake in the long term. She argues that in subverting, they are conceding their loss of autonomy, authority and trust, and professionalism. Unfortunately, although this is correct, it may be the only possibility that many educators have, particularly in further education. She proposes that further education lecturers need to move from subversion to revolution, but the risks of this are immeasurable for some. However, there are possibilities for mobilising critical pedagogy and reclaiming professional autonomy, and these are discussed later in this chapter.

Dimension Three, Self, represented the personal motivations, values, beliefs, academic and biographical experiences which led participants to a critical pedagogical orientation. Most interestingly, the reviewed literature relating to the motivations of critical pedagogues (Torres, 1998; Connolly, 2008; Kirlyo, 2013b; Clare, 2015; Porfilio and Ford, 2015), maps at a categorical level to those of my participants; to the four dimensions of Society, Education System, Self and Others. A detailed thematic, and comparative analysis of these participants in the reviewed literature with participants of my research, was beyond the scope of this research. However, at a broader categorical level, the dimensions held constant in relation to the literature reviewed.

The literature reviewed relates to the motivations of two broad groups of critical pedagogues. The first group comprises interviews and/or narrative pieces relating to published or eminent critical pedagogues, predominantly working in the US (Torres, 1998; Kirlyo, 2013b; Porfilio and Ford, 2015). The second group comprises PhD thesis participants in Ireland (Connolly, 2008) and the UK (Clare, 2015). The literature addressed the biographical influences which oriented participants to critical pedagogy. These influences were wide ranging and very individual, but included influential people and role models, experience of or witnessing oppression and alienation, experiences of education, academic subjects studied, reading, activism, and pivotal moments in their professional or personal lives. Their politics and values were also key components of their motivations, as was an overriding commitment to social justice. The themes of my research largely echo the motivations of those reviewed in the literature. There were two main exceptions to this. Firstly the influence of religion was more explicit among Connolly's (2008) and Clare's (2015) participants, than either mine, Torres' (1998), Kirlyo's (2013b), or Porfilio and Ford's (2015) critical pedagogues. This is likely to be because Connolly's (2008) participants had grown up at a time when the Catholic Church in Ireland held great influence, and because Clare (2015) identifies as a Quaker and her participants were people known to her. A second key difference is that the motivations of Torres' (1998), Kirlyo's (2013b) and Porfilio and Ford's (2015) critical pedagogues, included

their career trajectories and career achievements, as much as their personal biographies. My participants on the other hand, were not focused on their professional achievements in relation to critical pedagogy. This focus by Torres' (1998), Kirlyo's (2013b) and Porfilio and Ford's (2015) critical pedagogues, is possibly because they had mostly experienced international success and reputation, and the authors, editors and publishers wished to prefigure this in their writing. However, Porfilio and Ford's (2015) accounts have a more personal tenor and a greater focus on the formative influences than do Torres' (1998) and Kirlyo's (2013b). Kirlyo (2013a) does acknowledge that the critical pedagogues in his volume are deeply influenced by their individual autobiographies, and their personal beliefs. Both Connolly's (2008) and Clare's (2015) participants were operating at similar professional levels to mine, and the biographical influences described, like my participants, had a far more personal tenor. The differences between each of the three groups of critical pedagogues, are also likely to be a product of similarities and differences in national education systems, and to some extent differences in the methodologies used.

As the most influential educational philosopher in the development of critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009), Freire (1970) is cited by many of Torres' (1998), Kirlyo's (2013b) and Porfilio and Ford's (2015) critical pedagogues, as key in their development as academics and practitioners. Two of Clare's (2015) ten participants cited Freire as a key influence, and a number of Connolly's (2008) fifteen participants used Freirean ideas, although they did not cite him as a direct influence in leading them to critical education. This is interesting given that Freire is such a major influence in critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2009). However, he was important to Clare (2015) and Connolly (2008) themselves. Five participants in my research referred to his work, of which two cited him as pivotal in their critical pedagogical orientation. In my research, not all of the participants had heard of critical pedagogy at the outset and it was these participants who did not refer to Freire. They had been snowball sampled, and did indeed work from a critical pedagogical stance, but this explains why they had not come

across Freire. It may be possible that the same reason applied to Connolly's (2008) and Clare's (2015) participants. I did not elicit whether the two ESOL teachers in my sample were qualified specifically in adult literacy/ESOL, but if they were, it would be revealing that their training had not touched upon Freire's work.

The critical pedagogues in Torres' (1998), Kirlyo's (2013b) and Porfilio and Ford's (2015) work, cited a range of academic and career influences in terms of reading, meeting, or being students of well-known, academic figures. In contrast, the participants in my research, while they certainly emphasised reading and academic study, unsurprisingly had not moved in the circles of key influencers of international critical pedagogy. However, the impact of reading and academic study was very significant for many of them, and some had also met inspirational people in their work. Connolly's (2008) participants did not emphasise reading and academic subjects, but did identify pivotal people, whereas Clare's (2015) participants did. Academic study and reading had enabled some of my participants to apply a theoretical understanding to their own experiences, particularly their experience of alienation as children and young people. hooks (1994) cited such alienation, explaining that for her, theory was a means of understanding the world around her and a source of healing.

Politics and values were fundamental to what gives life to critical pedagogy for the participants in my research, and those reviewed in the literature. hooks (1994) advocates that our lives must reflect our politics, and the participants did so through their pedagogical practices, and their wider activism and praxis. Their politics and values were interwoven throughout their narratives, with a fulcrum of social justice, which was expressed in many different ways. Like a number of the critical pedagogues in Torres' (1998), Kirlyo's (2013b) and Porfilio and Ford's (2015) volumes, and some of Connolly's (2008) and Clare's (2015) participants, a number of my participants described the sources of their initial politicisation. One participant recounted a very similar experience to that of Au (2015), a contributor to

Porfilio and Ford's (2015) volume. Like Au, my participant had grown up as a person of colour in a white, middle class neighbourhood, and had discovered hip-hop as a teenager. For both Au and my participant, the lyrics and music of hip-hop were relatable and contributed to their critical politicisation.

Karvelis (2018) posits that hip-hop should be used as a critical pedagogical resource.

A commitment to human flourishing was central to the participants' values, and some applied the need for personal growth to themselves as well as their students, both of which I share. This mirrored Freire's sense of himself as 'unfinished' (Kirlyo, 2013c, p.51), and hooks' (1994) requirement for teachers to progress towards self-actualisation, if they are to empower their students. This commitment to human flourishing, for some participants, reflected Kirlyo's (2013a) perception that his critical pedagogues have a deep love for humanity. Freire's (1970) pedagogy is interlaced with the concept of love, and of hope, and Kirlyo also highlighted this sense of hope among his critical pedagogues. The participants in my research testified to such hope and optimism. Some likened their critical pedagogy to a creed or a form of spirituality. This was in the sense of a belief system related to a love of humanity, akin to hooks (1994), who identified a sacred element to her work. Indeed, Freire was influenced by Catholic liberation theology (Darder, 2018). It was when discussing this with a participant, I realised that although I had previously thought that my commitment to social justice and human flourishing originated in my early politicisation around feminism, it also came from my early Catholicism. This is in terms of an orientation to human liberation and equality, and a reaction to patriarchy and social control. Like many ex-Catholics, including Connolly's (2008) participants, early experiences of Catholicism are complex, but can foster a deep sense of social justice, resulting from both its teachings, and as a reaction to its power structure.

Dimension Three, Self, reflects the origins of the participants' deepest yearnings for humanisation (Freire, 1970), which for many began in their

early biographies, and was expressed through their pedagogical practices, personal politics and values.

Dimension Four, Others, relates to the participants' students and their growth, the importance of colleagues, and of wider connections and networks of like-minded people. The transformative effects of critical pedagogy for their students was a crucial motivator for all of the participants. Freire's (1970) was a transformative pedagogy in which he perceived people, including himself, to be continuously unfolding, in the process of becoming. Witnessing student growth, transformation and flourishing was a key motivation of all of the participants, reflecting Freire's (1970) and hooks' (1994) pedagogical intentions. In Torres' (1998) interviews, the critical pedagogues' motivations in relation to students are less apparent, with the exception of Giroux. This may be a reflection of the focus of Torres' interviewing. By contrast, Porfilio and Ford's (2015) critical pedagogues do cite witnessing student transformation as a motivating factor.

Amsler (2010) suggests that the marginalisation of critical pedagogy may be diminishing the transformational possibilities of education. While this may be true in terms of transformation at a societal level, at an individual level, Duckworth and Smith (2019) have repeatedly demonstrated the transformational effects of further education for students, whether through a critical pedagogical approach or not. According to Giroux (2011), critical pedagogy aims to develop a meaningful life for all students, and this was particularly apparent in the two participants who taught young refugees and asylum seekers. Students' growth was of fundamental importance to all of the participants and a key driver in what gives life to critical pedagogy for them. However, unlike hooks (1994) who wishes to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of her students, the participants did not refer to students' spiritual growth per se.

The participants all emphasised the need to connect with others, in order to give life to critical pedagogy. They saw this as taking place through dialogic networks. This reflects hooks' (1994, p.129) emphasis on the importance of

critical educators engaging in dialogue in order to ‘collaborate in a discussion that crosses boundaries and creates a space for intervention.’ Amsler *et al.*,’s (2010) Midlands Pedagogy Group was created to create a dialogic network (Canaan, 2010), to inspire and encourage others to use critical pedagogy, share knowledge, experience, examples of their work, to develop their practices further, and to build communities in which to nurture alternatives (Amsler, 2010). The aims of my research mirror these, as did the participants’ responses. They had witnessed the closing down of such critical spaces within the education system. Bathmaker and Avis (2013, p.743) suggest that in further education, such closing of critical spaces may result from the pressures of top down ‘organisational professionalism,’ as opposed to the practice of ‘critical professionalism.’ The participants wanted critical pedagogues, through dialogue, to pool their knowledge and contribute to envisioning and creating a socially just education system. Like Amsler *et al.* (2010) and Clare (2015), they proposed the development of networks of critical educators. Weatherby and Mycroft (2015) have used digital platforms to do this, but the participants did not suggest this specifically as a method.

Amsler *et al.*’s (2010) Midlands Pedagogy Group see their role partly as encouraging critical educators to join with them, and to develop a more complex and robust network of dialogue (Canaan, 2010). Canaan gives the example of Crowther’s (2010) international popular education network, which was set up to sustain solidarity among academics who work with marginalised community groups and social movements, but are experiencing increasingly precarious isolation in their own institutions. The participants, unlike Amsler *et al.* (2010), did not propose developing connections with non-academic cultural workers and activists to develop networks. An exception to this was the suggestion that the unions play a role in mobilising critical pedagogy, although the participants did not specify how the unions might do this. Unlike Clare’s (2015) participants, they did not propose that the unions link to wider social movements, in order to sustain critical pedagogy. Crawley (2017) proposes that further education teachers actively engage with other professionals in the wider community. He also argues that resistance to

managerialism and destruction in further education, could be impacted by teachers carrying out acts of joint resistance. These acts could aggregate and multiply through a network of connected professionals. He compares this idea to Dewey's (1916) concept, of participation in joint activities to promote education for democracy.

Connections with others were also conceived of as playing an important role in supporting critical pedagogues. Duckworth *et al.* (2016) discuss their creation of a feminised community of practice, which ameliorates to some extent, the patriarchal, managerial culture in their higher education workplaces. This takes place through dialogue with others' authentic voices, within a co-caring community. The authors encourage their students to do this also. This notion of co-caring community was echoed by two female participants in my research, who expressed the desire for a safe space in which to discuss a range of professional issues and challenges. This reflects Bathmaker and Avis' (2013) observation that in further education, discourses of occupational professionalism are weak. One participant thought that such discussions needed to take place away from the surveilled workplace. The critical pedagogues featured in Porfilio and Ford's (2015) volume, discuss the influence of supportive, like-minded colleagues and institutions. My participants highlighted this to greater or lesser extents. Some operated without this support but wished for connections with others to provide it, while others were fortunate to have connections in the form of colleagues and/or management who supported their practice.

Connections with other people were seen as very important, whether the participants currently possessed them or not. The purpose of these was three-fold; to provide the ground for dialogue and development of critical pedagogical practice and alternative educational models; to act as safe, caring spaces where critical educators could discuss their practice and its challenges on a more personal level; and, to contribute to the mobilisation of critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning sector.

Problematism and resistance to critical pedagogy

It was notable that the participants did not appear to problematise critical pedagogy. An exception to this was the participant who was concerned that her focus on social justice in teacher training might place a potentially onerous burden of responsibility on future teachers. However, none of the participants contested the ability of critical pedagogy to impact upon social justice in education or in wider society. Ellsworth (1989) challenges critical pedagogy's belief that social justice can be achieved through education, and that equal and transparent dialogue can take place in the classroom. The participants did not challenge these beliefs and assumptions, but neither did they state that they were the case. This is possibly because a positive lens methodology was used, actively seeking out what gives life to critical pedagogy. However, this did not inhibit participants in raising negative issues, such as opposition to the current instrumental education system. It may be that the participants felt so strongly about the education system that it could not be contained, whereas had they been asked to problematise critical pedagogy, they may have done so. Unlike Ellsworth (1989), the participants did not raise a challenge to the underpinning concepts of critical pedagogy, including the assumption that educators have the knowledge, ability or right to facilitate 'empowerment' among students. Indeed one participant implied that she thought that she did have this right, until it had recently been made clear to her that she needed to be transparent about her political views to her students. Some participants did acknowledge the unproblematized power dynamic between teachers and students (Ellsworth, 1989), and worked to counter this. The accusation that Freire creates a dichotomy between educators and the masses, with educators considering that they possess a higher level of consciousness with which to emancipate the people (Berger, 1974; Zachariah, 1986) was not raised by the participants. However, one participant did express discomfort with academics adopting critical pedagogy as an academic mantle or position rather than a genuine, lived belief. This relates tangentially to the criticism of Freire and other critical pedagogues' in

relation to their social position and epistemological assumptions (Darder, Boltadano and Torres, 2009).

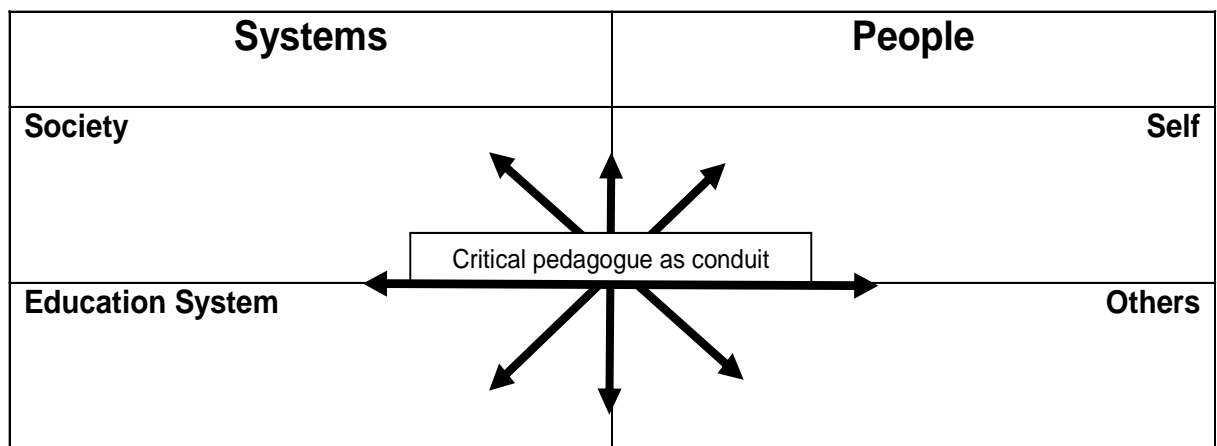
Only one participant raised the issue of student resistance to critical pedagogy, and this fuelled her motivation to use it. Yet in Motta's (2013) experience in introducing critical pedagogy in a UK higher education institution, the majority of students and staff did not desire social transformation. Although this resulted at times in anger or disassociation from the critical pedagogical teacher and course, there were also positive experiences of knowledge creation and learning. Although Motta's intentions did not result in political or activist student praxis, a climate of possibility did emerge. Boorman (2011) also experienced resistance by students. Resistance to critical pedagogy is by no means restricted to students, and Avis and Bathmaker (2004), and Avis (2007) report an ambivalence to critical pedagogy amongst teacher trainees.

In my professional experience of using critical pedagogy, resistance by some higher education students presents in the form of disruption of long held notions and a hegemonic acceptance of equality of opportunity. However, this is to some extent dependent on the nature and level of the courses being studied. The further on in their studies, unsurprisingly, the more critical the students are. The demands of consumer based capitalism upon them do not appear to be experienced as oppressive, although the impact of tuition fees does. In my teaching of adults in community-based provision, it was generally adults with severe and enduring mental ill health who were most passionate about confronting the systemic structures and influences which both led to their illness and thwarted their recovery. While there was some resistance to individual perceptions and prejudices being challenged by me or other students, there was a clear commitment to social justice and praxis.

5.3 Synthesis of the findings

Chapter 4, presented the participants' responses thematically. The themes related to four dimensions; Society, Education System, Self and Others, which aggregated to two broader dimensions, Systems and People. The critical pedagogue acted as a conduit between these dimensions and themes, as depicted in Figure 10. The figure itself replicates Figure 5 and is placed here for ease of reference.

Figure 10. Dimensions and the Critical Pedagogue



Although participants' responses were allocated to one dimension and one theme at a categorical and analytical level, the boundaries between themes and dimensions were permeable to some extent and the relationship between them dynamic. Responses in one dimension were integrally linked with each of the other three dimensions. For example, one participant became critically oriented initially through a combination of experiencing injustice as a child (Self), and a positive and successful education (Self). Higher academic study and the politics of hip-hop (Self) provided a theoretical framework for her experiences. This led to a politics of social justice (Society), the desire to become a prison educator (Education System), and latterly a higher education lecturer committed to prison-based education (Education System). Her current experiences in prison-based education and in the commodified, instrumental higher education system (Education System), continued to inform her broader politics (Society) and her politics of education (Education

System). The linkages between dimensions and themes in this exemplar were not a linear or fixed process, rather an ongoing, dynamic process with each of the dimensions informing the others in a fluid interplay, which was continuously evolving. This was the case for all of the participants. Together with the dimensions and themes being semi-permeable, they also influenced and acted upon each other in an iterative process. Beliefs, and personal and professional experiences within individual themes and dimensions, formed and reformed the participants' motivations to practice critical pedagogy, in an ongoing, evolving process. Their experiences and beliefs in each area, informed their praxis in the others. The critical pedagogues accomplished this by drawing their experiences in the four dimensions and themes inward to their core, synthesising them to form a critical pedagogy, and then enacting this back through the four dimensions. They thus acted as a conduit between the four dimensions and brought this cyclical, evolving process to life, thus 'giving life' to critical pedagogy. This insight was made possible by the use of an integrated analytical approach which involved both listening to and reading the transcripts on several occasions, then hand coding the transcripts.

This conception of the critical pedagogue as an active conduit adds an additional dimension to the existing research into teacher identity. Such research does recognise the role and interactions of social structures and educational policy, the social, cultural and organisational formations of schools and teacher education, colleagues, pupils and parents, and personal biographies, values, beliefs, and ideologies, in forming and reforming teachers' identities (Day *et al.*, 2006). However, the existing research does not identify the way in which teachers draw upon these factors to form their professional identity, as does mine. Nonetheless, the links to the four dimensions in my research are clear. What is different in my research and of pivotal significance, is the fact that each of the themes and dimensions, including those corresponding to the ones highlighted by Day *et al.* (2006), are driven and underpinned by an unwavering commitment to social justice within the education system and in wider society. This commitment to social justice is the vehicle through which they draw upon the different dimensions,

in order to give life to their critical pedagogy, and arguably their professional identity.

What is also significant is that my participants appear to have been consistently committed to critical pedagogy in spite of the constraints. Day *et al.* (2006) discuss the relative stability versus instability of teachers' identities in relation to the factors identified above, and conclude that:

The literature cited so far suggests that identities are a shifting amalgam of personal biography, culture, social influence and institutional values which may change according to role and circumstance.

The participants in my research had been committed to critical pedagogy over time and in spite of the constraints, fuelled by the force of their social justice convictions. As Bathmaker and Avis (2005, p.5) suggest, those who seek opportunities for critical pedagogy distinguish between professional identities which 'involve compliance with the performative requirements of managerial cultures, and professional identities which are defined as "authentic" to democratic values and practices.'

Social justice as a meta-theme

Although the themes described in the four dimensions were multifarious, they can be synthesised in the overarching theme of social justice. The desire for social justice lay at the root of each of the participants' inspiration and motivations to practice critical pedagogy, and seeing the fruits of this sustained them. Social justice appeared at a thematic level in Dimension One, Society. Here I use it as meta-concept which cuts across themes and dimensions. Social justice means different things to different people (Ruitenberg and Vokey, 2010; Atkins and Duckworth, 2019), and their conception often determines which end of the political spectrum they identify with (Smith, 2012). As Smith and Duckworth (2020, p.16) explain, 'social justice is a contested and politicised concept, a discursive field colonised by different interest groups from across the political spectrum.' Most Western

governments purport to support the concept of social justice, but what constitutes social justice and how it should be achieved differs greatly. In the UK, right-wing politics, represented by the Conservative party, promotes social justice through meritocracy and a free market economy. Left-wing politics, as represented by the Labour party, promotes social justice through either equality of opportunity to access wealth and resources, or the complete redistribution of wealth and resources on an equal basis. In relation to social justice in education, the term social justice can be recuperated. Clare (2015, p.33) cautions against such recuperation:

If even David Cameron and Teach First are “progressive” these days, then it seems likely, as Avis argued (Avis, 1991), that such terms mean quite different things to quite different people.

My epistemological position in relation to this piece of research was interpretivist and constructivist, as described in Chapter 3. In accordance with this, the conception of social justice that I am using here derives from my constructed meaning, and my interpretation of the participants’ narratives. To be transparent regarding my personal stance and positionality (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019), my concept of social justice in the UK comprises equal opportunity to access the benefits of society, the removal of barriers to such access, freedom from discrimination, exploitation and oppression, participation in a working democracy, and the exercise of agency in all areas of life.

The commitment to social justice was implicit throughout all of the participants’ narratives, evidenced in the dimensions and themes, explicated in Chapter 4. It is the overarching and underpinning factor in what gives life to critical pedagogy. This commitment to social justice was expressed very individually, both in relation to the participants’ pedagogy, and to the educational context that each worked in. It was also expressed in each of the analytic dimensions; Society, Education System, Self and Others. For example, for the two participants who worked in union education, social justice referred to fairness in the employment relationship, and was

characterised by successful union action in order to overcome unfair practices. One of the participants who taught Access to Social Sciences referred directly to her deep antipathy to social injustice. She wanted her students to be able to challenge health and education policy and practices, imposed as a result of government policy in their future work. The other participant who taught Access to Social Sciences, also enacted her commitment to social justice through the way she taught subjects, for example teaching Psychology from an anti-psychiatry perspective. This enabled her students to process their lived experiences of mental ill health through a critical lens, critiquing the power relations involved in psychological treatments.

One of the participants who taught refugee and asylum seeking students, was deeply concerned that her students be included in democratic processes which directly involved them. She was committed to teaching them how to participate democratically and to take action. The other participant who taught young refugee and asylum seeking students, was deeply committed to their well-being in terms of the way they were viewed and treated by society. The participant who lectured in Criminology and taught prison-based students, lived her belief that it was prison-based students in particular who needed an education which exposed them to the theoretical ideas and frameworks that had liberated her as a young person.

One lecturer in Social Work was greatly concerned that working class students did not believe they had ideas or knowledge and was determined to counter this through critical pedagogy. The lecturer in International Relations, felt very strongly that people needed to be able to speak out and take action with regard to unjust social conditions. For the participant who was a manager and lecturer in teacher education, critical pedagogy constituted living her values of social justice. For the participant who was an adult education manager and practitioner, critical pedagogy constituted utilising educational opportunities to enable people to take hold of their power.

These brief examples of the participants' commitment to social justice are fully illuminated through their narratives and the analysis of these in Chapter 4.

Although each of the themes in the four dimensions; Society, Education System, Self and Others relate directly to social justice, the analytic model of four dimensions and the critical pedagogue acting as a conduit between them, is crucial in relation to this meta-theme. It demonstrates that experiences and values relating to social justice derive from numerous and diverse sources (identified in themes and dimensions), yet are drawn together and embodied within the individual critical pedagogue. The critical pedagogue draws these in, then moves them back outwards in a praxis, which is enacted through each of the dimensions.

5.4 Summary

This chapter compared the findings of the research with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The literature mapped to the four dimensions of Society, Education System, Self and Others, therefore this conceptual framework was used to compare the findings to the reviewed literature.

The framework in relation to the findings was explored more deeply, with the portrayal of the boundaries between themes and dimensions being semi-permeable, and the dynamic nature of the relationship between them. Experiences and beliefs in each dimension influenced and acted upon the others in an iterative, ongoing and evolving process, and informed the participants' praxis in each dimension. The critical pedagogue acted as a conduit between these dimensions and themes.

The findings were then synthesised further into the meta-theme of social justice, which underpinned all of the participants' motivations to practice critical pedagogy. Through their unwavering commitment to social justice within the education system and in wider society, they drew in their

experiences in each dimension, synthesised these, and enacted their praxis back through the dimensions, thus giving life to their critical pedagogy.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly recaps on the rationale and context of the research. It then demonstrates the way in which the four dimensions of the findings (Society, Education System, Self, Others) link to the theoretical/conceptual framework described in Chapter 1. A reflection on how the positive lens approach, drawing upon AI, worked in practice is presented. Following this, the participants' ideas for mobilising critical pedagogy in the UK, and my proposals for dissemination and further action are discussed. Finally, the significance of the research and its contribution to knowledge are presented.

6.2 Rationale and context of the research

The overarching research question in this study was 'what gives life to critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector?' It sought answers from practitioners in a range of teaching and learning contexts across the sector in the West Midlands of the UK in 2018. The purpose of the research was to capture and distil the contributory factors that created a living practice of critical pedagogy, despite the constraints of the current education environment. The intention was to expand our knowledge of what effectuates critical pedagogy. Capturing and distilling the elements of what gives life to critical pedagogy makes the conditions for its flourishing visible, illuminating a pedagogical space where it can come to life and be sustained. The rationale for this was that critical pedagogy is arguably necessary in an increasingly complex, fragmented, and global world, where tomorrow's citizens will be impelled to address issues such as ecological destruction, the impact of globalised capitalism, the growth of the far right, ever proliferating communication technologies, and their associated unfiltered media. In

teaching students to be aware of the inequalities brought about by such structures, critical pedagogy also facilitates the exercising of agency in order to ameliorate these. Our students may also need to address potential issues of social justice resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alongside the multiple, global issues we face, we are also hard-wired to grow, develop, and to flourish, becoming more fully human, in a move towards self-actualisation (Maslow, 1968; 1993) and beyond, in ever evolving levels of consciousness (Wilber, 2000). Self-actualisation refers to the need for personal growth, discovery and flourishing, which is present throughout a person's life, motivating them to find and to reach their fullest potential. At a collective level, self-actualisation can be likened to, although is not the same as, Freire's (1970) concept of humanisation. Freire posits that the ontological vocation of all humans is that of humanisation, where all are enabled to live as full social and cultural agents, free from oppression. The thwarting of the individual drive for self-actualisation and the collective ontological vocation of humanisation, arguably leads to dis-ease in each of the four dimensions; Society, Education System, Self and Others. This dis-ease could be ameliorated to some extent through teaching students to be aware of oppressive structures, to take action against them, and to facilitate their own and others' human flourishing. It is therefore important that we continue to bring critical pedagogy to life and sustain it. By teaching students to be aware of oppressive structures, through socially just methods, we honour students as full cultural agents who are able to take action towards social justice and human flourishing.

However, we are experiencing an increasingly commodified and instrumental approach to lifelong learning. This is characterised by tuition fees in higher education, and in further education, prescriptive curricula and learning outcomes, quantitative measures of 'success' to meet accountability data requirements, surveillance, and the marketisation of education (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Bathmaker and Avis, 2013; Cowden and Singh, 2013; Duckworth, 2011; Elliott, 2012; Duckworth *et al.*, 2016; Bennett and Smith,

2018; Duckworth and Smith, 2018; 2019; Smith and Duckworth, 2020). This context can limit practitioners' autonomy in determining curricula and constrain their practice of critical pedagogy. This limits the extent to which they can develop students' critical awareness of the structures that shape both their individual circumstances and local, national and international contexts, which the practice of critical pedagogy would enable them to do.

The aim of this research was to elicit the human stories and life events which originally led practitioners to critical pedagogy, and to capture the sources of inspiration, motivation and support which informed and sustained their current practice. The aim was also to consider how critical pedagogy might be mobilised across the lifelong learning sector. The purpose was also to enable readers to reflect on their own experiences and practices in relation to other peoples' stories, and to draw inspiration and sustenance from this (Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985; Plummer, 1995; Stake, 1995).

The participants' responses to the interview questions and their associated narratives, combined to provide a rich and deep picture of what gives life to critical pedagogy. This picture constituted a myriad of forces operating on personal, professional and political levels.

6.3 Theoretical/conceptual framework

In addition to the both the findings and the reviewed literature mapping to the four dimensions; Society, Education System, Self and Others, these dimensions also reflect the components of the theoretical and conceptual framework, detailed in Chapter 1. This is illustrated in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Dimensions and Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Systems	People
<p>Dimension: Society</p> <p>Theoretical Framework: Critical pedagogical theories e.g. Freire (1970), hooks (1994), Kincheloe (2008a), Giroux (2011), Cowden and Singh (2013), McLaren (2013)</p>	<p>Dimension: Self</p> <p>Theoretical Framework: Teachers' personal and professional histories, politics and values e.g. Goodson and Sikes (2001), Goodson (2008)</p>
<p>Dimension: Education system</p> <p>Theoretical Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical pedagogical theories e.g. Freire (1970), hooks (1994), Kincheloe (2008a), Giroux (2011), Cowden and Singh (2013), McLaren (2013) • Critical pedagogical practices e.g. Freire (1970), Shor (1992), hooks (1994), Wink (2000) • Lifelong learning ideology and policy e.g Lifelong learning policy and ideology (Department for Education and Employment, 1998; 1999; Department for Education and Skills, 2003), and resistance e.g. Amsler <i>et al.</i> (2010), Cowden and Singh (2013), Daley, Orr and Petrie (2015) 	<p>Dimension: Others</p> <p>Theoretical Framework: Transformative learning and human flourishing e.g Maslow (1968), hooks (1994), Seligman (2002), Mezirow and Taylor (2009)</p>

In addition to the four dimensions, the theoretical and conceptual framework also contained the methodological influence which constitutes a positive lens approach (Golden-Biddle and Dutton, 2012), drawing upon Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008), and life history (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Goodson, 2008), which operated across all dimensions of the framework.

6.4 Methodological reflection on Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Criticisms relating to positive lens approaches and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) are discussed in Chapter 1, and referred to in Chapter 3. In relation to AI, these centre on the silencing of negative experiences (Pratt, 2002; Oliver, 2005), although writers such as Bellinger and Elliott (2011) emphasise that negative experiences contain the motivation for improvement, and that such criticisms of AI are based on a superficial understanding of it. I agree with Bellinger and Elliot's (2011) approach. I was very aware that discussing the positives of critical pedagogy would inevitably, and importantly, be contrasted with the constraints of the current system. I was also aware that focussing on the positives could evoke a sadness and yearning for the system to be different (Bushe, 2012). This was precisely how the interviews played out, and was crucial in terms of contextualising the participants' motivations to practice critical pedagogy. The desire for change underpinned these motivations and therefore that which needed to change, needed to be articulated.

The choice to use a positive lens approach to the research and draw upon AI, was very successful in answering the research question, 'what gives life to critical pedagogy?' The approach elicited generative and actualising facets of its practice, rather than those that thwart it. I was able to steer the participants back to the positive question, while also allowing the difficulties of the context to be expressed. The approach also gave the participants the opportunity to focus on their commitment to critical pedagogy and celebrate their successes, reflecting Merriam's (2009) statement that interviews allow participants to clarify their thoughts and experiences. The positive approach energised them and my hope is that they will play an integral part in mobilising critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning sector, as discussed in my recommendations in the following section. This would activate AI's 'positive principle,' where positive emotion leads to increased momentum to implement change (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008; Bushe, 2013).

6.5 Mobilising critical pedagogy in the UK

A key objective of this research was to explore how that which gives life to critical pedagogy might be harnessed and mobilised across the sector. Potential methods of mobilising critical pedagogy were identified in Chapter 4. These were discussed in relation to the reviewed literature in Chapter 5. Participants emphasised the importance of creating spaces both within the education system and beyond, in order to mobilise critical pedagogy. The purpose of these spaces was to enable dialogue around critical pedagogy and its development, and as a source of ongoing support for practitioners. These spaces linked to networks of connected people, both within the education sector and beyond. The need for political change was identified, along with linkages to a wider social movement, and the role of union activism.

In line with Amsler's (2010) fear that critical education is being erased from memory, some participants questioned how new critical pedagogues would be created and nurtured in the current educational climate. They discussed this in relation to professional identity in further education, particularly amongst new lecturers. As Avis and Bathmaker (2004) state, the possibilities for critical pedagogy are constrained by the performative and policy contexts of teaching. Yet they also call for educators and teacher trainees to jointly confront these issues, creating a politics of hope. Clearly the participants in my research were doing this. Within the education system, participants identified the role of teacher education in harnessing critical pedagogy, mirroring Clare's (2015) participants' views. However, Atkins (2011) suggests that standards led, initial teacher education programmes in the post-compulsory sector do not address social and political issues, which constrains teachers' ability to employ critical and socially just pedagogies.

Some participants in my research felt that potential practitioners, including teacher trainees, would need to be critically and politically oriented to social justice at the outset. This suggests that both spaces for dialogue, and critical teacher education, would draw out what is already there. However,

politicisation can arguably occur at any time in peoples' lives, and therefore a social justice orientation and an interest in critical pedagogy similarly have the potential to be borne at any point in a teacher's career span. Elliott (2017) asserts that education has a moral purpose at its core, that of making a transformative difference. From this we can extrapolate that teachers would wish to be the architects of that difference. Initial teacher education, critical spaces for dialogue, and wider social movements could therefore contribute to this. These could enable teachers to reflect and develop their practice in new directions. A benefit of educating teachers in a critical tradition, is that teacher education often takes place near to the start of teachers' careers. One participant thought that this made student teachers more open to critical approaches, because they would not yet have become disillusioned and overwhelmed by the demands of the current system. However, Avis and Bathmaker (2004) experienced ambivalence to critical pedagogy amongst further education teacher trainees, which they propose may result from the individualised world in which the trainees and their students exist. Although their trainees had an ethic of care, they tended towards individualised responses to students. The authors state that teacher trainees need to be able to locate both themselves and their students in the wider structural context, in order to move towards a more critical pedagogical approach. A critical teacher education could provide the grounding in this.

In order to create a network of critical pedagogues, as recommended by the participants, I plan to constitute a practitioner group to fulfil this. The group would initially comprise of the participants and pilot participants of this research, together with the critical pedagogues I communicated with in the early stage of the research, but who were located outside of the geographical boundary of the research. The UK based contributors to the critical pedagogical literature would also be invited to join. Such a group would initially participate in a full Appreciative Inquiry, undertaking each stage of Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros' (2008) collaborative 4D process: Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny. The 4D process is described in Chapter 3. The affirmative topic 'what gives life to critical pedagogy?' and its

associated 4D AI process would result in a collaborative piece of action research, with participants committing to individual actions. Subsequent group meetings would create further iterations of this. I plan to convene this group and subsequent iterations of it, and to produce the piece of action research. This will build upon the impact of the findings of this current piece of research.

A further objective of the research was to disseminate the findings in a manner which gives hope and inspiration for practitioners in the lifelong learning sector. Canaan (2010), hoped that the published work of the Midlands Pedagogy Group would inspire critical hope, and my objective reflects this. Presentation of the findings of this research at conferences, and publication in relevant journals, will continue to be key methods of disseminating the findings. However, in order to reach potential practitioners of critical pedagogy, it will be crucial to reach those operating outside of the traditional, higher education research audience. I propose that publication of the findings in book format has the potential to reach more teacher educators and students of education, which I plan to author. My intention is that, subject to full approval by each participant, the individual interviews are included in such a book, with a pen portrait of each participant, to add a more personal and immediate style, which will enhance the appeal and relatability of the text.

6.6 Significance of the research

As identified earlier in this chapter, a commitment to social justice is by no means a normative position. Even for those who are committed to social justice, what constitutes social justice, and the means of achieving this are not consensual, and are determined by and reflected in differing political positions. Critical pedagogy is predicated on a social justice which emancipates people from oppression (Darder, Boltadano and Torres, 2009) and it is in relation to this conception, that the importance of this piece of

research must be located. Critical pedagogy teaches people to challenge social and political hierarchies, critique power relations and oppressive structures, and to exercise agency. In the current national and international climate, this is arguably crucial to moral, social, political, economic and ecological progress, and for the development of democracy. Threats and crises related to these are ever present and evolving. As Giroux (2011) states, students need to learn to hold power and authority accountable, and to work for greater social justice in the world. Alongside this, Freire's (1970) concept of humanisation, proposes that our task as humans is to grow and develop, becoming more fully human. This is in order that all people can live as full social and cultural agents in a socially just world. Critical pedagogues believe that this can be achieved through the practice of critical pedagogical approaches. However, instrumentalism, quantification, surveillance, neoliberalism and the marketisation of education (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Elliott, 2012; Bathmaker and Avis, 2013; Cowden and Singh, 2013; Duckworth *et al.*, 2016; Bennett and Smith, 2018; Duckworth and Smith, 2018; 2019; Smith and Duckworth, 2020), can compromise teachers' professional autonomy (Bathmaker and Avis, 2013; Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) and thus the practice of critical pedagogy. The research has uncovered what motivates, inspires and sustains those practitioners who do work from a critical pedagogical orientation in the current educational climate. It has garnered ideas for mobilising critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector. Its dissemination will shine a light of hope for other practitioners who might also wish to use critical pedagogy.

The rationale for the research was predicated on critical theory's view of humans as agentic subjects existing within a historic continuum, where power is dialectical and thus has the potential for resistance. This historic continuum is crucial for teachers to be cognisant of. As Freire posits, 'history represents a time of possibilities, not determinism' Freire and Macedo (1995, p.397). Similarly, as Giroux (2009, p.47) explains, critical theory emphasises:

...the breaks, discontinuities, and tensions in history, all of which become valuable in that they highlight the centrality of human agency and struggle while simultaneously revealing the gap between society as it presently exists and society as it might be.

A mass education system in the UK has only been in operation for approximately 150 years. The system has continuously evolved and will continue to do so, and it is therefore critical that we keep alternative models on the agenda and in clear sight. Foucault's (1988, p.11) analyses 'show the arbitrariness of institutions...and shows which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made.'

This piece of research demonstrates that there are teachers within our current lifelong learning sector who are exercising their agency and resisting the totalising effects of the current educational paradigm. They are living their values of social justice and using critical pedagogy to do so in their professional contexts. Wink (2010) uses the Freirean term conscientization to refer to teachers developing the confidence and voice to question themselves, and to select curricula autonomously. Reflecting on my experience in teaching in further education in particular, I see how courageous and bold a step this may be for some. The participants in my research embodied and enacted that courage.

However, in my professional experience, many educators in the lifelong learning sector have become alienated and disillusioned by the instrumental, neoliberal system and have given up on the possibilities of social justice education. Others have been raised and trained in a climate where it has never existed, and therefore do not conceive of its possibilities. Amsler (2010) fears that critical approaches to education in the UK are being erased from memory, and this view was also expressed by some of my participants. Yet the work of Daley, Orr and Petrie (2015), Clare (2015), and the participants of my research, demonstrate that resistance to this is taking place. The research demonstrates that it is possible for educators with a social justice orientation, to draw upon the threads from the different

dimensions of their lives, to form and actualise a pedagogy which is congruent with a social justice intention. Experiences and beliefs formed in the four dimensions of Society, Education System, Self, and Others, can be alchemised to form a pedagogy which reflects and honours their authentic selves. Experiences within these dimensions can be viewed as resources, whereby lessons learned in each dimension can be processed, synthesised and transformed to create a pedagogy of social justice. This reflects Freire's (1970) belief of human beings' true vocation being that of humanisation, where people live as full social and cultural agents, as subjects rather than objects within the world.

The research demonstrates that the potential for personal agency and praxis exists for teachers, because it is being enacted by professionals experiencing similar constraints as they do. For me, this is inspirational. As Thrash *et al.* (2014) explain, people are inspired both 'by' an elicitor object (e.g. a person, action, or scene), and/or 'to' actualise the inspiring qualities exemplified in the elicitor object. Through educators understanding the way in which historical, social and cultural forces shape their lives, they may view their practice from a fresh perspective, and feel empowered to foster transformative change (Roth, 2005). We must bear in mind that in reality this is an aspirational practice (Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Bathmaker and Avis, 2005), and at this point in history, it is unlikely that education will be overtaken by social justice as McLaren (2015) purports. Yet as Crawley (2017) proposes, collaborative acts of resistance can aggregate to form a greater groundswell and movement.

This piece of research provides evidence that the practice of critical pedagogy is alive. It illuminates what brings it to life, shining a light of hope for others. It demonstrates the need to sustain hope, and to continue to fight for the education we believe in. It exhorts us to recognise the historic nature of the education system. It shows us how to reach in to the depths of our experiences in the four dimensions, and draw these experiences together, then agentially transform these experiences into a new praxis, and enact

this back through each of the dimensions. It calls to us to join with others to make critical pedagogy happen. It reflects Goodson's emphasis on the importance of exploring and understanding the person the teacher is (Goodson, 1981; Goodson and Walker, 1991; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Goodson, 2003; 2008). It points us to the deepest yearning for social justice and humanisation in ourselves and others, and encourages us to reclaim our agency.

6.7 Contribution to Knowledge

This research examined what gives life to critical pedagogy in the lifelong learning sector in the UK. A number of volumes, which have been reviewed in this thesis, have recounted interviews with, or narrative pieces about, published and distinguished academic critical pedagogues, predominantly from the US (Torres, 1998; Kirlyo, 2013b; Porfilio and Ford, 2015). To varying extents, these cover the biographical and motivational factors behind their critical pedagogy. Similarly, localised PhD research studies in the UK and beyond, have been published, with those relating to critical pedagogues in the UK and Ireland also reviewed in this thesis (Connolly, 2008; Clare, 2015). Connolly's research relates to adult educators in Ireland, and Clare's to further education practitioners of critical pedagogy in the North of England. My research relates to practitioners of critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning sector in the West Midlands of England, and as such explores a range of different contexts. This enabled common themes across different contexts to be analysed. The methodology drew upon the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry, to extract the positive, life giving forces of critical pedagogy as its focus, constituting an innovative research lens and resultant findings. The range of lifelong learning contexts, explored through a positive lens, is original in its focus and as such presents an original contribution to knowledge.

The thesis will be available through the University of Worcester's online repository and Open Access. Two journal articles have been published (McElearney, 2018; 2020), a forthcoming book contribution is in press, and initial findings have been presented at seven conferences. Papers will be published in relevant academic journals and it is intended that an anthology of participant stories will be published, subject to participants' full consent.

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Appendix 1

Self-interview

- How did you find out about 'critical pedagogy'?

To be honest, I didn't actually find out about it until I saw the application for my PhD studentship. I wanted to do a PhD for years, but this was the first time I'd seen a funded studentship in an area I was interested in (lifelong learning). I saw that the PhD was in critical pedagogy – I'd never heard of it and thought it would be something extremely complicated. I googled it and was absolutely blown away. It was precisely the aspect of adult learning that I was deeply committed to. I didn't know it was a named pedagogy with a whole body of theoretical research. It was just something that was an inner belief of mine; that this was one of the main reasons for adult education. Although I'm also very committed to lifelong learning for personal fulfilment and flourishing, alongside transformative education, I'd regularly used a critical pedagogical approach in my teaching of adult students with special educational needs, and so I was completely delighted to find out about it. But I was slightly bemused as to how I hadn't heard about it before. I think that's because the Cert Ed in post-16 education, was taught in a very vocational context (further education college), by further education lecturers. Both my training and my colleagues were very instrumental in their outlook and approach.

- What led you to become a practitioner of critical pedagogy?

Well as I say, I was a sometime practitioner, and I feel very frustrated that had I read and learned what I know now, I would have used it far, far more, and in a much more active way. I think I would also have felt less concerned about surveillance from further education management. Because I would have been able to justify my position.

But to answer the question. What led to it was a whole host of personal and academic factors. Belief in social justice, left-wing politics, and a real desire for the most marginalised people to be able to have some power. I think that

comes from my own very mixed experience of education, and a utopian way of thinking that has been with me since my adolescence.

- What do you think critical pedagogy is?

To me, it's about enabling people to see the hegemonic structures surrounding them and how these determine their life. But also really trying to work to empower people to take some action. To feel that they can have agency even if that's only in a small way. Because I think that's the difference between depression and living. I also think it's about personal transformation; transformative learning in relation to the world.

- Why do you think it's important?

Because I think it's really exciting for people to realise they have some agency and to utilise it. On a broader political level, I don't believe we will see change for social justice until people can do this.

- What are the thing(s) that currently motivate you to use critical pedagogy? What 'inspires' you to use it?

I'm inspired by seeing people taking action as a result of their learning, whether that's through personal transformation or through actually transferring transforming their circumstances. And by seeing the incredible satisfaction students get through doing that. I've so often witnessed people with enduring mental health and learning disabilities suddenly seeing that they've got something to live for.

- What supports and sustains you in your practice?

Well prior to my starting my PhD and learning about critical pedagogy, my own inner belief system. But now I feel sustained and validated through a body of theoretical work. However there is very little work around critical pedagogy and people with cognitive disabilities, and that's something that I'm very interested in.

- Is there anything that would enable you to increase or enhance your practice of critical pedagogy?

At the moment I'm a full time student, but looking to the future, the process of doing my PhD will be enough for me to put critical into practice, either in higher education or further education.

- Which teaching strategies and methods have successfully lead to critical awakening or personal transformation for your students?

With students with learning disabilities and enduring mental ill health, the strategies that work the best are very practical ones. So rather than teaching about ideas in an abstract way, we learn about ideas using students' lived experiences, and then actually go and do something. For example campaigning with local bus companies against hate crime; devising courses on hate crime for peers with learning disabilities; taking action in community places such as in rundown parks so that the community could take ownership of these again; devising green community projects and implementing these.

- What do you think is the best way to mobilise critical pedagogy across the sector? What message would you give to those wanting to practice critical pedagogy?

I think connecting to other people is crucial. So that people know that there are others doing it. That it can be done. There needs to be a mechanism for doing this. So I'd say find those people. Also read and learn because the theoretical frameworks will give you the confidence in your practice. I think critical pedagogy needs to be included in all teacher education, and some practical publications and resources that trainee can try out made available.

Appendix 2

Research Questions and Interview Questions

Overarching research question	What gives life to critical pedagogy?	
		Interview questions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you find out about 'critical pedagogy'? • What do you think critical pedagogy is? • Why do you think it is important?
Research sub- questions	What socio-historic life factors, beliefs and values led practitioners to critical pedagogy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What life events led you to become a practitioner of critical pedagogy?
	What inspires, motivates and sustains them in practicing critical pedagogy in the current educational climate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the thing(s) that currently motivate you to use critical pedagogy? • What 'inspires' you to use it? • What supports and sustains you in your practice?
	How might this be harnessed to inspire and motivate others wishing to use critical pedagogy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything that would enable you to increase or enhance your practice of critical pedagogy? • What do you think is the best way to mobilise critical pedagogy across the sector? • What message would you give to those wanting to practice critical pedagogy?
	Which teaching strategies have led to critical awakening amongst students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which teaching strategies and methods have successfully lead to critical awakening or personal transformation for your students?

Appendix 3

Participant Covering Letter



University of Worcester
Henwick Grove
Worcester
WR2 6AJ

19 June 2018

Dear Maxine

What 'Gives Life' to Critical Pedagogy in the Lifelong Learning Sector?

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research; it is greatly appreciated and your input will both add to existing theoretical knowledge and contribute to the mobilisation of critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning sector. Critical pedagogy is an educational philosophy and approach to teaching and learning whereby teachers and students co-create knowledge in order to facilitate the development of a critical consciousness; this in turn leads to social action and/or personal empowerment and transformation. I would like to find out what brought practitioners to critical pedagogy, what inspires, motivates and sustains them, the strategies they consider to be successful, and how critical pedagogy could be harnessed and mobilised across the sector.

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any point during the process, without giving your reasons for withdrawal. Any data which has been collected from you will be deleted. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and individual transcripts will be anonymised as far as possible. Confidentiality will be maintained by omitting all references to your name and institution on the interview transcript and in the results. The interview transcript and the subsequent analysis will be sent to you for your approval.

The interviews will be audio recorded and the files held on the University of Worcester's secure network for ten years, and subsequently deleted. Hard copies

will be held in a locked filing cabinet and shredded after ten years. Other researchers will only have access to the data if they agree to preserve confidentiality and if they abide by the terms you have agreed to on the attached consent form.

The research results will be disseminated as a PhD thesis and in a range of media including reports, publications and conferences, and a digital resource for teachers may subsequently be produced.

This piece of research has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through the University of Worcester Research and Ethics Committee. If at any point during the research process you have any concerns, please speak in the first instance to Professor Geoffrey Elliot on 01905 855000; g.elliott@worc.ac.uk. In the event that you should wish to make a formal complaint, please contact Louise Heath on 01905 855240; l.heath@worc.ac.uk.

Thank you again for your participation.

Yours sincerely

Paula McElearney (PhD student)

Appendix 4

Participant Information Sheet

What 'Gives Life' to Critical Pedagogy in the Lifelong Learning Sector?

Thank you for your participation in this piece of research; it is greatly appreciated and your input will both add to existing theoretical knowledge and contribute to the mobilisation of critical pedagogy across the lifelong learning sector.

Critical Pedagogy

Practitioners in the lifelong learning sector may not necessarily be familiar with the term 'critical pedagogy', although they may teach in this way. Critical pedagogy is an educational philosophy and approach to teaching and learning whereby teachers and students co-create knowledge in order to develop a critical awareness of oppressive structures and forces, leading to social action and/or personal empowerment and transformation.

Rationale for the Research

In an increasingly complex, fragmented, and global world, it can be argued that people need this critical consciousness in order to address the emerging issues we are facing, and for us to progress morally, socially, politically, economically and ecologically. It can also be argued that our task as humans is to grow and develop, becoming more fully human and reaching our highest potential. Critical pedagogy is therefore important to research and develop.

In the UK, critical pedagogy has traditionally been practiced in the lifelong learning sector. However, the work of practitioners in this sector has become constrained by funding cuts, instrumental curricula and accountability measures and teachers can feel that they have little room for professional autonomy and thus the practice of critical pedagogy. Yet there are practitioners who do continue to work from a critical pedagogical stance.

This research will explore what brought practitioners to critical pedagogy, and what inspires, motivates and sustains them in the face of constraints. It will also explore the strategies they consider to be successful and the ways in which critical pedagogy could be harnessed and mobilised across the sector. The research will capture rich narratives viewed through a positive lens methodology. Semi-structured interviews will be

undertaken with twelve practitioners of critical pedagogy in the West Midlands across a range of lifelong learning contexts.

The research will be published as a PhD thesis and will make recommendations as to how the findings can be harnessed to mobilise critical pedagogy across the sector.

Appendix 5

Participant Consent Form



Informed Consent Form

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please initial boxes as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____.	
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn. Any data which has been collected will be deleted.	
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	
6.	If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	
8.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	
9.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	

Participant:

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher:

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Appendix 6

Sample Transcript

Interviewer: Well, first of all, how did you find out about critical pedagogy?

Respondent: I suppose, the term itself, the word, I guess my earliest recollection would be having read Pedagogy of the Oppressed I think; Paulo Freire's book. That's when I got a label for something that I was engaged in anyway. I was involved in community education, education from below, all these kinds of words that are associated with critical pedagogy. Dialogue, activism. And then I guess, when looking in Freire's...looking at both the context in which that concept is framed but also the kinds of politics behind it, that seemed to resonate with what I was doing really. And struggling and trying to make sense of the world.

Interviewer: Were you teaching when you came across the book then?

Respondent: I think it was before.

Interviewer: In social work?

Respondent: It was before even. From about the age of 13, I guess, from my teenage years I'd been active in anti-racist struggles, initially through family connections. I had a cousin who was subject to a deportation order, but he was in prison. This was in the early '70s and there were campaigns from leftist groups around the rights of migrants and things. And so there was a protest outside the jail, up in Armley Jail in Leeds, near where

I grew up in Bradford. And they told the activist that my cousin was actually locked up in the prison as well, because we used to go and visit him sometimes. And they said do a speech. I was about 13 at the time and I didn't even have time to think about, to worry about what to say. I just used lots of expletives, I can remember.

But it felt quite liberating. I suppose, for me this is a connection between that and critical pedagogy. One of the things that Freire writes about in his method, is that we are all thinkers and we are all trying to make sense of the world and we have our own language. We have our own means of communicating and one of the important things for critical pedagogues is to give credence to meanings and language from below.

And so at school I would have probably been disciplined for what I said, but here, I was seen as saying something significant. It was how my choice of words became very powerful.

Interviewer: You were talking about that experience of that protest. What things lead you to critical pedagogy?

Respondent: Well, from that was an obviously...then it's a sense of, how do you make sense of this lived experience? I guess you could see power, you could see power as physical. Growing up the power was in police officers and uniforms. The power was in schools, in institutions and prisons and things like that. You can see that power, because at an early age, I don't think you have the capacity to think in abstract terms, you just think in concrete terms, yes? And it was a desire to make sense of that that then led to reading and I used to do a lot of reading in the library. But not solitary reading, that was important.

From about the age of 14 I used to be part of the leftist book shops and so we'd always share ideas and dialogue.

I think it was the sense that reading was important, but reading had to be active, it had to be public, it had to be shared. And I think that really- there was a fear of intellectuality, I think, because at one level, I was as a working-class lad from a minority community, I was put outside of that sphere of what it is to be clever, intellectual. Struggled at school, in terms of my GCSEs. Truanted from school, to read which was ironic, in the sense that school is supposed to be there to read, but I think the school was contributing to my alienation. Whereas, I think what I was doing is fighting that by looking for an alternative curriculum.

Alternative spaces in which to make sense of the world as opposed to the classroom, and of course all of these things resonate with Freire's work around alienating education, around oppressive education as opposed to liberating education. So I guess in retrospect, it was a process of self-liberation that was taking place there for me. And then once I then began to look at the theories, it all kind of made sense.

Interviewer: You know you were saying you were doing the reading as a collective thing, through alternative bookshops. What drew you or lead you to that?

Respondent: Events really. As I say, the events around-

Interviewer: Activism?

Respondent: Well, my cousin and him being in prison on a deportation order. Then one leading, getting involved in other struggles around police brutality, around- I can remember once, we picketed outside a school, where the head teacher had banned young Rastafarians from coming to school with dreadlocks, he said, 'cut them off.' And what was really interesting at the time was that they were finding it difficult for people in their communities to support them. Maybe because there was a bit of slight stigma towards Rastafarians, out-casting.

We, as Sikhs, because we also keep long hair, we came and protested outside the school in solidarity. So you know it was a realisation that these personal troubles are not personal, they were, other people shared those, yes? I suppose the connectivity and, C. Wright Mills' work in Personal Troubles and Public Concerns, again later on made me realise that all life is kind of practical, in a sense, that life is about survival and that critical pedagogy helps you to make sense of the practical challenges of life.

And then Freire talks about this notion of praxis. And then again later I realised that it's practice to theory as much as theory to practice. Then one thing leads to another thing, leads to another thing, you know, so it becomes an unravelling process. And it's constant, even to this very day I'm still unravelling.

Interviewer: Still becoming

Respondent: I think that's the pedagogical dimension to it. So critical pedagogy wasn't a project for me, it was a way of living. Freire talks about that; he said that if critical pedagogy is about liberation, then the more liberation you get, the more you realise you want and need it. It becomes a bit addictive really and then it becomes a way of being and a way of life, rather than an event.

Because I did have other colleagues for whom, friends, maybe from privileged backgrounds, where some of these things were events. You know, you'd attend a protest, it was a passage of rights. For me, it was never an event, it became then an all engrossing way of being and that's why I think I find it very difficult to withdraw from this project, even if sometimes it might be easier to do so.

Interviewer: It might sound simplistic, but to you, what is it? What is critical pedagogy to you?

Respondent: You could say it really becomes a creed and some people have said that Freire and his own Catholicism, was what was driving him. And I think that's what keeps me going, is that sense of utopia, I guess. That sense of possibility. And I think, and then what really keeps me energised is when you see the real fruits of that, especially with students, I'm working with students. Within myself as well, you know. I'm constantly surprised at things that I can do, that I didn't think I could do. Simple things, like being able to use punctuation in the right way. Being able to use it to make a sentence stronger. And then it's back to Freire's literacy, so I think that's been the biggest thing for me, is to validate but also to increase my own literary capabilities.

Although I still find it difficult to identify as a writer, because when you look over the shoulder when they say, 'he's a writer' - that's got symbolic violence, those, the scars of symbolic violence don't go away. Maybe you develop a thicker skin over those scars and so I think that's part of it really, you know?

Interviewer: Critical pedagogy is about literacy, for you?

Respondent: It's about literacy, but it's about the relationship between the self and literacy. The idea that it's a disruption of this notion of the binary, literate illiterate. Yes. And so I've very much come to the point where- again, the work of Gramsci was important. The way Gramsci talked in The Prison Notebooks. He talked about, he says 'men', (in context), he says all men are intellectuals and another place he says all men, again, he uses 'men' as a generic, all men are philosophers. And so because, obviously Gramsci talked about organic intellectuals and I think that critical pedagogy is also saying the same thing, that we're all intelligent people, even though we're put into boxes of being intelligent or not intelligent.

And in that sense, we all have forms of literacy and on one level it's about validating our own ingrained or from below literacy. Our own poetry, our own creativity. But also realising that there is a kind of structure of power that we have to confront and navigate, which requires other tools. And what I've realised, is that they're tools and so I say that being able to write grammatically is nothing to do with intelligence. It's to do with being able to use certain tools, but it can be very empowering.

Interviewer: Would you extend that literacy then to voice, to verbal communication?

Respondent: That's an interesting one, because identity is about the way you speak, as much as anything else. And I think what I've been able to do, is to be able to develop a repertoire of voice-different repertoires. So the way I'm talking now won't be the

way that I would talk in other settings, you know? I guess it's an expanding - I think there is a danger in seeing critical pedagogy simply as validating people. It's not. What critical pedagogy does, it certainly validates people as human beings, yes, and it seeks to expand people's own appreciation of their own humanity and others', yes? It's working towards... and that self-subjectivity is Freire's. We all have to recognise the subject for what they are, but it also is about growth, about nurturing and developing, yes?

I guess the point there is that as you grow and nurture and develop, you expand your humanity. Because the danger is, that when you go for- say in academia, for example, if you get published or you get titles, there is a danger that you'll then slip into the trap of symbolism, of power. So it's like what John Holloway says, it's almost wanting to gain power without having power. It's wanting to be in control without having power. Because we all want control in our life, but not to be controlling, if that-

Interviewer: Well, that's the whole Freire and things, the oppressed want to be the oppressor.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Part of his process was about, no, challenging that.

Respondent: Exactly, so it's trying to-

Interviewer: Is that what we want?

Respondent: I think so, that's precisely where we're getting to. I think that in that sense, it becomes quite a kind of utopian ideal. It becomes almost a religious ideal in some senses. It becomes a place that may be a conception of heaven. Which is what utopias often are. And so there is a realism that you might never get there, but I'd rather live a life of striving for that than one which is taking the default position, which is the easier option in some senses.

Interviewer: Why do you think it's important, critical pedagogy?

Respondent: It's important, for me, because I believe that all human beings... again, I think it comes back to a personal creed really. I believe that all human beings have potential, they all have abilities. I often say that, every human being has beauty and talent but because of the nature of societal oppression their talent is often unrecognised or unrealised, and their beauty is often, again, not recognised. And the reasons for that is because we construct ideas about ability, beauty, talent, in very binary ways.

In kind of hierarchical ways. I guess once you start to see the world in more of a flat or horizontal way, then difference becomes beauty. Difference becomes talent, not difference as representing deficits of capabilities. That's kind of where I come from in this. Then it means that you have to have a commitment to see, to help, to nurture and a mutuality.

Interviewer: In the current educational climate that we're in, for you the university climate. What motivates you and inspires you? What motivates you to use it?

Respondent:

Okay, I think I am a pessimist. Sorry, I'm an optimist, I'm an eternal optimist and I think that's really important for critical pedagogues, to be optimistic. Because by definition you are fighting against a system. You're like a virus in a system that's sending all these antibodies to try and wipe you out. And so you're going to get opposition, but you have to be optimistic because if you're not optimistic, then in a sense you've become self-defeatist, yes?

So that's what...I suppose, personally, I believe that I have immense privilege in some senses working in the university. I always used to say that when I was young I wanted to be a football player, a professional football player, and the reasoning behind that was I'd love to be paid for something that I love doing, and I'd do for nothing. I wasn't able to become a football player, but becoming an academic in a sense achieves that same objective. That I'm doing something, I'm paid for doing something that other people would pay to do, which is to gain knowledge and have access to wonderful resources, yes? I see that privilege and then responsibility comes with that. I think that's one of the kind of theories that I've...there is nothing wrong with having power, as long as you realise the more power you have, the more responsibility that you have with that power.

Therefore, I feel that I can and I should use that, not in some kind of arrogant way that I'm a kind of Messiah, but in ways I suppose, that enables me to connect with students and colleagues and citizens, that in a kind of interesting way surprises them. Because when they encounter the academic, you know, they often have this kind of prejudice or this concept that you're going to be aloof and you're going to be talking in big sentences and big words, and then I kind of do

deliberately disrupt some of that and that does, that has its own liberating effects, I think.

Interviewer: What you're saying, is what motivates you to use critical pedagogy in the current climate, is that you feel the responsibility of your position of privilege?

Respondent: Yes. I suppose it's relative, it's a relative position, you know? In some senses you could say you're not that privileged at all. I think it also means that you can operate, again, Gramsci was important here, Gramsci says there are two ways which you can fight a system. He said, you can actually just storm, as it were, storm the fortress but you need a lot of power up there and to do that you need a kind of army. It's a traditional metaphor of fighting battles, or you can go behind enemy lines, as it were. Gramsci called that 'a war of position' and I feel that particularly in the last 30 years of neoliberal capitalists, we've been fighting a war of position. And that critical pedagogy has probably become even more important, because I think it is a perfect weapon for fighting a war of position.

You know I call it 'within the belly of the beast.' Yes. And Higher Education, there has been a massive expansion of Higher Education, a lot more working class, a lot more minoritised students coming into it. And so it becomes a really important space where you can function, even at the same time as you're challenging all these ideologies that try to create relationships with you and students, which are binary relationships. You know, customers and providers and so you are fighting that as well. And you see some victories, so it is possible and that keeps you going.

Interviewer: Yes. What inspires you? That motivates you, is there anything that actually inspires you to keep using critical pedagogy?

Respondent: Yes. I tell you what it is, it's when students come to you, who initially said, 'this doesn't make any sense to me, it's all rubbish,' and that kind of... They don't use the word 'rubbish' but they'll often sometimes complain and sometimes, even when I set assignments and they'll complain about how hard it is and all this. But then when they've come up with good marks and when on reflection it's actually done something to them that they didn't even realise, or they've produced something that they felt incapable of. They've come back and they say, 'we really appreciate what you were doing here.' And you know although it was painful- because you're disrupting certain forms of alienation, I guess, that's what you're doing. You're trying to get them to reclaim their own subjectivity, which is what Freire talks about.

People in some senses find in the short term, find it much more comfortable to function as objects and so you're disrupting that. That's painful for you as well as them. But when you see the fruits of that, when you bump into students many years afterwards, who cross the road to have a conversation with you and say, 'look, you don't remember me, but this is what... and this was really important.' For me, that just keeps you going, and so this last 10 years of having no pay rise at all, can be slightly overcome by these kind of...

I suppose that's the thing about education; you know that is the greatest reward that you can get, is when you see somebody who didn't feel that they had much to offer, feel that they have and feel that your intervention has been important in that.

Interviewer: What supports you and sustains you.. you're in the university, in the academy, like you say, doing something differently. What supports you?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: What sustains you, if anything?

Respondent: Yes, well I think it's individuals. Committed individuals, people with passion. Again, I think it's that kind of war of position, where you have to find them and then you form those kinds of networks. The key thing there is not to confine yourself to the parameters of the university that you work for. Because these are just bureaucracies, that's all they are. They're buildings and bureaucracies. And our project of education is much more, much too important for it to be confined to buildings and bureaucracies. And so I... having those networks outside, getting out and meeting and networking and sharing ideas has been really crucial. In fact, for me, it's a bit like a kind of battery. You know like your mobile phone, you use it and then you recharge it.

And for me, those kinds of encounters are really important for recharging, because sometimes you might get...doubt can set in, yes? Or there is the allure of bureaucracy you know? And so to avoid all those things you have to- again, it's almost kind of back to that religious kind of metaphor, where people go to the church on a Sunday to reconnect with God or something. I suppose at one level, when you take on unorthodoxy, when you're fighting a system, you do need to be able to get access to those other individuals who share your passion, I guess, and keep you inspired.

Interviewer: Is there anything that would enable you to do more, to do use critical pedagogy more in your work?

Respondent: Yes, yes. One of...I do talk to colleagues who are often saying, 'I can't do anything because of the bureaucracy.' I think that some of that is absolutely true, you know the bureaucracy does wear you down. But I think some of it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as well. It's symptomatic of alienation, yes? And so I always say, again, go back to Freire, look at the kind of immense problems he was facing in terms of the kind of poverty and alienation, and everything else. Yet he was able to produce amazing results, yes? And so I don't believe that capitalism and neoliberalism is the kind of- it's not all encompassing, I don't think it's all victorious.

I believe that the system has its weaknesses and contradictions, so that helps me to hold onto that and I think often working within those cracks. What else? I think slowing down, for me, something that I've come to realise is that we all learn different things at a different pace, but the bureaucracy needs to standardise time. And so if we could slow things down, for example, what's wrong with a student taking five years to finish a degree, particularly if they're a single parent, they've got other commitments. This idea that you've got to get everything through in three years, and that's to do with the way in which finance is driving Higher Education. It's tragic.

I think the other thing that would help, is if we scrapped the student tuition fees, because what that has done, is it's changed the relationship between students and teachers. So they see us as deliverers of a service, and their education is a

commodity and they're purchasers. Which is tragic, because education is much, much more important than that.

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: I think that would really make a difference and that does create problems with students saying, 'yes, that's all interesting stuff, but what is the minimum that I need to do in order to get the maximum mark here?'

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Respondent: So that, I think, would be one, scrap fees altogether. I think the other one would be to try and develop a year one, if you're looking at undergraduate teaching. A year one curriculum that across all subjects has philosophy, critical thinking, critical pedagogy as a kind of central component of that curriculum. I think we've become too obsessed with vocationalisation of the curriculum, which ironically and tragically seems to be something that might not be fit for the future, because by the time you've learned a skill then that becomes redundant with artificial intelligence and the way in which knowledge is becoming universally available.

So in some senses, what would be a very progressive idea, is almost to spend much more of the course enabling critical thinking and linking critical thinking to critical pedagogies; for them to spend more time looking at big, major model ethical issues for humanity. The environment and things like that. So I would like to see a massive shift in the curriculum towards those kinds of questions, of ethics, of criticality, of meaning and of personal development, as much as we focus on subject specific knowledge.

Interviewer: Yes, and talking with students, what sort of strategies, methods, activities have you found to be most successful in leading to that critical awakening?

Respondent: Three things. I think there's a danger to see critical pedagogy as simply reducible to creative ways of teaching. I say that partly because, if you look at neoliberal management development, they use a lot of so called 'creative techniques'. Brain storming and flip charting and personal development plans, and all these kind of things, yes?. So I think that those activities are important but they have to have a context. And so I believe in offering students theory that's complex, but then enabling them to understand that through a dialogue. Using metaphors, I found very powerful, and so I think you can develop that capacity to use metaphor.

And for me, that's the creativity, using literary devices. I always think that teaching is a performance as much as anything else, so I'd certainly still hold onto the value of the lecture. Some people think that critical pedagogy is about getting rid of the lecture. No. Because dialogue can happen between two people, dialogue can happen in a group but dialogue can also happen within yourself. So if you're

delivering a lecture that encourages students to dialogue with themselves, then that's powerful.

I'll give you an example of that. If you had a PowerPoint slide and you have a picture, and you get the students to think about that picture and ask them, 'what does that picture tell them?' For me, you're still, as it were, in that traditional didactic mode but you are encouraging students to use the material that you're offering to engage in a critical dialogue. So that's okay.

Co-creation I think is really important and one thing I'd like to, I haven't got the courage to do this yet, is almost to handover the assessment to the students. It will come one day when they say, 'well, what's the assessment?' I'll say, 'whatever you want it to be. Here's what you've got to demonstrate. You decide how you're going to do that.' Maybe one day I'll do that, maybe the university might allow me to do that. So I think co-creation and where I have done that and obviously group work is really powerful there. Collaborative production, podcasts, posters, performances, poetry, there you are, Ps. Podcasts, posters, performance and poetry, four Ps, yes? They're very powerful and that's partly because I also believe in multiple intelligences. I don't believe in the singular notion of IQ, I think that's for me, one thing that critical pedagogy totally rejects.

But we do believe that people have different ways into the learning process. Again, I think some of that crude learning style stuff, for me, it's problematic, but I do like the idea of lots of different kinds intelligence. From spatial awareness through to emotional intelligence, through to, obviously, around a more abstract intelligence and things. And so I think that if you can use pedagogical devices that enable people to enter the process and co-create, that's a very powerful method.

Interviewer: Where do you see the critical element and the praxis element?

Respondent: That's important because, I suppose, what is the criticality? What is the critical in critical pedagogy? There I would say, I would go back to enabling people to understand how things that are outside of their own personal realm, as it were, in the public realm. And that could be both history, it could be the structures, of economic structure. The social structure, the cultural and they're... obviously Bourdieu's work around habitus is important. Marx's work around the structures of capital and all these things, the things that structure your life and your thoughts. You have to give them the tools to be able to make sense of that, and there theory is important.

So critical pedagogy is built on theories of human functioning and that could be both psychological theories, as to how we come to believe what we believe, right through to sociological theories. Learning about history. I would say that Marxist influences are important, feminist ideas, anti-racist ideas, so that they can have, the histories of new social movements, I think liberation movements, anti-colonial movements, peasants' movements, first peoples kind of movements, they're all important, indigenous peoples' movements, to building this broad theoretical base towards human liberation, I think, that's got to be it and the valuing of human beings.

Interviewer: Where do you see the praxis with students? You were saying sometimes it's 10 years down the line, they'll cross the road...

Respondent: I see it particularly with students who've been subject to what Bourdieu calls a 'symbolic violence', what Freire would talk

about as 'internalised oppression'. So it's students who have got onto the courses, maybe more mature students, maybe students who are Access students, or maybe even students who at school have not performed particularly well, okay. Or students who have performed very well as well, so you get both, in terms of maybe privileged white, middle class students who will come here and then, as I said earlier on, sometimes break into tears and say, 'look, I've just realised the whole other world that I've either been excluded from or I've excluded myself from.' And so they're tears of joy as well as tears of sadness. You do get that and that's very powerful. It's almost as if people begin to appreciate their humanity, it's that movement away from the alienation. Critical pedagogy should ...I think it is almost as if there is a kind of, they're beginning to love themselves, you know?

Interviewer: Critical pedagogy, how do you think we might harness it and mobilise it across the lifelong learning sector, given the climate we're in, have you any ideas about what's the best way to do that?

Respondent: I think that there is a danger, as I said earlier on, in seeing it as a technique. It's much more than a technique. Certainly we can identify participative learning process as creating the possibilities. And certainly, if you've been used to a very didactic and very alienating experience at school, then if you're allowed to participate and share your own feelings and thoughts, reflect, that's a better experience. I'm not going to condemn that but on its own it's not enough. I think it has to allow students to reframe their own theoretical understanding of their being and their self and the world around them.

We all have a theoretical understanding, as I say all human beings are intellectuals as Gramsci said. We are all philosophers, but there are different philosophies and I suppose one way to think about it is that we can equip people with new philosophical tools and theoretical tools to be able to develop a more sophisticated, nuanced understanding of their lives.

The important thing is that in critical pedagogy you never separate the personal from the theoretical or the political, it has to be that dialectical relationship, it's back to praxis. Thinking and doing, thinking and feeling, doing and feeling is a dialectical process.

Interviewer: How do we let people know? People who might want to practice in that way, but haven't, yes, who are so ground down by the system?

Respondent: Well, sometimes I think critical pedagogy can just...it's not...it is about validating people's situation, their feelings, yes? Helping them to understand why they might feel like that, but it's not counselling. Maybe that-

Interviewer: Yes, it's not therapeutic.

Respondent: It's not about personal therapy, although it certainly could make people feel better. It has to...the praxis means that it has to connect their own personal feelings, it's the personal troubles and the political, the wider structural. The personal has got to become the political. If it can't then I think it gets

stuck. So you have to, at some point get people to engage in activities and actions that can enable change to happen.

Interviewer: That's about getting colleagues across your institution or across institutions to engage?

Respondent: Yes, yes. Working on projects and they should be collaborative as much as possible. I'm not saying that you can't engage in projects on your own, I guess you could be a blogger or something in today's world. You could go on social media and be provocative, I'm not saying that you can't do that. But I think the social dimension is really crucial for critical pedagogy. Because it is about connecting, and because it is about affirming or expanding your sense of humanity. Then what makes us human is the fact that we are social beings. And so you have to enable those connections. And in fact people that get down and often get a bit pessimistic and worse, people often become disconnected from the social. Or certainly, disconnected at the psychological, emotional level even though at the physical level they might appear to be connected.

Interviewer: What message would you give to somebody or to people wanting to practice critical pedagogy?

Respondent: One of the things in my own life, is when somebody comes to you with an idea or a challenging thought, yes, welcome it, bring it on, don't run away from it, yes? Don't be disinterested. I think you have to take some risks as well. And so that's important to be inventive, to allow things to happen. I don't think transformation comes by being passive. There is a

paradox here, because in sense you could argue, how do you break out of a passive state? And I think that there is a paradox, I'm not quite sure what comes first, it's the chicken and the egg.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: But if I go back right to the beginning of this interview, when I said that it all began with me involved with this protest and it was a real something, a real material issue though that then led to my own being, being influenced and changed. So I think you have to be active and sometimes...see, this is the other interesting thing, is that as a teacher, sometimes I do exercise authoritarian power, if you like, and I do think, 'well, should I really be doing this?' An example might be insisting that students attend class, for example. But then I think that possibly as long as I use that as a means to a greater end and I can justify that, then maybe it's okay.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: So I suppose you have to then trust people as well sometimes, and sometimes it doesn't always work, you know?

Interviewer: Yes. In terms of my research, what gives life to critical pedagogy, is there anything more you feel you'd like to add or we haven't covered? Thoughts or reflections?

Respondent: I think what really gives life to critical pedagogy is a real enthusiasm, a kind of absolute belief that education has transformative...In fact, in some senses I believe that within any social system, within any historical periods, oppressive societies, even if it was a slave-based society through to capitalist or communist societies, whatever. It is that kind of power of pedagogy that opens up possibilities there. And so in some senses, the responsibility of pedagogues is huge because it is the one thing that can in its own way, kind of create those possibilities. In that sense, it's the last form of defence against the system. Once that goes, everything goes. So in that sense, you are on the frontline, I think, I always feel that I'm on the front line.

Interviewer: That's fascinating. Thank you so much. I feel quite moved actually, by some of the stuff you were saying.

Respondent: Yes. Well, you need to reflect on that, because I suppose these interviews and what you hear from different people will connect with your own journey, struggles and pain and suffering. And I think that's also some important data, so really reflect on that.

Interviewer: Yes, yes, that's very true.

Respondent: And so the autobiographical self is something that's ever present. I think in your methodology, that could be something to think about.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes. Yes, absolutely, comparing with autobiographical stuff.

Respondent: Yes, but also how you process that, you know, both like we're doing now really, I guess. The fact that you felt the need to share your own feelings, yes, which is interesting you know.

Interviewer: Yes, yes, thank you.

Respondent: Well, no, I think that's part of the methodology, I think.

Interviewer: Yes, I think so.

Respondent: I had a similar thing when I did my PhD, where I was talking to people and it was about how they felt they struggled against racism. They were talking about some very painful things and of course that resonated with my life. So it becomes...often these interviews were very emotional because there were lots of highs and lows in them and it's almost as if you're on this rollercoaster journey with the person. I think that's important because that also affects the way in which you might interview. Should you have a poker face or should you validate people?

Interviewer: Yes, yes, absolutely.

Respondent: And is that interview simply a data gathering exercise?

Interviewer: Is it co-construction?

Respondent: Is it co-construction? Is it critical pedagogy? What is it, yes? So I think that's something else that you might want to think about, can you separate the two?

Interviewer: Yes, and I found it very interesting reflecting on. Because I always thought my critical pedagogy was about politics with a small 'p', about equality. Equality and justice and hating inequality and oppression. And I reflected back, where did those values come from and I think, I'm not religious but I was brought up a Catholic. A very strict Catholic and I think my stuff comes from almost the liberation theology of Freire.

Respondent: I think so.

Interviewer: That absolute belief in humanity and human equality and humanisation.

Respondent: That's right, and heaven, this notion of utopia.

Interviewer: Utopia and heaven. Absolutely.

Respondent: I think so. Utopia, utopian ideals became very unpopular around the collapse of communism because in some senses communists were trying to create a utopian society. Pol Pot

and things like that, because the means were beginning to justify the ends, where you wipe out whole generations in order to create this utopia. Religious fundamentalist use the same thing, you know Islamic fundamentalists want to destroy the world in order to cleanse the world, yes? Utopia became a very dangerous...it almost became a dystopia. But I think in the face of neoliberalism, I think where almost the alternative to it, an idea of the alternative became ridiculed, utopian thinking, I think helps because it's not just what you're against, but what you're for. But it's not easy to define that. I think what a religious text does, it offers loads of metaphors and ways of thinking about that and which at the root of it is eternal peace, eternal self-actualisation, you know, all that kind of stuff.

Which actually resonates with some of these liberation ideas here. Yes, I think that it's interesting how critical pedagogy actually is taught in a lot of seminaries and places like that.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes.

Respondent: It's very popular amongst teacher education. Particularly from the influences that can be given, religious orders as well. That might be a criticism, I think that it may well be for some people that critical pedagogy is a kind of secular creed, secular faith.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: That might be something to look at, you know?

Interviewer: Yes, and that is some people's motivation.

Respondent: Yes, yes, yes. Freire hardly ever mentions Marx in Pedagogy of the Oppressed and people did challenge him and said, 'where is the Marxism in this?' and he said, well, it's everywhere. In his interviews he did say that he didn't underestimate the importance of economics and structural factors. But he also felt that pedagogy and education had the transformative capacity.

Interviewer: Which is his humanisation.

Respondent: I think so, yes, yes. And that's why I think his ideas... I think a lot of educationalists have a- why would you not be a teacher if you didn't feel that by through the teaching, education programme, you can't make a difference, yes? And then clearly, and I think in the '70s and '80s teacher education was- I think a lot of leftists were partly, maybe, just the way the education system was. And so... teaching and social work I think were two professions that you could have almost do in capitalism and still feel that, do you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Yes the teaching, education and that's where I think leftists gravitate, is towards those kinds of professions. And that's why I think there's been huge attacks on those professions by neoliberals. Because they see these are, again, the last-

Interviewer: Dangerous.

Respondent: Last line of defence. Trendy teachers and that's why they've introduced Frontline, Step Up, Teach First.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: They'll be after nurses as well, they'll say they're leftist.

Interviewer: Well, they've been after social workers, haven't they?

Respondent: Yes. Yes. Well, I think they've probably more or less got social workers now, though we're still fighting a rear guard.

Interviewer: That's wonderful, thank you so much. Now, let's make sure that we've saved this properly.

Respondent: That's alright. But certainly, I think I would suggest to you, in your methodology section or in your data section, somewhere actually record your own thoughts and feelings.

Interviewer: Definitely. I definitely will. Not autoethnography but, yes, absolutely.