

Critical Literacy, Media Production, and Civic Engagement Among Urban Youth

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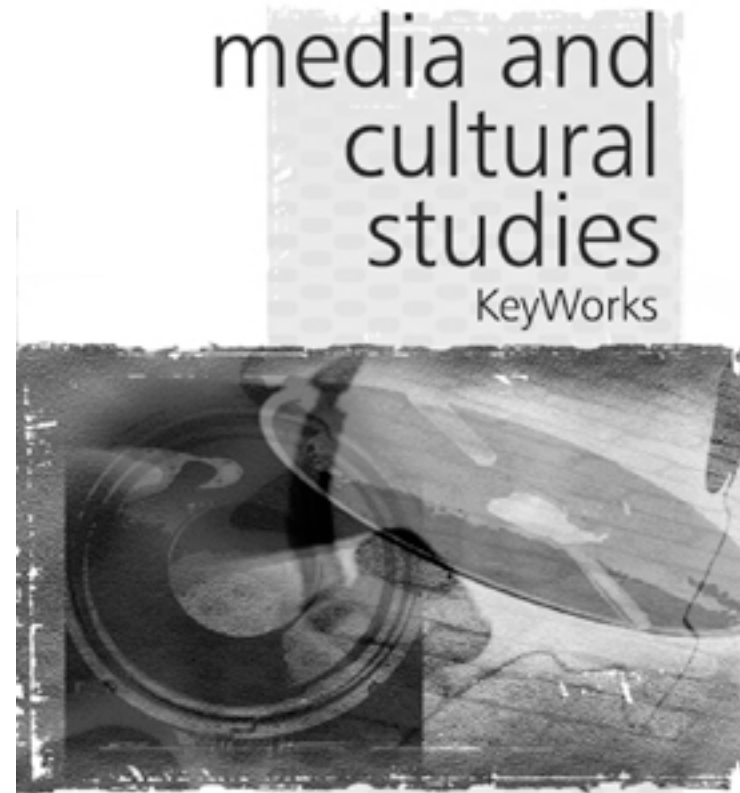
The “Crisis” in Urban Literacy Education

- The perceived crisis
 - Regressive literacy pedagogy
 - Deficit explanation of home and community practices
- “New” “literacy” demands
 - New demands for traditional literacies in postindustrial workplace
 - Demands for new literacies in techno-centric society
- The real crisis
 - Lack of access to *literacies of power*
 - Lack of connection to home and community literacies
 - Lack of attention to new media literacies

Research Questions

- How do students learn to critically produce through new media?
- What traditional academic and critical literacy skills are associated with the process of critical media production?
- What outcomes (empowered identity development, transformational research, activism for social justice, civic engagement) are associated with the process of engaging in critical media production?

Conceptual Framework



The Frankfurt School
and 'Political Correctness'
by Michael Minnicino

edited by
Meenakshi Gigi Durham
Douglas M. Kellner



Media and Cultural Studies

Cultural Studies:

- Is an interdisciplinary field that appropriates theories and methods from sociology, anthropology, linguistics, literary criticism, art theory, philosophy, and political science
- Aims to examine its subject matter in terms of cultural practices and their relation to power.
- Its objective is to understand culture in all its complex forms and to analyze the social and political context within which it manifests itself.
- Is both an intellectual and political enterprise.
- Aims to understand the structures of dominance everywhere, especially in industrial capitalist societies. (Sardar and Van Loon, 2000)

Media Studies:

- Media culture has become a dominant force of socialization, with media images and celebrities replacing families, schools, and churches as arbiters of taste, values, and thought, producing new models of identification and resonant images of style, fashion and behavior (Kellner, 1995, p.24)
- Media cultural studies is the project of analyzing the complex relations between texts, audiences, media industries, politics, and the sociohistorical context in specific conjunctures. (Kellner, 1995)
- Role of media in proliferating hegemony
 - Gramsci was interested in analyzing the agencies by which culture is shaped (i.e. media, literature, theatre, schools, politics) and to what extent culture could be guided by conscious political agency (Gramsci, 1985)

Critical Media Pedagogy

- Draws from the work of Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and American critical cultural theorists such as Kellner, Giroux, Lipsitz, and McLaren.
- Counter-hegemonic instruction aimed at developing a consciousness of the role of the media in configuring social thought. Also intends to foster engaged citizens who are able to critique these master media narratives and who also have the skills to use new media technologies as tools in the struggle for social and educational justice.
- Targets populations that have been targeted by media industries.
- Involves critical consumption, production, and distribution of new media texts.

Theories of Civic Engagement

- Personally responsible citizen
- Participatory citizen
- Justice-oriented citizen (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004)
- Radical/Transformative Citizenship (IDEA, 2004)
 - Larger view of humanity and citizenship than sanctioned participation the nation-state. Motivated by a love of humanity more than a love of the nation-state.
 - Fundamental critique of Western capitalist democracies. Considers as an option transformation of these democracies
 - Radical praxis that may not seem “political”
 - Involves youth and others who may not be voting age as central participants.

Methodology and Method



Critical Educational Research

- Unique educational research methodology
- Unique research methodology to education
- Theorizes and investigates potentially empowering practices inside classrooms and schools.
- Interested and engaged research
- Researching change
- Research to change

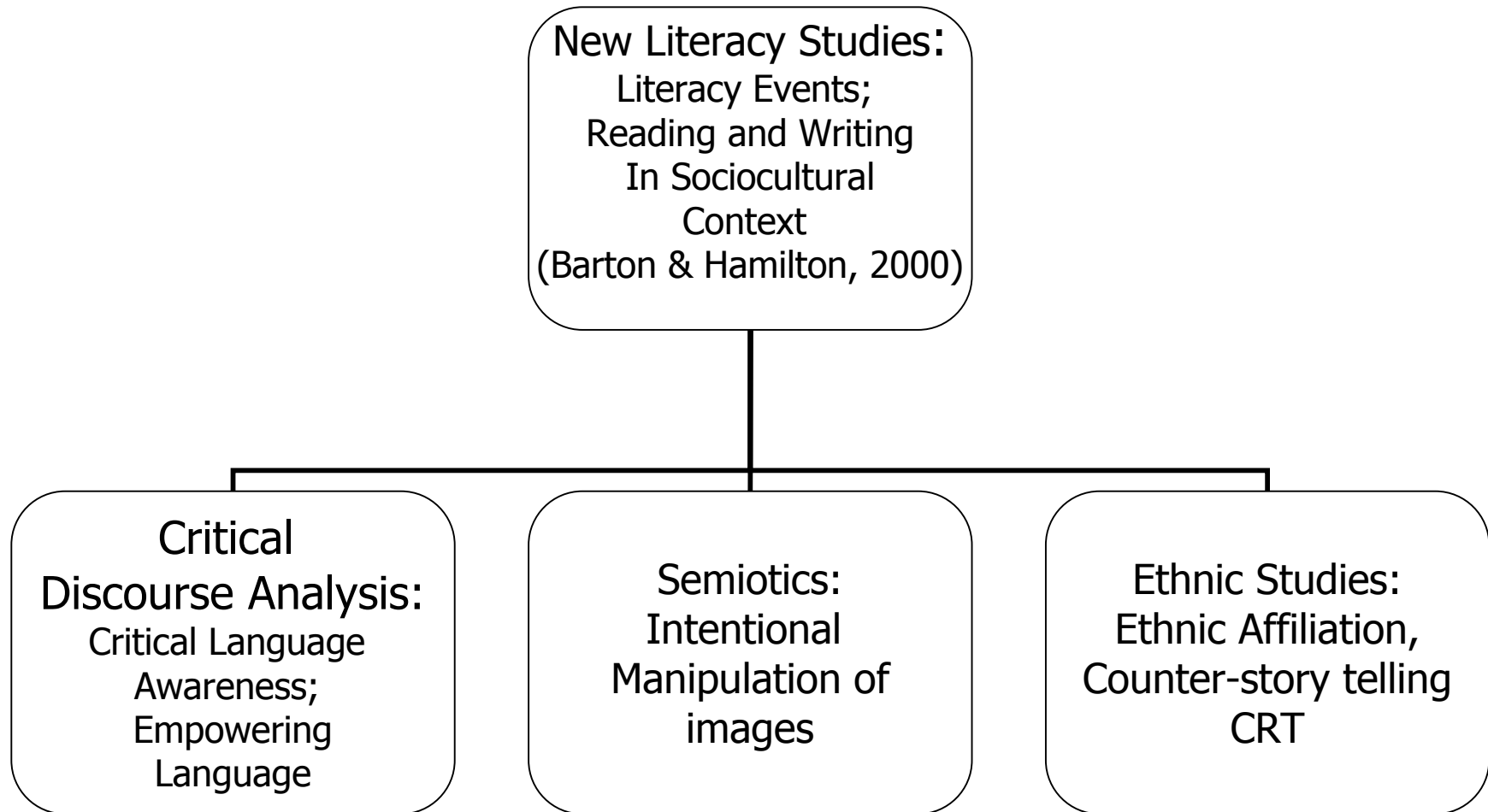
Site and Participants

- IDEA Summer Research Seminar, 1999-2004
- 20-25 adolescents from Los Angeles City Schools (Eastside, South Central, Watts, Westside, and the Valley)
- 4-5 Beginning teachers from LA City Schools
- 8-10 parents from an activist parent organization in the LA area [2001-2003]
- 2 University faculty members

Data Collection

- Field Notes
- Digital Photographs (1500 photos)
- Digital Video Footage (100 hours)
- Pedagogical Artifacts
- Student Media Production
 - Electronic Journals (250 entries)
 - iMovies (5 movies)
 - PowerPoint Presentations (5 presentations)
- Other Student Work
 - Research Instruments (Interview Protocols and Surveys)
 - Research Papers
 - Notebooks

Analytic Framework



The Media Literacy Project



**Appendix G
Media Survey
Summer Seminar 2000**

(Created and distributed by students at the Democratic National Convention)

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a West Coast University Research Fellow in a college summer enrichment program examining various perspectives about youth, youth issues, and youth protesters in the media. If you could please take a few minutes to answer 10 questions it would be greatly appreciated.

For Media Personnel:

Specific Role: _____

Employer: _____

1. Recalling a recent story involving youth (10-21 years old), youth issues, and/or youth protesters; what was the main topic/focus of the story?

2. What did you learn about youth in the story?

3. How did the story talk about youth in relation to the particular issue?

4. Please list all who were called upon as "experts" in the story.

5. What others were called upon as informants in the story?

6. Can the media's/author's/reporter's positionality (i.e. race, class, gender, community of residence, or employment) affect how the youth are presented in stories? (Circle one)

Always

Sometimes

Very Seldom

Never

7. Who are the primary subjects of the recent stories featuring youth?

Newspaper analysis (Sample)

Newspaper on Aug. 15	Word Count	Coverage of youth activist/protest issues	Pictures
USA Today	Weapons – 13 Police – 6 Fire – 1 Protester –5 Students –0 Youth - 1	None	At nighttime, four protesters surround a fire, two with handkerchiefs covering their mouths. One protester is putting a piece of paper in the fire out of the 8000 youth at concert/demonstration area
LA Times	Weapons – 2 Police – 20 Arrest – 2 Riot – 5 Protester – 4 Youth – 2 Gas Masks – 1 Students – 2	None	Five cops of color walking in the middle of the street with riot gear preparing for any riots that may break out.
Chicago Tribune	Protester – 22 Violence – 7 Weapons – 5 Police – 27 Fire –1 Anarchists - 2	2 issues mentioned – “Human need not corporate greed” and “Occidental Petroleum Inc.	Six LADP Police officer in riot gear with batons are on top of a protester who is trying to cover his head with his arms
LA Opinion	Protester – 2 Police – 7 Manifestantes – 12 Disturbance - 1	3 – issues mentioned – Oil drilling, nuclear weapons, spending money on schools	Three pictures – one cop hitting one person, calm protesters walking and holding signs, and a picture of other calm demonstrators

iMovie Production



Analyzing iMovie Production

New Literacy Studies:

iMovie as literacy practice

Document traditional and new literacies associated w/production (i.e. using DV cam, iMovie software, typing in text, logging, annotating, and recording footage, reading camera manual)

CDA:

iMovie as "critical discourse."

Documenting how movie is an instantiation of critical language awareness. How is the language informative? Empowering? How does it function as counter-text?

Semiotics:

iMovie as sign/image

Documenting how iMovie uncovers the ideology of dominant sign systems and how iMovie uses signs and images to challenge these dominant ideologies [creative and critical uses of signs in iMovie production.

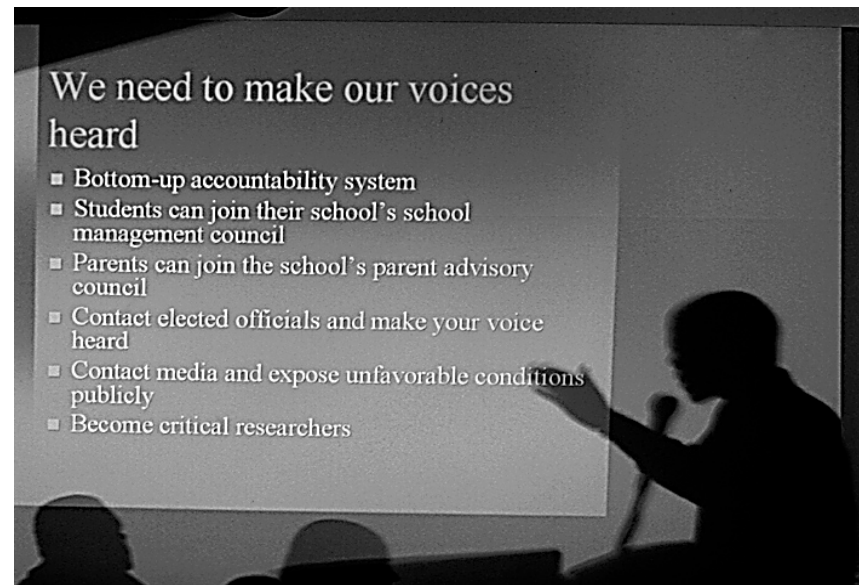
Ethnic Studies:

iMovie as counterstory

Documenting challenges to existing ethnic narratives [police brutality, poverty, crime, activism] instantiations of ethnic pride, ethnic affiliation, ethnic counternarratives [hip-hop selection, images of the Watts Towers, the statue, language of pride and affiliation]

Other Forms of Media Production

- PowerPoint Presentations
- Online journal articles
- Newspaper articles
- Cyberactivism



Conclusion

