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The Role of Critical Pedagogy in Place-based Education: An Extensive Literature Review

Emma E. Griffin

University of Wyoming, egriffi8@uwyo.edu

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**The Role of Critical Pedagogy in Place-Based Education:
An Extensive Literature Review**

By

Emma Griffin

Plan B Project

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for the degree of Masters in Science in Natural Science Education
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Masters Committee:

Samara Akpovo, Chair
Sylvia Parker, Co-Chair
Clifford Harbour
Michelle Jarman

Abstract

Self-discovery, sense of place, and experiential education have been largely disregarded in the United States' Education System, and replaced with test scores and standardization.

Incorporating place in education focuses students on the local and brings the ideas of “self” back to the center of education, while also improving test scores. This paper explores each of the place pedagogies, which I define as Outdoor Education, Environmental Education, and Place-based Education, examining and critiquing their effective use of place. Focusing on Place-based Education, which strives towards the use of place in education through sense of place and stewardship, I found that it disregards the social, political and economic components of place. The literature shows that Critical Pedagogy examines and questions those components of place within society and education, but disregards the environment. A bridge between Place-based Education and Critical Pedagogy would provide a holistic approach to place in education, and an inclusive educational philosophy that addresses all facets of place. Introducing Critical Pedagogy as a strategy to address the missing aspects of place, I claim that it has a foundational role in Place-based Education. Critical Narratives, as a tool for both students and teachers to examine their environmental and social connections to place, is examined as a practical application for the bridge between the two pedagogies. Guided by my research and past experiences, I then explore my own narrative, applying a critical lens to myself as an educator.

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to Self-Discovery, Sense of Place and Experiential Education

“Unless we understand how the twists and turns of life operate to make us, we cannot comprehend who and what we are. Without self-awareness, we are blind to registering the intertexture of other people’s inner life. Gracefully enduring personal hardships expands our minds to extend sympathy and empathy for other people. By casting our personal life experiences into a supple storytelling casing, we create the translucent membrane that quarters the fusion of our flesh, nerves, blood, and bones. Self-understanding is an essential step in loving the entire world.” – Kilroy J. Oldster, Dead Toad Scrolls

Life is a lesson of discoveries learning about self, others, and the world around us.

Discovering one’s self is the initial phase of this lifelong cyclical process. It involves understanding values and abilities, recognizing how those values influence life, and then reflecting on those experiences that structure who we are. Relationships are the common thread in the cycle. One builds relationships from shared values, which inevitably influence experiences and identity. Goodson and Gill (2014) in *Critical Narrative as Pedagogy*, discuss that self-discovery stems from these relationships, extending beyond human relationships to include the relationships one has with objects and ideas such as nature, religion, cultural, history, and society.

Self-discovery doesn’t happen solely in the human mind. It is deeply connected to place and the world around us. According to Semken and Brandt (2010), a person only understands themselves in the context of place. The connection that occurs between place and self creates a Sense of Place, which provides context for self-discovery and grounds experiences. “Sense of place encapsulates the relationship of humans to places” (p. 288). It is a way to connect to self (i.e., self-discovery) and connect to something greater (i.e., an aspect of place). In Aldo

Leopold's *Sand Country Almanac* (1989), he explores his personal connection to place, and the relationship he has with the natural world. He focuses on the connection with the ecology of the land, one aspect of place, where his morals and values are rooted. Encapsulating this connection and sense of place with a narrative, he reflects on the stories and journeys that influence his identity. What grew from these experiences is his "Land Ethic": An ethical call to human kind for a progressive view of the world and an understanding of one's relationship to place. Leopold's foundational narrative encouraged his continuing discovery of self, which fostered a deeper connection to the natural world, and called for moral responsibility of himself and human kind.

Sense of place arises in numerous forms and differs by person and place (Semken & Brandt, 2010). Every place offers unique qualities and each person experiences them in their own way. Spaces acquire meaning through human experiences, which broadens the definition of sense of place beyond the ecological facet to include the natural, social, cultural and political. (Semken & Freeman, 2008). Connecting to one of these facets of place has the potential to be an influential component of self-discovery, while providing the context necessary to broaden the definition of sense of place beyond the self.

Experiences are constructed through exchanges between people and place, and it is through these experiences, that we acquire understanding in relation to our self and others. John Dewey in his foundational writing, *Experience and Education* (1986), describes this exchange of understanding as a defining characteristic of Experiential Education, which is the underpinning of all education, and is centered on the idea that past experiences shape future ones. "The principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after"

(p. 35). Dewey states that the growth that arises from each experience, both past and present, which directs our future and growth arises through self-reflection, which is part of self-discovery. When reflection is absent, one travels from one experience to another without critically thinking about their experience, and the potential for self-discovery is diminished. The act of self-reflection provides students with the tools of self-discovery to grow, learn and explore new aspects of themselves in the context of the places and people around them.

Critical Narrative: Reflections on Self-discovery, Sense of Place, and Experiences

My Critical Narrative discusses the cyclical process of self-discovery, sense of place, and the experiences that have brought me to this point in my life. Woven into my research, I address my reflections and narrative, ultimately critiquing my connection to place, and the social and political role I play as an educator. During my senior year in college as an Environmental Studies major, I reflected on how I was shaped by the natural world. I wrote countless anecdotes about the connection I had with nature, about my experiences that have shaped my environmental ethic. Tasked with reading Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*, a keystone environmentalism novel, I was to write my own. Mimicking Leopold's structure, we were to reflect the stories that brought us to that point in life: the experiences we had, the places we had explored, and the people who had helped us get there.

My reflection started with my connection to nature through my spirituality. I discussed my lack of connection to the traditional religion that has guided my family's heritage, but that I felt most connected to a higher power, outside, in nature. This is indicated in a section of my original writing below:

Finding my faith was a powerful experience beyond belief. It was personally powerful and without finding one's self, one cannot be successful in finding their place within the community of others and the world around them. One needs to find something to believe in, something to have faith in, to be able to understand it, protect it, and have ethical manners towards it. Once this faith is found and put into action it is powerful beyond belief. So powerful, that it could move mountains. (Griffin, 2014)

I addressed my connection to place, community, and others; aware that once those connections are made they can be powerful enough power to move mountains, to turn love and care into action, and to find one's role in place. It was through these relationships that I had built with the natural world that I discovered myself, developed a sense of place, and experienced events that shaped who I was at that time. My connection to place at that time was influenced by my recent relationships and experiences, which have changed and grown since, and will continue to change and grown as I learn more. At the time, I had only completed a part of the cycle, blissfully unaware that I had more to learn about myself and place. I had only just started my narrative.

The Role of Narratives in Self-discovery and Sense of Place

In *Place, Survivance, and White Remembrance*, Greenwood (2009) states that “places shape our experiences of learning and becoming, and because our experiences of learning in turn contribute to place-making, place-changing, and place-leaving” (p. 1). Self- discovery is the initial step for experiencing the world around us and is continually being developed from our sense of place, which in turn affects how we socially interact, and learn from our environments (including the natural, social and cultural environments). Our life experiences that come from

this foundation of learning, becoming and connecting become our narrative: The stories that create who we are, and how we connect with people, place, and experiences.

According to Goodson and Gill (2014), a narrative can come in many forms, some of which tell stories of history and challenge, or others that ask questions about self and the meaning of life. Narratives hold their power in their many different forms that “allow us to examine life through lived experiences, and to question these experiences in light of their place in our life, their significance and meaning to our being and becoming a person” (p. 31). Narratives reflect one’s values and morals, as well as the places and people who shaped, transformed and challenged those values. Rooted in the connection between self, place, and experiences, narratives encapsulate human intentions and actions. Tzou, Scalone and Bell (2010) discuss in further detail the role of place in creating these narratives,

As individuals enter places, they interact not only with each other but also with the cultural narratives and resources available in those places. As individuals move within places and perceive those sites in certain ways, they construct places and fill those places with meaning. (p. 107)

The statement above suggests that one is unable to leave thoughts about self, community, and place at the door when entering a new space. As such, bringing lived experiences into a new situation influences the way that one gives meaning and purpose to place.

Statement of Problem: The Four Walls of the Classroom

Students walk into classrooms intertwined with the narratives that tell the world of their challenges, growth and experiences discovering self and place. Occurring outside of the four walls that traditionally define the classroom, that are disregarded in teaching. Haas and Nachtigal

(1998), in their short book of essays on *Place Value*, argue that when this traditional thinking of classrooms occurs, “schools are disconnected from specific places and life in communities, they cease to be public institutions, serving the public good” (p.5). Education is broader than a school building or classroom; it extends into every aspect of life and doesn’t happen independent of the world outside. It is a public act and involves self, people and places, as well as the social, political, and culture aspects that define them.

Brookfield (1995) highlights the social reality of classrooms stating, “Classrooms are not limpid, tranquil reflective eddies cut off from the river of social, cultural and political life” (p. 8). Classrooms cannot continue to be cut off from the democratic manners of society. They are mini social settings where students should explore their social, cultural and political connections. Narratives are the tool for addressing these issues, and allowing students to share stories of their growth and challenges they have faced in place. Narratives bring the outside world into the classroom and give students, teachers and the education system the power to start with the self.

Purpose: Pedagogies of Place

Giroux (2011) writes that, “pedagogy must always be contextually defined, allowing it to respond specifically to the conditions, formations, and problems that arise in various sites in which education takes place” (p. 75). Education needs to respond and adapt to current cultural, historical, social and political influences. This paper is grounded in the argument that education needs a pedagogy that includes the connection between self and place. In this paper, I explore the Place Pedagogies that are most prevalent in today’s education system: Outdoor Education, Environmental Education and Place-based Education. Of these Pedagogies of Place, Place-Based Education is the most progressive in including place in education. Sobel (2004) defines it as the

“process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach interdisciplinary concepts” (p. 6). PBE attempts to use the many facets of place as context for community learning, but disregards the complexity of place.

The idea of critically addressing all facets of a place is rooted in Critical Pedagogy, which “draws attention to the ways in which knowledge, power, desire, and experience are produced under specific basic conditions of learning” (Giroux, 2011, p. 4). Critical Pedagogy needs to be used when addressing the many facets of place and their connection to self. Investigating self-discovery through a Critical lens allows students and teachers to evaluate the knowledge, power and experiences that exist between themselves, place, and community. Arguing for a pedagogy that addresses all facets of place, including social, political, cultural, and natural, this paper presents a bridge between Place-Based Education and Critical Pedagogy.

David Gruenewald (2003b) discusses a similar pedagogy that bridges PBE and Critical Pedagogy: Critical Pedagogy of Place. Expanding Gruenewald’s idea creates a more intentional bridge between the two pedagogies. Critical Pedagogy is discussed in the Place Pedagogies, but it is regarded as an “add-on” with the focus on the natural aspects of place. Moving away from the idea of Critical Pedagogy as a side conversation, the ideas of questioning and examining one’s self can be the foundation of PBE. Allowing the space for educators to reflect on the life experiences they have, and that students have in specific places, allows for critical reflection on how those roles are played out in the classroom, as well as in the social arena beyond the four walls. This act of telling your story of life experiences, and critically reflecting on the power, desires and knowledge that comes from those experiences, strengthens the connection between place and self. As such, Critical Narratives can be a practical tool that brings attention to the importance of the many components of place.

Research Questions

1. What does the literature tell us about the role of Critical Pedagogy in Place-Based Education?
2. What does the literature tell us about the role of Critical Narratives as a tool for bridging Critical Pedagogy and Place-Based Education?

Chapter 2

Methods of an Extensive Literature Review

Procedure

The procedure for this extensive literature review is focused on gathering sufficient literature to support my argument, as well addressing my own Critical Narrative as an educator. Throughout the research process, I was reflecting and writing my own Critical Narrative, which allowed me to address my connection to place and the role that I play in the social, political, cultural, historical and natural facets of place. I began my research reviewing articles from my previous education in Place-Based Education, while simultaneously reflecting on my past experiences in PBE as an educator and student. Focusing on article that discussed place in education, I found three main Place Pedagogies, including Outdoor Education, Environmental and Place-based Education. Narrowing my focus to PBE, I addressed the claims that the pedagogy makes in the name of place in education. PBE articles provided information about sense of place and community-based learning, but there were gaps in in the delivery of PBE as a philosophy that includes all aspects of place. Through the exploration of this literature, I discovered others who critiqued the articles and addressed the gaps, which led me to Critical Pedagogy. Exploring the definition and application of Critical Pedagogy, I investigated its foundational role in PBE. During my research, I discovered that I also made certain statements in my environmental narrative that needed to be critiqued and challenged. My research and reflection led me to Critical Narratives as a practical tool that can be used to bridge Place-based Education and Critical Pedagogy.

Sources

My extensive literature review consists of approximately 40 publications including peer reviewed articles, educational texts, and practitioner articles gathered from the educational database ERIC, and educational references from previous courses and institutions. The following search terms were used: Place-Based Education, Critical Pedagogy, Critical Pedagogy of Place, Narratives, Self-discovery, Sense of Place, Pedagogies of Place, experiential learning, social justice, environmental justice, Critical Narratives, environmental education, outdoor education, contested places. Researching Place Pedagogies led me to the progression of place in education starting with Outdoor Education and leading to Place-based Education, which has a more progressive view on including place in education. While researching PBE and Critical Pedagogy, the definitions of both pedagogies were used as a guiding theme. Looking for inconsistencies in the definition of PBE, and how it aligns with the definition of Critical Pedagogy, created the bridge between the pedagogies. Researching Critical Narratives was focused on how they could be used as a practical application in strengthening the bridge. The following diagram is the heading of the matrix that was used to organize my resources and the information they provided.

APA Citation	Theoretical Framework/Definition	Research Question/ Purpose	Participants/ Audience	Findings/ Conclusion	How does this relate to your research?
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Figure 1. Reference Matrix Headings

Structure

The literature review is organized into four sections: a) Pedagogies of Place (including Outdoor Education, Environmental Education, and Place-Based Education) b) Critical Pedagogy c) The Bridge and d) Critical Narratives. This flow is shown in Figure 2. My research found that there is a progression between the place pedagogies, starting with Outdoor Education, which has a broad definition and purpose of including place in education. This leads into Environmental Education, and then Place-based Education, each focusing on a different aspect of place and enhancing the idea of place in education. The flow chart shows the progression, as well as the bridge between PBE and Critical Pedagogy.

Summarizing my argument and organizing my thoughts regarding each of these sections, I created a table (Figure 3). The table is meant to display the bigger picture of my research, showing the progression of the place pedagogies and then the bridge that occurs between Place-based Education and Critical Pedagogy, with the focus on definitions, purposes, learning outcomes, and critiques of each pedagogy. The table influenced my conclusions, but is provided for the reader in this section as a guiding tool.

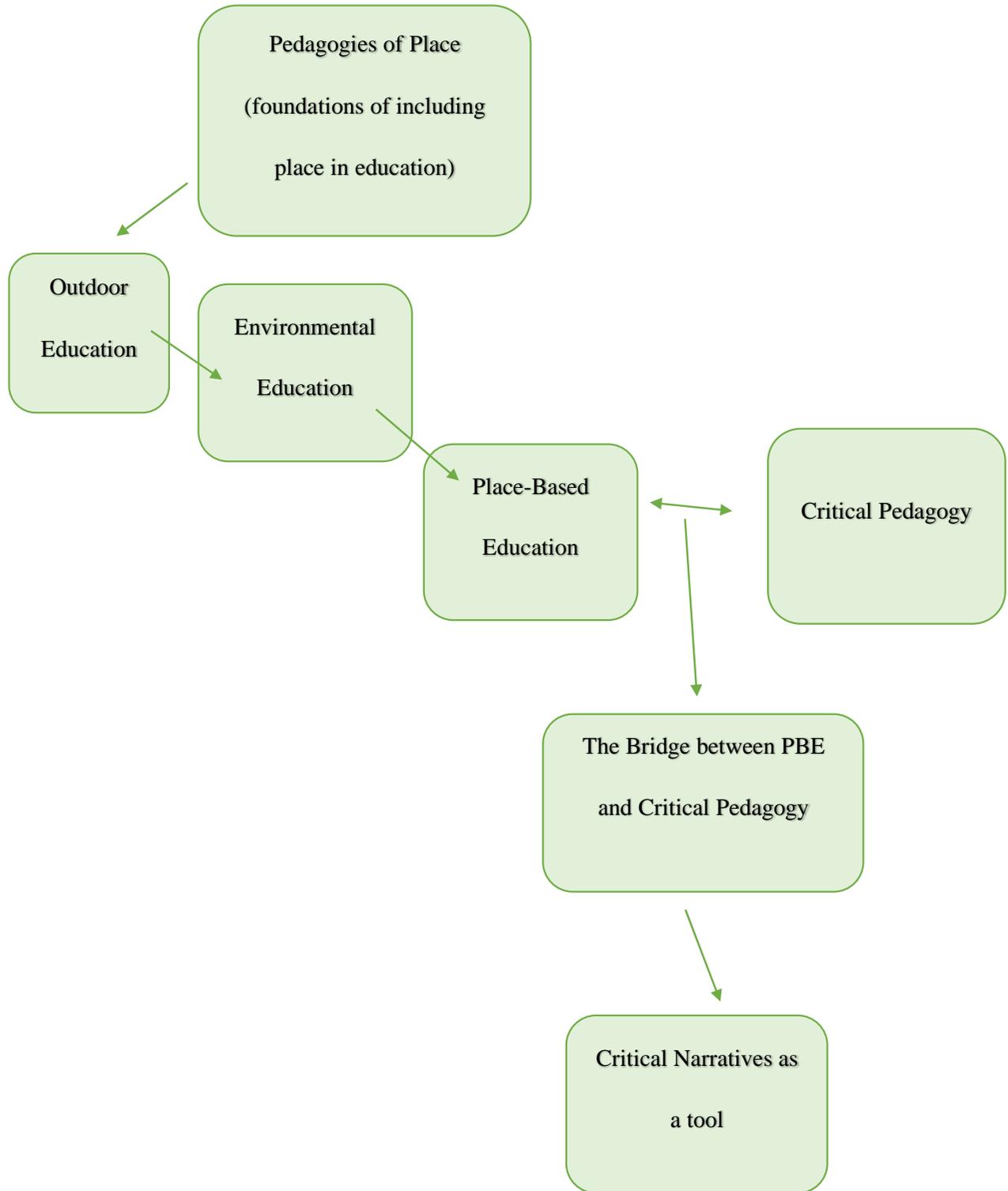


Figure 2: Literature review sections and flow.

Pedagogy	Focus	Locations	Purpose	Learning Outcomes	Critiques
Outdoor Education (OE)	Self	Outdoors (nature, especially wilderness)	Challenging & pristine setting to encourage personal growth	Focused on outdoor leadership skills, stretch/comfort zones, and interpersonal relationships.	The pristine wildness and constructed places of OE provides a false reality of place. OE misses the opportunity to engage with place in terms of ecology, natural history, or social issues.
		Constructed (ropes courses, etc)	Challenging, but predictable setting to promote comfort and access		
Environmental Education (EE)	Environmental	Various places (especially nature)	Develop sense of place & environmental stewardship	Primarily through science and critical thinking, students develop understanding, love, care and protection for the environment.	Takes an apolitical stance on a very political topic, disregarding the social, political, economic and social issues connected to environmental degradation.
Place-based Education (PBE)	Science	Through place	Primarily science content but social, cultural and economic context <i>can</i> be included.	Interdisciplinary, hands-on science learning through local natural history and ecology lessons.	Claims to be place-and-community-based education, but disregards the many facets of place that make a community complex. Leaves out difficult discussions on the social, political, economic, historical and cultural facets of place.
	Place	In place	Awareness of place and development of sense of place.	Connecting to place, primarily through exploration of the natural world.	
	Community & Self	For place	Stewardship, action, and local community involvement.	Develops a sense of self efficacy through community service learning projects.	
Critical Pedagogy	Social Justice	General or specific places	Examine the social, political and economic issues present in society and education.	Questions, examines, and challenges social relationships in hope to transform them, and ultimately being liberated.	Pedagogy was designed by the elite, with no discussion on race or privilege. Force primarily on economic and political issues.
Critical Narratives	Self and Place	General or specific places; formal and informal settings	For self	Develop awareness, define identity, become agents of change	Navigating the personal issues that arise for students and educators is challenging. Critical Narratives will look different for every individual, in different places and times, making the application difficult to implement.
			With others	Develops empathy, understanding & collaboration	

Figure 3: Summary of Pedagogies and Argument

Chapter 3

An Extensive Literature Review on the Role of Critical Pedagogy in Place-Based Education

The Definition of ‘place’ in Place Pedagogies

At the core of our education system, all learning was generally place-based: Students would learn about the land from the land. As the economy became more industrialized and technology advanced, the education system moved away from hands-on learning and its roots in place, eliminating the context where authentic learning occurs. David Orr (1994) states that the current educational system has become too absorbed in technology and economic growth. As such, education has lost its connection to place and the natural world. The educational pedagogy of Place-Based Education (PBE) claims to restore the connection between place, community, and education by bringing the system back to its roots in place. To fully understand the use of place as a context for learning, there needs to be an understanding on how place is defined within educational philosophies.

Including place in education requires intentional connections and deliberate teaching. Educators must understand sense of place, and the use of connections between people and place to foster the skills and knowledge needed for learning and discovery. The definition of PBE may vary depending on the source and the author’s interpretation of what it means to include place in education. All definitions have the same general idea: the context of place is an essential component of meaningful learning but is often disregarded in classrooms today. A deeper exploration of the definitions will reveal that each definition, even though it has the same main

purpose, varies in terminology and meaning, raising the following questions: “How do we define place?” and “What aspects of place are included”?

The definition of place relies on an understanding of the connection between people, places and experiences. Places are defined spaces, with the meaning and purpose resulting from human constructs. Places present certain meanings to individuals, which create connections that change according to personal experiences and perceptions of that place. This makes place a complex social construct, difficult to define, and to incorporate in education. There are many facets of place that stem from these different interactions, definitions, and purpose of certain spaces. There are environmental facets of place, but also social, political, economic, historical, and culture facets that need to be considered. The challenge of using place as a pedagogy lies in its intricacy. What facets of place should be the focus?

Gruenewald (2004) refers to place pedagogies, defining them broadly. For the purpose of this paper, place pedagogies are defined as Outdoor Education, Environmental Education, and Place-Based Education. These place pedagogies each have a unique way of incorporating place, highlighting a different aspect, and approaching the role of place in education differently. Outdoor Education has roots in outdoor leadership, while Environmental Education is focused more on ecology and science, and Place-based Education attempts to teach to community. There is a connection between each of them, an evolution of ideas, thoughts, and applications of place in education that build upon each other, each time strengthening the connection between people, place and experience.

The progression starts with Outdoor Education (OE) and the idea that personal experiences in the outdoors can provide a framework for specific knowledge and skills.

Woodhouse and Knapp (2000) write about the place-based approaches that can be identified in

Outdoor Education defining it as a way “to provide meaningful contextual experiences- in both natural and constructed environments- that complement and expand classroom instruction” (p. 2). OE takes the learning outside of the classroom walls and into the natural environment, usually the wilderness, to provide the students with meaningful experiences that supply context for their learning, moving beyond textbooks. Wattachow and Brown’s book, *A Pedagogy of Place* (2011), discusses the purpose of OE at its most basic level stating that it aims “to heighten awareness of and foster respect for self, others, and nature” (p. xvii). The learning that OE produces is focused on this relationship and includes lessons on calculating risk, how to be a leader among peers, and how to care for and love nature. OE learning is broader than other pedagogies of place since it is less focused on specific aspects of the outdoors, and focuses more on getting students outside of the classroom, learning without the support of print or electronic media (Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000).

The emphasis of OE is on the understanding of self and interpersonal relationships that can be built and strengthened in an outdoor setting (Wattachow & Brown, 2011). OE involves aspects of self-discovery through the learning of leadership skills, which fosters a sense of place in the exploration of beautiful scenery, and provides Experiential Education through outdoor adventures. It is these experiences that have allowed and maintained the status of OE to continue (Wattachow & Brown, 2011). These lessons and skills cannot be discounted, they have proven to be beneficial for many. A look at the critiques of OE shows that this learning is just the surface of including place in education.

Wattachow and Brown (2011) go on to address the “myths, dubious claims and the denial of place” that they have identified in the field of Outdoor Education (p. 26). They state that the definition of fostering a sense of self, others and nature, isn’t a sufficient application of place in

education. The implementation of OE leaves something to be desired in terms of the application of Place-Based Education. OE is associated with challenging hikes that stretch comfort zones, rafting down a narrow and rapid river, or working together to complete a ropes course (Brookes, 2004; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). These experiences occur in beautiful and pristine places, missing the opportunities for natural history and ecology lessons, and a deep connection to place. In the choosing of OE places, the education opportunities regarding connection to all places, natural history, and ecology are missed. Outdoor Education places and spaces hold potential for lessons of a higher caliber, but that's not the purpose of OE. The focus is on how places can teach about outdoor leadership and intrapersonal relationships while also providing adventurous and safe, outdoor experiences (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

Woodhouse and Knapp's definition (referenced earlier) of Outdoor Education states that it takes education outside of the classroom and into "natural and constructed environments" (2000). Wattchow and Brown (2011) argue that it is in these constructed environments that OE diverges from the connection to place. In the construction of environments, OE gives its students the false reality that nature is "accessible, predictable and affordable" (p. 27). When nature is fabricated it disregards the potential for dangerous, unpredictable, and unfamiliar physical and social terrain. Instead of providing context for the learning, these environments provide an inaccurate idea about place. All places are constructed, they are social constructs, defined by humans, but Outdoor Education constructs place to be something it isn't. For the most part, OE focuses on wilderness as context for its connection between self, others and nature, but pristine and protected wilderness doesn't give an authentic representation of nature, nor does the place that facilitates the rope course. "When nature is seen as a place it is messy, contested and

constantly changing”, only then can it be used as an authentic environment for including place in education (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p. 33).

Outdoor Education takes learning outside of the four walls of a classroom, with a focus on the self, which is a first step. It fails however, to address environments, other than wilderness and specific physically constructed places (i.e., ropes course), which disregards the complexity of the relationship between people and places, applying a safe and simple definition of including place in education. Outdoor Education’s narrow view on the facets of place leaves room for another place pedagogy to deepen the connection between people, places and experiences.

David Orr (1994) examines the purpose of education stating that its roots are in Environmental Education. He argues that all education should be teaching students how to create relationships with the natural world. Environmental Education (EE) explores how humans are a part of the natural world and in turn how our actions, or inactions effect natural systems, just as natural systems affect us. EE, as the terminology of the pedagogy suggests, focuses on the environment (i.e., the environmental facet of place). Gruenewald (2004), defines the purpose of Environmental Education “to provide people with the experience and knowledge needed to care for our environment” (p. 73). For EE, the knowledge needed to care for the natural world is primarily science-based. Students learn about natural systems (i.e., ecology) with the goal of understanding one’s role in those systems.

To learn how to make positive change and understand their role in the natural system, students must understand themselves and their connection to the environment. Students might explore their surroundings using their five senses or enhance their physical connection to the natural world with sound maps or sensory activities. The scientific process is introduced as a tool to enhance their connection to place, developing an understanding about the role that science

plays in nature, and the role that humans play. These lessons and activities aim to foster a sense of place and connection to nature, providing the necessary scientific knowledge that can nurture the development of love, care and protection for the environment. The North American Association for Environmental Education, states that “environmental education (EE) is a process that helps individuals, communities, and organizations learn more about the environment, develop skills to investigate their environment and to make intelligent, informed decisions about how they can help take care of it” (2017). EE strives to produce environmentally involved citizens through science learning, introducing issues that exist, and developing informed decisions making skills. EE deepens the idea of the connection between self, others and nature found in Outdoor Education, through the introduction of science education, environmental stewardship and a touch of environmental activism.

The main goal is to teach students how to understand, protect, care and love for the living and non-living that make up the environment; EE aims to produce informed stewards of the land. The ideas of EE have become a global, political topic, with the involvement of the United Nations and Earth Summits, making it difficult to limit its purpose to the natural world (Tilbury, 1995). The globalization of EE, that has been influenced by the various Summits, brought the idea to the foreground, but in doing so has made it a political issue. Citizens are expected to make informed decisions about how the environment is treated, maintained or exploited, making the learning of how to understand, love and protect the environment an important aspect of education (Stapp, 1969). The education of EE is important for the development of students who fight for and protect the natural world and it shouldn't be overlooked, but examined.

Environmental Educators need to examine what aspects of place are being disregarded in the

curriculum of EE, specially looking at the role that social and political arenas play in the development of environmentally aware and active citizens.

Gruenewald (2004) claims that “environmental education is disciplined by science and conventional environmentalism, it tends to neglect the social, economic, political and deeper cultural aspects of the ecological problem” (p. 94). He argues that EE focuses on science and the natural world, disregarding the many other aspects that influence the environment. EE leaves out the aspects of place that make it messy, contested and complicated: the social, political, cultural, economic and historical facets (Cole, 2007). Leaving these aspects of place out of the discussion, disregards the relationships that exist within these facets of place and the environmental issues and concerns that EE strives to address.

Environments inherently involve all facets of place. To ignore the influence that the social, political, cultural and historical aspects of place have on the environment is ignoring the root issue (Gruenewald, 2004). The environment is manipulated and controlled by human constructs (i.e., social, political, cultural, economic, historical influences), which means that the issues and concerns that are addressed in science and environmental education are results of human’s actions or inactions. EE helps guide students to understanding their role in the environment, but to fully understand that role, one must examine the social constructs and influences that exist (Cole, 2007). EE fails to explore the association between the exploitation of people as well as the exploration of the environment (Gruenewald, 2003). Many environmental issues have social, political, and economic undertones to them, which effects specific places, as well as the people who inhabitant them. This limitation of the pedagogy exposes a gap in the definition of place in education, which provides the space for a pedagogy that can address environmental and social needs.

Gregory Smith, a leading educational writer on Place-based Education (PBE) discusses its origins, stating that it has roots in Environmental Education, but it differs in the “attention its practitioners direct towards both social and natural environments” (2007, p. 190). The pedagogy of PBE focuses on using the natural environmental as context for learning that occurs outside of the classroom, while also directing focus on the social interactions. In short, PBE aims to connect schools with their local communities (Smith, 2007; Sobel, 2004; Gruenewald, 2003). Aiming to extend the classroom walls to include the outdoors and the community, it hopes that students can take the multidisciplinary knowledge learned in school and apply it in real world situations that deepens and strengthens their understandings. Sobel (2004), defines PBE in more depth stating that,

Place- based Education is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum. Emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences, this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students’ appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens.

(p.7)

PBE builds upon the principles and theories of Outdoor Education and Environmental Education that provide students with the tools for self- discovery and developing a sense of place through their lived experiences. PBE facilitates interdisciplinary learning with the purpose of guiding students to be productive citizens who understand, love, care for and protect the environment and the living and non-living that inhabit it. This education should not be

diminished, but examined with a question in mind: Is PBE an education that addresses *all* aspects of place for the benefit of serving *all* students?

The Claims of Place-Based Education

PBE makes certain claims regarding its methods of including place in education. It makes statements about connecting schools with communities, and including all aspects of place in the exploration of the environment, but in the practical application of these ideals, it rarely makes the connections that it intends. Broadly examining the claims of PBE, they disregard the connection between self, place and experiences.

Smith and Sobel (2010), in their collaborative writing about PBE, consider its roots in community, highlighting this focus in their definition, and addressing PBE as “place- and- community-based education”. Titling their book to reflect the emphasis, they begin by addressing five misconceptions and the corresponding reconceptualization regarding place-and- community-based education. Crediting the pedagogy to the increase of test scores and the ability to teach interdisciplinary concepts using the natural, social, and cultural environments, Smith and Sobel affirm that this approach to education doesn’t need additional prep time, simply a reorganization of time and thinking (p. x-xi). The authors emphasize a transition of thinking within the discipline of PBE that is smooth, necessary, and relevant to today’s education system. Including community in place-based education is logical, and strives to include an aspect of place that is disregarded in other pedagogies of place.

The Rural School and Community Trust, an organization that was at the forefront of PBE in the United States, states that

Place-based education is learning that is rooted in what is local: the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place. The community provides the context for learning, the students' work focuses on community needs, and interests and community members serve as resources and partners in every aspect of teaching and learning. (as cited in Smith & Sobel, 2010, p.23)

PBE's claim of community-based education is weakened when it disregards the complicated factors that make up community, which is frequently what happens when PBE is enacted in schools.

A community involves the commons, which in its most simple definition includes systems, spaces and relationships that revolve around shared resources. Hardin (2009) wrote about *The Tragedy of the Commons*, which discusses the economic downfall that can occur when people living within the commons choose self-interest over community wellbeing, thus resulting in inappropriate use of the shared resources. The commons, for the purpose of this argument, are all the environmental and human resources that are shared between the community, influencing life styles, livelihood, and interactions with others and place (Bowers, 2001; Haas & Nachtigal, 1998). With the inclusion of resources that make a living, the commons become an economic and political subject. When the shared use of the commons is managed effectively, the wellbeing of the community increases (Bowers, 2001). For the commons to be managed effectively there needs to be a strong connection between people and place. There needs to be an understanding about how people and places influence each other and shape economic and political constructs.

The many facets of the commons, like the facets of place are also messy and often contested. Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2003) define contested places as “geographic locations

where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontations, subversion, and/or resistance engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control of resources and access to power” (as cited in Tzou et al., 2010, p.110). The commons design communities, which are shaped by places, and made up of resources, and it is when the resources are dominated by one group that others feel oppressed. The historical narrative of the United States can be traced back through these relationships of domination and oppression involving the commons (Greenwood, 2009). One can’t discuss the construction of place or the involvement of place and community in education without addressing these stories of contested places, and the relationships that develop from the sharing of the commons.

Each individual interaction that occurs in a place involving the commons, involves different points of view, different experiences, and different social status. These contested issues, when approached appropriately, may build empathy, compromise, and cooperation. The use of stories, and the sharing of experiences that tell of the contested places, are important lessons to learn especially in the name of place and community-based education. Addressing how to share the commons with humans and non-humans, the pedagogy fails to examine how the commons are shared in terms of social relationships. Place-and-community-based education must address the contested, messy and politically and socially charged relationships that occur in communities.

In their argument for including place in Outdoor Education, Woodhouse and Knapp (2000), claim that PBE “emerges from the particular attributes of a place. The content is specific to the geography, ecology, sociology, politics and other dynamics of that place. This fundamental characteristic established the foundation of the concept” (p. 4). They claim that PBE’s curriculum has a foundation in the social and political dynamics of place, but PBE’s attempts to include the social and political dynamics occur solely through community based

education, which as stated before, doesn't fully address the complexity of social interactions. For example, a school and the local community might combine efforts to promote stream restoration and health in their community, but disregard the historical aspects of place, and the events that led to the degradation of the stream, sometimes overlooking where the stream is located and who is affected most (Null, 2002). It disregards the contested story of that community and use of resource. Gruenewald (2003), in his examination of PBE, states "place-based education continues to foreground local environmental study while neglecting the more politically charged cultural environment" (p. 149). PBE focuses on the local environment (i.e., local stream health), but without consideration of the social and political influences that made the stream unhealthy in the first place.

Diving into the stories that tell of the sharing of the commons and contested places rarely involve a romantic view of place, rather it is stories of hardships, oppression and derogation. Some classrooms and educators haven't designed their classrooms to take on these discussions, which creates a barrier for education in the name of place-and-community learning. Discussing the limitations of PBE in more depth, McInerney et al. (2010) address local activism, stating that it can be difficult for the local people to enact change in environmental and social issues, without an understanding and involvement with the larger government. Addressing why a stream is unhealthy in the first place, or why certain populations of people are exposed to more environmental pollution, opens conversations that are larger than the local community, larger than the school, creating hesitations for individual teachers and school districts.

Exploring these larger ideas of social injustice that involves race, cultural identity and the environment entails a dialogue that moves beyond traditional schooling, requiring deliberate teaching. Every individual has different experiences, different connections to place that need to

be addressed before one can care love and serve a place. PBE claims to improve student's engagement in their personal learning, and for the majority of students, PBE can achieve this. PBE has the power to connect students to their local environment, including their community, building a lasting relationship that continues to shape a sense of place, deepens their self-discovery, and assists in finding their role in the system. Lacking differentiation that would highlight individual's and community's social, political, cultural and historical concerns and interactions, PBE can't achieve the same success for all students.

PBE claims to cater to all students, engaging them in place and community, especially addressing those individuals of native descent. In their research about the role of Sense of Place in Place-Based Science Teaching, Semken and Freeman (2008) found that

Place-based Pedagogy is advocated as a way to improve engagement and retention of students, particularly members of indigenous historically inhabited communities (e.g. American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Mexican American) who possess a rich culturally rooted sense of place. (p. 1044)

Students come into the classroom with their own cultural and historical backgrounds; their own family traditions, cultural identity, and heritage that influences their sense of place. PBE has the ability to help students reconnect to their roots (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005), but the methods and pedagogy that is implemented needs to be examined with intention. Ellsworth (1989), when discussing her role as a teacher of diverse students, illuminates this with a question: How can a white, middle class teacher help a Native student find their connection to place? Educators can't expect to teach every student, with different cultural backgrounds in the same manner. Educators of a particular race can unintentionally teach perspectives that might influence and dictate how students should connect to place. The United States is based on a Western perspective that has

historically dominated, silencing underrepresented and marginalized groups such as native populations (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). A lack of cultural and historical awareness does not serve the purpose of reconnecting native descendants to their roots and often perpetuates privileged ideologies. Differentiation and awareness is needed to acknowledge and honor personal identities, cultural experiences, and relationships to place that native students hold.

Having awareness of the students' background and cultural connections to place allows, an educator to better understand the methods and approaches that must be addressed before PBE can be an effective pedagogy for all. It is unrealistic to think that all students can use place in the same context, given that each student has a different perception and attachment to place. Educators must also explore their own narratives to better understand their role in the systems of place, community, and education. One must address these connections within themselves, as well as in their students, before teaching to diverse populations with the pedagogy of PBE is effective.

Appropriately teaching to all students demonstrates that educators must understand and respect the personal meanings and attachments that each student has to place. "In Place-based teaching, the most important sense of place to consider are the personal meanings and attachments that exist between each student and the place or places offered as the context for the curriculum" (Semken & Freeman, 2007, p. 1045). Understanding that when multiple individuals, with varying connections to place, come together, contested places are constructed. When teaching in contested places one must question the cultural, social, political and historical facets of place that make them contested; one must question who is in the position of power and why (Greenwood, 2009; Brookfield, 1995).

When educators provide the space for students to question and examine themselves in relation to power and place, students can start to ask questions about who they are in the context

of place. “We need to think about learning pathways that create empowerment for youth- to question why their part of town contains the Superfund site, for example and work toward positive action (and learning) in their communities” (Tzou et al., 2010, p. 116). McInerney, Smyth and Down’s ‘*Coming to a Place near You?*’ (2010), evaluates the politics and possibilities of Place-based Education stating that one can’t expect a student to engage in learning that increases their sense of place, and foster a love of their local environment if they feel excluded or oppressed. We can’t let the contested nature of places exclude our students, and continue the cycle of oppression that occurs when we fail to address all facets of place. Without critical inquiry, and providing our students the opportunity to question their place, how do we expect them to make positive change? The learning that occurs from PBE should not be disregarded, but it also should be questioned. Educators must start to question and examine the social, racial, political, cultural, economic, environmental, and historical facets that shape a place in order to claim its appropriate and effective use of it as context to teach *all* students.

The Role of Critical Pedagogy

The limitations of Place Pedagogies allow for a pedagogy that is more inclusive, one that invites collaboration and open inquiry (Gruenewald, 2003b). Paulo Freire (1971) states that to be fully human, we must question. Questioning one’s role in the social, political and cultural aspect of place accentuates the existing relationships between power and language. Critiquing Place-based Education through the lens of a Foucault analysis, Gruenewald (2004) examines how power relationships are formed through the expression of words. An important form of language is inquiry, which he argues is lacking in PBE, specifically the question of “Who benefits and

why”? Inquiry provides a tool to critique the relationship between power and language as well as the relationship between people, place, and experiences.

A critique of these relationships offers room for improvement, rather than identifying a failure. Michel Foucault, the founder of the analysis, defines the role of critiques, stating that, critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out what kind of assumptions, what kind of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest. (as cited in Gruenewald, 2004, p. 93)

The critique of Outdoor Education, Environmental Education and Place-based Education in the preceding section strives for this analysis. Place Pedagogies have their purpose and time in education, proven to be powerful pedagogies for some students in specific situations. These educational frameworks hold privilege in their thinking, disregarding the contested facets of place. My critique attempts to address the aspect of Place Pedagogies, more specifically Place-based Education, that have become familiar and unchallenged, highlighting those claims in a new light that refocuses the Pedagogy to strongly connect self-discovery, sense of place, and educational experiences.

The claims of PBE that have not been questioned, need to be addressed, examined, and re-evaluated, which positions Critical Pedagogy in a vital role within Place-based Education. Critical Pedagogy is rooted in Neo-Marxist Critical Theory, applying Marx’s theory of socioeconomic analysis to present day. The theory analyzes the way that issues of class relations, and societal conflicts arise, are confronted, and maintained by present day society (Giroux, 2011; Bowers, 2001; Burbules & Berk, 1999). Paulo Freire, in his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1971), expands the ideas of Critical Theory with *conscientizacao* (translates to critical consciousness). Freire discusses the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, and

the economic inequalities that arise out of this relationship. Arguing that the relationship is complex, layered, and mutual, he states that both need to develop awareness in order to be liberated. The Pedagogies of Freire conjoined with Critical Theory, create a definition for Critical Pedagogy that allows the purpose to analyze the social, political, cultural and historical power relationships in today's educational systems.

Smyth (2011), writes about Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice, defining the Pedagogy as a place where "schooling becomes a project of helping students to see injustices and assisting them to locate themselves in relation to such issues and to see how society is structured in ways that both sustain and maintain those inequities" (p. 51). Critical Pedagogy highlights the social inequalities that are present in schooling and society, assists students in identifying their role in power relationships, and then translates their awareness into actions. For this to come to fruition, one must examine the issues of class relations and societal conflicts at three levels: historical, present, and future (Smyth, 2011). It is vital to look at all aspects of social conflicts that have transcended time, identifying the root cause, the ways in which it was maintained, and the means for change to occur in the future. Deep examination and questioning of social injustices, throughout time, is how relationships of power may be transformed.

Freire (1971) discusses the importance of the oppressed finding his or her place within the system. It is in the discovery of one's role; they can find freedom from the labels and titles that have falsely defined them. In the process of identifying one's role, the power relationships and language used to create and maintain that role are highlighted, providing space for questioning and the opportunity for change. Burbules and Berk (1999), state that Critical Pedagogy is

an effort to work within educational institutions and other media to raise questions about inequalities of power, about the false myths of opportunity and the merit for many students, and about the way belief systems become internalized to the point where individuals and groups abandon the very aspiration to question or change their lot in life.

(p.5)

Deprived of self-discovery, one continues in the system following those that came before, without questioning, without examining their position. One cannot challenge power relationships without awareness. One must understand their place and function within a system to confront it and transform it.

Critical Pedagogy is learning about social injustices and creating awareness, but then asking the questions, “Who benefits? And how can we change it?” (Burbules & Berk, 1999). It moves beyond simply learning about injustices, to analyzing in-depth, the role that one plays in the relationship of power that create, maintain and fuel social injustices both locally and globally. Inquiry illuminates the patterns of social injustice throughout history, assists one in finding their position within the system, and asks the question of how do we make change?

Addressing inequalities primarily through an economic lens, Critical Pedagogy lacks a boarder view on the social, political, historical and cultural inequalities that exist (Allen, 2004). The foundation of Critical Pedagogy in Marxism and Freire’s writing exemplifies the economic inequalities that are present in schooling and the relationship of the oppressed and oppressor, but disregard specific social, political, and historical influences. Critiques of Critical Pedagogy include the lack of race in the discussion, excluding the ideas of privilege, specifically that of White Privilege, in the discussion of social injustice (Allen, 2004). Disregarding race in the conversation protects the privileged perspective that designed Critical Pedagogy, fueling the

system of oppression. Critical Pedagogy must address the issue of race to be able to hold merit for all people, and provide an opportunity for all students to be able to examine, question, challenge and transform their connection to place and their position within the system.

While disregarding the conversation of race in economics, Critical Pedagogy also fails to address the role that the environment plays in economic injustices. Gruenewald (2004) makes a similar claim against Critical Pedagogy, also quoting Bowers (2001). “Indeed, it seems incomprehensible to write about social justice for women, minorities, and the economic underclass without considering the ways in which the Earth’s ecosystems are being rapidly degraded” (p. 3). One can’t fully address social justice without considering the effect on the environment; similarly, one can’t completely discuss environmental problems without addressing the underlying social, political and cultural issues that cause the degradation. Environmental issues and social inequalities run parallel to each other; disregarding one or the other exacerbates the issue.

The Bridge: Critical Pedagogy of Place

Throughout his career, Gruenewald, makes an argument that there is a natural connection between Place-based Education and Critical Pedagogy. Places are contested through the manipulation of human’s thoughts, experiences, and opinions, which makes both people and place politically, culturally, socially, and environmentally charged subjects. The unchallenged and unexamined claims of PBE that disregard the contested aspects of place are questioned with Critical Pedagogy, while the relationship between the local environment and communities is disregarded by the Critical and illuminated in PBE. The two Pedagogies complement each other, fitting together like a puzzle, strengthening the relationships between individuals, communities, and the places they inhabit.

The most influential work of Gruenewald, “Critical Pedagogy of Place” (2003b), is an educational philosophy that takes into account five dimensions of place: 1) perceptual, 2) sociological, 3) ideological, 4) political, and 5) ecological. It attempts to address the many facets of place through a Critical lens. Gruenewald identifies the purpose of Critical Pedagogy of Place through two processes: reinhabitation and decolonization, describing them as

- a) identify, recover, and create material spaces and places that teach us how to live well in our total environments (reinhabitation) and b) identify and change ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people and places (decolonization) (p. 9).

Gruenewald’s pedagogy bridges Place-based Education’s ability to use the local community and environment as a foundation of learning, with Critical Pedagogy’s exploration of power relationships, to create one concise pedagogy. Later in his career, Greenwood (2009)¹, broadly defines his Pedagogy as a way of “remembering a deeper and wider narrative of living and learning in connection with others and with the land” (p. 5). His work takes into account the power of the local environment as an education tool, the inclusion of all facets of place, and the use of ‘place-based inquiry’ to answer the question: “What in this place needs to be remembered, restored, conserved, transformed, or created?” (p. 5).

Critical Pedagogy of Place could be the solution to the lack of critical examination in PBE, and the exclusion of the natural world in Critical Pedagogy, but it is presented as an add-on, an additional component to Pedagogies of Place (Outdoor Education, Environmental Education, and Place-Based Education). Gruenewald (2004) states that education needs to move past the idea of EE since it is an add-on to an already “crowded discipline” (i.e., science and ecology units). In Gruenewald and Smith’s book, *Place-Based Education in a Global Age*

¹ Gruenewald changed his name to Greenwood later in his career.

(2007), there is a single chapter on Critical Pedagogy, and while its ideas are addressed sporadically throughout the book, it is not the central focus of PBE, but rather framed as an additional thought to consider with place-based learning. For our educational system to undertake the task of including all aspects of place there needs to be intentional space for it. That is, it should be a pedagogy that stands alone as a foundational platform rather than an additional piece.

The foundational idea of Place Pedagogies that attempts to inspire love and care for the environment can't be implemented without the consideration for the power relationships that fuel environmental degradation. One can't effectively teach about local stream's health without addressing who is being affected and why. Teaching students in a uniform manner that is disconnected from the social, racial, political, cultural, historical, and environmental experiences that affect each student uniquely, removes the possibility of exploring differences, and asking why. "If we are at all interested in place, pursuing the questions [of why] needs to become a prominent feature of educational inquiry" (Greenwood, 2009, p. 5).

Critical Pedagogy and Place-based Education have a natural connection between them, with the Critical as a foundation of PBE. Inviting open-minded thinking and collaboration into the discipline of Critical Pedagogy joins with the invitation of ecologically minded individuals to think more socially and critical, thus forming a bridge (Greenwood, 2008). Educators need to recognize and utilize this bridge to its full potential to help students understand themselves and others in the context of place.

Critical Narratives as a Tool for the bridge between PBE and Critical Pedagogy

To understand the subtle social tensions and conflicts that are highlighted with place-based inquiry, educators need alternative methods that progress beyond the traditional thinking

of learning (Cole, 2007). Narratives have the power to be a progressive tool that can help one understand the connection between people, place, and experiences, and the power relationships that occur between them. “A focus on the lived experiences of place puts culture in context, demonstrates the interconnection of culture and environment, and provides a locally relevant pathway for multidisciplinary inquiry and democratic participation” (Gruenewald & Smith, 2014, p.148). Narratives are an instrument that shares one’s lived experiences about connection to place, the power relationships that influence them, and their role in certain systems.

Narratives are comprised of a sequence of lived experiences and events “which take place within particular historical, social, cultural, political and individual personal situations” (Goodson & Gill, 2014, p.71). Highlighting the contested relationship between people and place in narrative brings the “critical” into the story. A narrative becomes critical when it addresses particular personal situations that have resulted in social injustice and oppression, questioning why they occurred, and discovering modes of change.

Exploring the definition and purpose of Critical Narratives, one finds that it depends on the person, place and experiences that are presented. For the purpose of this research, broadly giving Critical Narratives perimeters gives context to how they can be used as a practical tool. Critical Narratives are a method of reflecting on one’s story, deconstructing one’s lived experiences through reflection, and then reconstructing them with questioning and examining one’s role in the system. The purpose is to provide space for students and educators to examine who they are in the context of place and others. This definition and purpose of Critical Narratives can be applied to many different situations, with the application changing and adapting to specific experiences and individuals.

Educators, as well as students, need a tool that provides a learning pathway to open this discussion. Tzou et al., (2010) addresses the importance of narratives in the uncovering of social positions for educators. When teachers engage in their stories and recognize their social positions, they become facilitators of learning that creates a space of awareness. Several educational writers have addressed the role of teachers in the classroom (Giroux, 2011; Cole, 2007; Brookfield, 1995; Ellsworth, 1989; Freire 1971) emphasizing the importance of teachers identifying their role and addressing their privileged perspectives. Without gaining this awareness, educators teach to their perspectives, potentially continuing the cycle of oppression and social injustice in the classroom and beyond. “When we do not build learning pathways that connect these values to those held by learners, these narratives serve to obscure and marginalize some learners’ lived experiences and personal narratives” (Tzou et al., 2010, p. 112). When educators teach to the life experiences of their students, they move away from teaching based on their own lived experiences, providing an opportunity for growth and awareness, rather than the continuation of teaching to one’s own bias and privileged perspectives that obscure the stories of others.

The act of writing one’s narrative holds power, as does the sharing of that story. When we engage in dialogue that highlights and reveals our relationships with people and place to others, we facilitate learning that creates understanding and empathy. Supporting this claim, the literature states,

Critically dissecting cultural materials also empowers students to reflect upon their own commonalties and differences, and to respect their differences from others, while becoming critical of those who would suppress difference or present some difference

(such as race, gender, and class) negatively, stereotypically, and pejoratively. (Kellner, 1998, p. 107)

Using Critical Narratives as a tool encourages self-reflection of one's own lived story and the similarities and differences that exist between them and others around them. Learning and exploring the relationships that exist for others builds awareness for those who hold different roles within the system. Building space to examine, it focuses on where individuals' stories overlap, influence, and intersect with others in terms of social relationships, shared experiences and perspectives. Goodson and Gill (2014), write about *Critical Narratives as Pedagogy*, presenting the idea that when students critically reflect on their own lived experiences, as well as listen to other's stories, they construct a learning that involves empathy, understanding and dialogue. This understanding builds a community that supports and encourages the individuals to recognize injustices and transform the social constructs that have been built to maintain them. When students gain the appropriate awareness, and understanding of social conflicts and relationships, they can start to develop as agents of change. The space created from writing and sharing critical narratives opens an opportunity for students to see themselves as a part of the system that can create change. The literature supports this claim stating:

by speaking, in their authentic voices, students are seen to make themselves visible and define themselves as authors of their own world. Such self-definition presumably gives students an identity and political position from which to act as agents of social change. (Ellsworth, 1989, P. 13)

In other words, exploring critical narratives (1) provides a learning pathway to increase self-discovery and sense of place (Goodson & Gill, 2014; Ellsworth, 1989), (2) an opportunity to recognize one's position in the system (Cole, 2007; Kellner, 1998; Ellsworth, 1989; Freire,

1971), (3) use place-based inquiry to question roles and relationships (Gruenewald, 2003), and (4) fosters an activist identity (Freire, 1971). The intention is to highlight connections that build relationships as well as disconnects that are traditionally ignored and concealed. Critical narratives illuminate every aspect of one's story, bringing forth the good and the bad, to be examined. What aspect of our story has become familiar, unchallenged, and disconnected from the reality we wish to hold?

Freire (1971) discusses the idea of Praxis, stating that the word has two dimensions: "reflection and action" (p.68). PBE's focus in local place and community in partnership with Critical Pedagogy's ability to highlight social injustice, has the potential to facilitate Praxis. The narratives that reflect on one's role in the local environment, the social, political, cultural, historical, and economic aspects of place, need to be initiated before the action. Critical Narratives provide the reflection of Praxis while the Place-based and Critical Pedagogies create the action through their learnings. Critical Narratives need to be the foundational tool in order for reflection to motivate change.

This balance between reflection and action is crucial in the balance between verbalism and activism (Freire, 1971). A focus on reflection only creates students who can verbalize the injustices in the world but have no pathway for changing it. A focus on the action of injustice lacks the support of reflection and critical examination. Critical Narratives are a tool for the bridge between PBE and Critical Pedagogy, which constructs a learning pathway that encourages reflection and critical inquiry, while also providing space for change and action within the many facets of place. Similar to the cyclical process of self-discovery, reflection and action follow a familiar path. It is important to start with reflection, building an appropriate pathway for action. After action is taken, it is important to maintain balance and return to reflection and contemplate

how the experience will influence future self-discovery, sense of place and personal experiences. The act of reflection allows for compassion in the self. Being able to see and understand that one's experiences and knowledge changes in different times and space, allows for one to be forgiving and understanding to those past experiences, while also growing and learning from them. This is important aspect of reflection if one is to continue examining and growing from this process.

A purpose of Critical Narratives as the bridge between PBE and Critical Pedagogy is to uncover, challenge and question the aspects of one's own story that have gone unnoticed and unexamined throughout time. This method of reflection and action is an educational tool for all. It is not just for those who are oppressed, or minority populations, or those with a privileged perspective. Giroux (2011) discusses the role that the critical educator plays in assisting students in this reflection journey, stating that "the aim of the critical educator should be to raise ambitions, desires, and real hope for those who wish to take seriously the issues of educational struggle and social justice" (p. 177). It is for all who want to explore their story in terms of social and environment injustices creating a pathway of change.

We can't make assumptions about one's privilege, relationships of power, roles within the system, or personal narratives. The aim of Critical Narratives is the opposite, with the focus of uncovering, challenging and critiquing the assumptions we hold, the positions of power we have (or don't have), and the actions (or inactions) that have resulted from our relationships with people, place and experiences. The point is to share our narrative with raw and authentic reflections that question and rework the character we play, as well as the characters that influence us.

Chapter Four

Discussion

Conclusions on the Bridge between PBE and Critical Pedagogy

If the purpose of Place-based Education is to use place as a context for interdisciplinary, hands-on, community learning, and the purpose of Critical Pedagogy is to question and examine the social, political and economic aspects of society present in schooling, then the purpose of a bridge between the two is to use all facets of place as the context to engage in relevant learning that involves place-and-socially-based inquiry. The logical bridge of PBE and Critical Pedagogy strives to move away from the monoculture education system of the United States to an inclusive pedagogy that address *all* facets of place for the benefit of *all* students who wish to engage with place making and transforming.

The pedagogies presented in the literature review have overlooked an aspect of self or place in the attempt to incorporate place in education. Outdoor Education aims to teach in the name of self, others, and nature, exploring beautiful landscapes and constructed places, but misses the opportunity to engage in deeper academic discussions. Environmental Education takes advantage of the missed opportunities that OE chooses to not explore, using science and critical thinking to achieve the development of environmentally conscious citizens. The literature suggests that EE neglects to dissect the environmental issues it teaches about leaving the social, political, or economic influences unexamined. This dissection is vital to education and its ability to produce citizens who love, care, understand, and protect all components of a place.

Environments encompass many facets of a place, including, but not limited to, the social, political, cultural, natural, racial, and historical. Place-based Education, which attempts to

incorporate the locality of place into education, claims to build from EE's connection to the natural world by adding the social component. It uses interdisciplinary learning to foster a sense of place and stewardship primarily through science education, with the hope of producing stewards of the land and community. PBE literature recognizes the need to include the many facets of place, using Critical Pedagogy to incorporate the social, political and economic issues that EE and OE disregard in their philosophies. The critical is considered an add-on to the discipline of PBE, taking away from its potential to include all facets of place. Building from Gruenewald's argument, I assert that there is a natural bridge between the pedagogies of PBE and the Critical that when facilitated with intention can enhance the philosophy of including place in education.

A holistic approach to incorporating place in education is warranted in today's education system. Bridging PBE and Critical Pedagogy, should be the foundation of education, providing a learning pathway that involves self-discovery, a sense of place and the facilitation of citizens who are aware of all of the facets that place offers. The literature demonstrates that Critical Pedagogy has a role within PBE as a tool to question and critique the use of place, but it requires deliberate practices and intention. Fitting together like a puzzle, the pedagogies supplement each other's idea with elements that were unchallenged by the former. The role of the critical is to uncover and challenge the aspects of Place-based Education that have gone unnoticed and forgotten. The role of the Critical needs to move from an additional component, to the main component of PBE. A foundation of the critical in the teachings of PBE provides a space for the self to be highlighted, and challenges the idea that education is contained within four walls.

Narratives have the power to uncover the aspects of place that make them contested in shared events and individual experiences. In the act of writing one's narrative, reflection

uncovers and examines the experiences and relationships that influence the story. Sharing those experiences and reflections with others facilitates understanding, empathy and collaboration. Examining one's own narrative, in comparison to others, suggests that there are multiple ways of experiencing, interpreting and appreciating people and places. Examining relationships with the natural world, within communities, within power relationships, allows an individual to reflect on the social, political, racial, economic and environmental facets of place that have influenced their learning pathways.

Theoretically, the idea and practice of using Critical Narratives as a tool to bridge PBE and Critical Pedagogy is logical and comprehensible. Understanding one's connection to place, the relationships, and the experiences that have influenced who they are, can be reflected on and shared in the form of a narrative. Once one examines this tool in its practical application, it becomes as contested and complex as the places that influence it. Inquiry about one's privileged perspectives and racial identity are difficult questions to explore. It involves understanding your privilege (or lack of), accepting it, and then working towards awareness. The role of narratives is to bring these questions into schooling with mindful and deliberate awareness.

My intent is not to overgeneralize the ideas of Place-Based Education or Critical Pedagogy, but to examine the role that Critical Pedagogy plays in all facets of place in the discussion of education, and how it can be utilized to enhance PBE. The critiques of PBE, Critical Pedagogy and narratives are considered in my argument, recognizing that having an awareness of those critiques assisted me in avoiding the language and concepts that undervalue the use of Critical Narratives and the potential power they possess. In the next section I will present my own Critical Narrative as a practical tool, exploring and validating the use of narratives in education.

Implications: My Critical Narrative

I started my Gunnison County² Almanac, as my environmental narrative, with a quote from Aldo Leopold (1949), in which he discussed the power of moving mountains. In the Old Oak section of his own Almanac, he described the faith that his dog had in him to keep him warm and safe, elaborating on how that faith can move mountains. The theme of faith and movement was woven throughout my “Land Ethic”, focusing on the power that education can have on society, and its ability to inspire change, to move mountains.

Leopold’s “Land Ethic” discussed the disconnect between people and places, stating that we don’t consider ourselves a part of the natural community, but a separate community that dominates and conquers the natural world. Leopold’s call for all of us (living and non-living) to cohabitate in harmony with equal rights has not happened. Some might live their daily life in this manner, but as a society we still haven’t fulfilled his call to action. There is still disconnect and domination and oppression in many of our relationships with the natural world and especially within human communities. We need to address the human relationships: the relationships with the self, others, and place that result from lived experiences before we can start to care for and love the natural world.

One of Leopold’s classic quotes from the Sand County Almanac is, “we can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in” (p. 214). Agreeing with Leopold, I challenge the thinking to extend beyond the natural world, to include other aspects of community: human constructs and interactions involving the social,

² A county in the southwest region of Colorado, home to Western State Colorado University, and where I completed my Undergraduate Degree in Environmental Studies.

political, economic, historical and environmental aspects. It seems we can't be ethical towards other beings unless we see, understand, love and have faith in them as well.

This argument, and these thoughts have only recently developed. Like Leopold, the Land Ethic I wrote doesn't address the social, political, cultural and historical aspects of a community. It focuses on the environmental, but rather than focusing on ecological communities, I choose education. Discounting my previous narrative would take away from the knowledge and understandings that I had at the time. There were many things I didn't know about education, about the world, about myself, and disregarding my thoughts at that time would be disregarding who I was at that time. That person might have been a little naïve and unaware, but has influenced who I am today. Writing my Land Ethic on Environmental Education led me where I am now, so rather than dismissing it, I am going to critique it. I want to take those foundational words, some of which I still believe and some I have developed more fully, viewing them through a critical lens. The following is a critique of my environmental narrative, which takes the words I wrote as a Senior in College, examining it, and then adding or validating them with my experiences since.

My Faith in Hope and Love. “Faith can move mountains- can create change. All we need is hope and love” (Griffin, 2014). I wrote these words in relation to my connection to place through my spirituality. The natural world supplies me with faith, with hope that humans, like nature, are resilient. I still believe in the power of faith, hope and love, in the ability to look past the hate and anger, and see the good and beauty in life. In a recent experience, I was able to travel to North Dakota to support the fight against the DAPL pipeline, learning that there is power in hope and love, but it may be a long and difficult journey.

My motivation for going to Standing Rock was a fear of being a hypocrite. How could I write about moving mountains and the desire to inspire change, or be engaged in science education and social justice without participating? How could I sit in an office and write about Place-Based Education and Critical Pedagogy and not do something about issues that were happening in my field of study? I had to go. Driving into the camp, I was nervous. I was nervous about being a White girl with privilege entering into a place sacred to Native Americans. I was nervous about saying the wrong thing, of being looked at as someone who doesn't belong. For one of the first times in my life, I had fears that minorities have on a daily basis.

These fears blinded me from seeing the whole experience at times, not because they came true, but rather the opposite. It was, and is, a Native American fight for their rights, fight for respect, but it was also a fight for the people, for water, and against the oil industry. It is a Native American fight that every human has a right to fight along with. In that inclusion, I felt the love and hope. Every morning, the Elders would address the camp with updated news, a plan of action for the day, and appreciation for everyone who had come to fight with them. There was gratitude and love for all. I believe that Native Americans have every right to feel hurt, distrust, and angry towards the non-Native populations who have taken their lands, killed their people, and stolen their resources. In the continuation of this abuse and oppression, I was blown away by the ability of some to still hold love and hope in their hearts and minds. How does someone take anger and hate and turn it into love?

After leaving that experience, my attention was brought to the fact that I had been blinded by the love, and missed the opportunities to see the hurt and anger. If I had stopped and listened, I could have seen that it was the Elders who spoke of love, and the younger generations who spoke of anger and hurt. Is that the answer? Does it take time; the span of a lifetime, to start

to understand that there is more power in hope and love than in hate and anger? I might have been blinded by love and acceptance, missing the hurt and pain that existed, but I still believe that it is when those feelings of oppression are heard, shared, and acknowledged, they can be transformed into love, which is where the power lies. Narratives can provide the opportunity to be heard and respected, understanding where that pain comes from, and the uphill journey of turning it into love.

Thousands of people wouldn't have gathered in solidarity with the Standing Rock Reservation without hope. From this hope grew love, compassion and ethical manners. That hope and love didn't come from thin air though. It was built from the flames of hate, anger and oppression. It was fueled by the anger that had built up over centuries of mistreatment and disregard for the Native Communities. This shouldn't go unrecognized, but neither should the love. Coming from those feelings of oppression, makes the love and hope powerful. In the end, it is love that will change the world, not more hate.

I recognize that my privilege is showing but I still have faith in humanity. I still believe in the power of hope and love. I have not known the struggle of turning the pain of oppression into positive thinking. I don't know what it is like to be afraid on a daily basis and I don't know what it feels like to have anger growing in your heart. This limits my ability to help change that pain into something different. All I know is from my experiences, and what is in my heart. All I can do is share that, and continue to have faith in hope and love.

Expanding my Awareness of Connection to Place. Growing up in the outdoors, in a small and safe neighborhood in the suburbs of St. Louis, my friends and I would explore the tall, old trees surrounding my house, and not once did I ever feel afraid. Not once did I wonder about the strangers passing by, or the noise of the busy street. I loved being outdoors with my friends

and that's where we spent most of our time. As I got older, and was introduced to the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, I learned what it was like to be in a different type of outdoors. I enjoyed it just the same, maybe more, and once again I never felt unsafe. I never hesitated to take a hike by myself, or to explore the foothills with friends after school. In my environmental narrative, I wrote about one particular hike where my connection to place, to Colorado, to the mountains grew and flourished. Nature was my safe place, my place of comfort. I would go to the mountains to ponder, think and reflect. This personal connection to place is the result of certain privileges I hold, which I was unaware of at the time. Exploring my connection to place and the privileges I hold through a critical lens allows me to help others connect to place through education. In this journey, I have learned that it is important to remember that awareness of those privileges doesn't invalidate my connection to place, but simply brings awareness and understanding to the processes of self-discovery and sense of place.

We are a product of our environments and experiences, which means my feeling safe and protected within nature, is due to my experiences in nature, which have been positive and welcoming. I have never felt oppressed because of environment degradation, afraid of a business dumping trash in my backyard, or hesitated to drink the water from the tap. My communities haven't been designated as superfund sites because I live in the privileged community of "Not My Backyard." My connection to place has been influenced by these experiences (or lack of) and I cannot assume that my students or peers can connect to nature in the same manner. Prior to my year at Teton Science Schools, I was mostly oblivious to the ideas of privilege, especially concerning the environment. The following stories highlight experiences where my understanding and awareness grew.

Teton Science Schools (TSS) offers a great experience in the name of Place-Based Education and Professional Development. As graduate students, we were provided a multitude of tools: naturalist's tools, environmental tools, ecology tools, art tools, leadership tools, and the list goes on. They are all valuable skills to acquire and I strive to use them deliberately, and with intention in my teaching. My year at TSS was transformative, and the gratitude I have towards the organization, the people and the experience is tremendous. I wouldn't change my experience, but in my journey, I think it is important to reflect and think of ways to continue to improve and grow. I believe that TSS would support this since the skill of critical thinking and inquiry is one of the many tools in my TSS toolbox. The intention is not to diminish the education that TSS has given me, but to critique it with the new tools that I have acquired.

Students come from all over the country to participate in PBE in Grand Teton National Park including students from low-income families, affluent communities, big cities, and rural towns. The diversity that passes through TSS might not be visible or staggering, but it is there, deserving attention. During my time at TSS I didn't fully understand how to address that diversity and differentiate in my teaching, but looking back I see the need. The opportunity for PBE to bridge with Critical Pedagogy with the assistance of Critical Narrative is evident.

The welcoming gathering for students and teachers coming to TSS was generally the same for every school. Depending on my peers we would add some style, but we had a script and we kept to it. We causally mentioned, and sometimes teased about the fact that the scariest thing "out there" was the bears and wolves, not people. We, myself included, would brush over the parts about how we don't lock doors at TSS, and that everyone can walk through the buildings freely. We talked about why we take off shoes, and where we would go in case of a fire. It was a part of the script and to be honest, after about the 5th time, most of us had it memorized. There

was very little differentiation for the students who came from rural towns or big cities, or from different income status, and I personally didn't see the need at the time. I hadn't stopped to question or examine what I was saying; I simply followed along, until my attention was drawn to the fact that not everyone feels safe in the outdoors.

For some students, this experience was their first time being in the nature, a place that seemed endless and vast, and not in a comforting way. For some students, their surroundings are consumed with noise and tall buildings, not by quiet, large spans of tall grass and mountains that look like the postcards they see in stores. These qualities of the Tetons provided me peace and serenity, but that is based off of *my* connection to place, not theirs. Thinking about how I felt when traveling in New York City, overwhelmed by the bright lights, loud traffic, and thousands of people, I started to see how we are conditioned by our surroundings. What is comforting to one is not for others. I felt safe and protected in nature so the need to lock doors seemed silly, but for those students who came from a big city where burglary, break-ins and murder were more common, not locking the door was scary and uncomfortable. This consideration was not fully taken into account during our introductions at TSS. Our privileged perspectives about place and safety were showing.

During my education at TSS we engaged in course work about natural history, ecology, and teaching strategies. We learned how the Tetons were formed using Geologic and Glaciation terms, we discussed the progression of settlers into the area beginning with Native Americans and ending at present day. All of these lessons were delivered through a privileged perspective. Briefly mentioning Native Americans who lived on this land, and the original names for the Tetons, didn't prepare me for teaching Native American students about an area that their families once occupied. It didn't prepare me to answer a question about a mountain named "Sleeping

Indian,”and it didn’t prepare me for a student to call me out on how I was teaching them a “White man’s history.” My cultural and social awareness and understanding was not examined and reflected on prior to that experience.

The Wind River Reservation, located near Lander, Wyoming resides not far from Jackson. We had the opportunity to host a group of students from one of the High Schools on the Reservation, and I was looking forward to the experience. Prior to this group, we had mostly taught affluent, predominantly White schools from the Midwest and East Coast. There was nothing wrong with those experiences, but I was interested in teaching different populations. Prior to this experience we discussed how this group would be different than others, not in a racial way, but because their schedule and desired outcomes were different than most schools. Rather than a focus on science lessons, we were to focus more on connection to place.

My lesson plan included activities like sound maps, observation skills for “reading” the landscape, and local history. The first day, my co-teacher and I planned to introduce some naturalist skills they could use for the rest of the week. As we were making observations about the landscape, the topic of naming the Tetons emerged. I started telling them the names of the peaks that I knew off the top of my head, and directed the students to look at the illustration in their journals to find out the others. After a few seconds, one of the girls said to me that she didn’t need to know the names of the “White man’s” peaks, because she was taught different names of the peaks. She continued by calling me out on the fact that I was teaching “White man’s history” to them, stating that this land isn’t even mine, but theirs. I didn’t know what to say. I was in shock and mostly because she was right. She called me out and I was in the wrong, but as a new educator I didn’t know how to handle 1) a situation where a student calls you out and 2) a moment where I was teaching from my privileged White perspectives.

After a few seconds, with their teacher addressing it, I was able to collect myself a little and ask her what history she knew. I genuinely was interested in knowing, what were her names for the peaks? I wanted to know her perspective. Reflecting on that moment, allowing the space for her to teach me helped facilitate a moment of learning for me, and the development of mutual respect between us. Throughout the week, she continued to challenge my thinking, my perspective, and me as an educator, providing me with knowledge that I will never forget. She is a student I will never forget. Towards the end of the week, she started to open up to me, telling me her story, her dreams, and desire to be something more than a “Res Kid.” I wish I could tell her how much she helped me grow as an educator and person. It saddens me to write, but about a month after that experience, we got news that she had been killed in a car accident. This news shook my teaching team and the TSS community greatly. I personally had only begun to understand and appreciate the experiences from that week, let alone her influence on me. It has now been over a year, and I finally feel like my reflective self has caught up with reality. She opened my eyes to new perspectives. I will always be grateful.

She taught me a great deal about my privileged perspective and ultimately led me down the path of writing my own Critical Narrative. This specific moment for me, speaks highly for the need of Critical Narratives in education. My lack of understanding of my privilege and of my perspective on place, allowed me to appear ignorant. I was projecting my privileged perspectives and it was culturally, historically, and socially wrong. TSS offered us training on privilege, which I had participated in, but we didn’t have a formal opportunity to apply that awareness to our teaching, to our educator selves. I wonder, if I had been trained to reflect on my perspectives and critically examine where my privilege lies within my teaching, would I have gone into that week with a different perspective, with more knowledge on how to teach to that group of

students. How would the experience have been different, if rather than starting with my stories and interpretation of that place, I had started with theirs?

Moving Mountains. I am just now starting to learn what it means to move mountains. I have theoretically written, both in the past and more presently, about what it means to move mountains, but I still have no idea how *I* can do it. The journey of writing my environmental narrative in College was my foundation, this Critical Narrative is the next building block that will continue to grow and change as my experiences and awareness develop. I still have so much to learn and experience before I can move mountains, but through this process, I now can see clearly how I can. I was able to take some of my bias and perspective out and critically look at them. I cannot act in ways that I do not know. I am always learning and as I learn more, I can act more appropriately.

My intent is not to dismiss these experiences, my connections with the natural world, or the narrative I wrote. It has become a part of my story, a story that is ever growing and changing. Adding to it my past narrative, I hope to make it more than an environmental narrative; more than just a connection to the natural world, but also about my connections and experiences I have had with the social, cultural and political world. I am challenging myself from here forward. I will continue to explore my connection to the natural world through a critical lens, identifying areas where I leave out the social, cultural and political subtexts. I strive to be more aware, more relevant, and more inclusive to all that surrounds me in the name of being an effective educator and an aware citizen.

Limitations and Future Research Questions

The act of being critical, or examining the unchallenged aspects of any domain, doesn't, and shouldn't stop at Critical Pedagogy. The implementation of the theoretical framework that I have presented involves examination and critique of the very work. The process of critiquing is infinite; educators and students should never stop examining and reevaluating their teachings and learning, and the pedagogies from which they stem. The critical examination of Pedagogies of Place, Critical Pedagogy and Narratives informed and directed my research, but were not exhausted, exposing limitations, and providing space for future research.

The literature critiques Critical Pedagogy on the basis that it was developed and serves an elite population, failing to include the topic of race, which for the privileged is not a topic of concern (Allen, 2004; Bowers, 2002; Ellsworth, 1989). The exclusion of race in the conservation of social and environmental justice exacerbates the very issues which it strives to address. Addressing this in-depth would have been beyond the scope of my research and would require a deeper discussion about the role that race plays in the educational theories presented in this body of work. Using the topic of race to increase understanding and inform my narrative, I was able to touch on this issue within the limitations of my research.

Engaging in an extensive literature review means that the research I conducted is theoretical. Providing support for my argument in the form of literature, allowed me to explore the concepts of PBE and Critical Pedagogy as educational theories, but limited my ability to address Critical Narratives as a solution. Without the support of data, my work is confined within the realm of the theoretical, not able to move into the practical. Examining and exploring the literature in my field provided more questions, rather than solutions.

Collecting data about the application of Critical Narratives in a classroom would provide data for a claim that is for or against its effective use as a tool for the bridge. The data collected based on this literature review could investigate the way that Critical Narratives could be used for different age groups. What would the practical application look like in an elementary classroom? In a High School Classroom? Or in a Professional Development workshop for Educators? How would the data support my claim for Critical Narratives? Could Critical Narratives be a tool for teaching diverse populations? For addressing the many facets of place? Exploring these future questions would support the theoretical claims that I have presented in my work, opening a door for the United States' education system to move towards an inclusion of *all* facets of place in education and for the benefit of including *all* students.

This research has been a personal journey for me, allowing me to reflection, examine and question who I am in the context of place, which has assisted me in becoming a more aware and effective educator. My hope for the reader is that it can be a thought provoking read that allows for this reflective process to be transferred to their own lives, enhancing their journey of self-discovery, sense of place and experiences within the context of place in education.

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Author's Biography

Emma Griffin originally grew up in St. Louis, MO, but claims herself as a Coloradoan. She studied Environmental Studies at Western State Colorado University in Gunnison, Colorado where she gained essential knowledge in science and was introduced to the world of education. After completing College, she spent a year living in the Mountains of CO and enjoying the outdoors, before pursuing her Master's Degree. Wanting a graduate program that bridged Science and Education, she found Teton Science Schools in Grand Teton National Park, in Kelly, Wyoming. After spending an incredible year exploring the realm of Place-based Education and Ecology, she came to the University of Wyoming to complete her degree in Natural Science Education. She is graduating in May of 2017 with future plans of traveling to Bhutan in August, where she will be assisting in the implementation of a Place-Based Education Graduate Program at a Bhutanese Teacher's College. She is looking forward to the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills she has acquired over her academic career.