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Critical Literacy as a Way of Being and Doing

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This article focuses on critical literacy as a way of being and doing around the globe. Orientations to critical literacy, models for instruction, key aspects, and new directions are shared.

New definitions of what it means to be literate and how to teach literacy have arisen from changing student demographics and students with different linguistic repertoires. New technologies have further contributed to changing definitions of literacy. Young people are grappling with the traditional demands of academic literacies while simultaneously interrogating "fake news" and managing their everyday life worlds, which are increasingly crowded with dynamic digital doings. In this article, we outline our understanding of critical literacy, explore its historical roots and theoretical perspectives, discuss critical literacy as a way of being around the globe, highlight orientations to critical literacy and influential models for instruction, share key tenets, and suggest new directions.

We begin by defining the term "critical." In the field of language arts education, confusion remains regarding the difference between "critical" from the Enlightenment period, which focused on critical thinking and reasoning, and "critical" from Marx as an analysis of power. At the center of these debates are definitions for critical literacy and attempts by some educators and researchers to pin down a specific definition. Theorists and educators including Comber (2016), Vasquez (2010, 2014b), and Luke (2014) have maintained that as a framework for

doing literacy work, "critical literacy" should look, feel, and sound different in different contexts; the model(s) used as part of one's critical literacy toolkit contribute to the kinds of work accomplished from such a perspective.

This framing has been referred to by Vasquez (2010, 2014b) as a way of being through which to participate in the world in and outside of school. She continues by stating that such a frame does not necessarily involve taking a negative stance; rather, it means looking at an issue or topic in different ways, analyzing it, and suggesting possibilities for change and improvement. For example, children might investigate their local wetlands and work out ways of enhancing the quality of the water; in another class, they might study the ways in which cartoons work to portray those in power and those on the margins, then produce their own. How teachers negotiate critical literacy practices depends very much on the affordances of their place and the students in the room. As such, critical literacies can be pleasurable and transformational as well as pedagogical and transgressive.

Some writers deliberately highlight social issues in books for children and thereby create spaces for critical literacy discussions. However, because texts and practices are never neutral, it is

possible to use any text for critical literacy to consider the points conveyed. This means the world, as text, can be read from a critical literacy perspective, especially given that what constitutes a text continues to change. For instance, a classroom can be read as a text; even everyday objects like water bottles can be read as texts (Janks, 2014). Any issues and topics that capture learners' interests, based on their experiences, or artifacts with which they engage in the material world as they participate in communities around them can and should be used as text to build a curriculum that has significance in their lives (Vasquez, 2014a).

Historical Roots

From an historical perspective, Luke (2014) describes critical literacy as "the object of a half-century of theoretical debate and practical innovation in the field of education" (p. 21). Principles associated with the Frankfurt School's critical theory, created in the 1920s in Germany, are often included in discussions of its roots. The school was started by academics with the aim of carving out a space to develop theories of Marxism independent of political parties. Their emphasis was on the importance of class struggle in society. However, Paulo Freire's work on critical consciousness and critical pedagogy in the late 1940s (McLaren, 2000; Morrell, 2008) is more prominently associated with the roots of critical literacy pedagogy.

Freire (1972) argued that readers and writers must assume the role of creative subjects who reflect critically on the process of reading and writing itself along with reflecting on the significance of language. Learning to read and write were therefore acts of knowing through which the critical consciousness of learners could be highlighted. Freire and Macedo (1987) popularized the concept that reading the word is simultaneously about reading the world and that our reading of any text is mediated through our day-to-day experience and the places and spaces that we encounter and occupy, together with the languages we use. This sort of critical reading could create opportunities for disrupting and "unpacking myths and distortions and building new ways of knowing and acting upon the world" (Luke, 2014, p. 22) that challenge our taken-for-granted assumptions and naturalized practices.

Further, work done by the Frankfurt School scholars and Freire was overtly political. Their work inspired theories about the nature and democratic potential of education as central to critical approaches to pedagogy (Comber, 2016). An example of such critical pedagogy is work done in a local parish by literacy researchers and educators Campano, Ghiso, and Welch (2016) on collaborative, community-identified interventions, and Campano, Ghiso, and Sánchez's (2013) work that demonstrated the benefits of sustained involvement with a community.

Freire's work was groundbreaking as it pushed to the fore the importance and effects of critical pedagogy as a way of making visible and examining relations of power.

The original focus of early critical literacy work was adult education. An example of this was Freire's campaign in the 1960s for hundreds of sugar cane workers in Brazil to participate in a literacy program that centered on critical pedagogy. This liberatory work became known as a tool to empower oppressed workers. Critiques of Freire include the unidirectional way in which Freirean educators liberated the oppressed, as well as their lack of attention to gender and the environment in their resolute focus on workers (Bowers, 2005; Weiler, 1991). Nevertheless, Freire's work was groundbreaking as it pushed to the fore the importance and effects of critical pedagogy as a way of making visible and examining relations of power in order to change and dismantle inequitable ways of being.

It is also important to point out there were many antecedents to these approaches, as noted by Luke (2014), including: early-twentieth-century exemplars of African American community education in the United States that were established in many cities (Shannon, 1989); Brecht's experiments with political drama in Europe (Weber & Heinen,1980); work by Hoggart (1957) and Williams (1977) on

post-war cultural British studies; and related work such as Augusto Boal's use of participatory and problem-posing strategies in developing "theatre of the oppressed" in Brazil (1979).

Theoretical Perspectives on Critical Literacy

Kurt Lewin (1951) wrote, "There is nothing more practical than a good theory" (p. 169). Through the years, various theoretical paradigms and traditions of scholarship have influenced how critical literacy has been defined in education—what it is like in practice as well as how it has circulated. Feminist poststructuralist theories (Davies, 1993; Gilbert, 1992), post-colonialist traditions (McKinney, 2017; Meacham, 2003; Pennycook, 1998), critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 1999, 2003), critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Janks, 2010; Pennycook, 2001; Rogers & Wetzel, 2014), new literacy studies (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011; Street, 1984), critical media literacy (Share, 2009, 2010), queer theory (Vicars, 2013), place conscious pedagogy (Comber, 2016), and critical sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology (Blommaert, 2013; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) have all had a role in shaping critical literacy practices in different places. Combinations of such theories have resulted in various orientations to critical literacy. These include: critical literacy as a concept, a framework, or perspective for teaching and learning; a way of being in the classroom; and a stance or attitude toward literacy work in schools at all levels and irrespective of whether students are working in the languages they are fluent in or languages that they are adding to their linguistic repertoires.

These various theoretical orientations help shape a range of approaches to pedagogy. Common to these approaches is "understanding the relationship between texts, meaning-making and power in order to undertake transformative social action that contributes to the achievement of a more equitable social order" (Janks & Vasquez, 2011, p. 1). Critical literacy focuses on the interplay between discursive practices and unequal power relations—and issues of social justice and equity—in support of diverse learners. This includes "taking the languages they bring with them to school seriously and understanding the ways in which multilingual children are treated unjustly when their linguistic repertoires are excluded from classrooms" (Vasquez, 2017a, para. 5).

Critical Literacy as a Way of Being

A number of researchers and educators also argue that critical literacy is a way of being, living, learning, and teaching across the curriculum (Pandya & Ávila, 2014; Vasquez, 2005, 2014a, 2015) and not just an orientation to teaching literacy. Vasquez (2001, 2010, 2014b) further notes that as a way of being, critical literacies ought to be "constructed organically, using the inquiry questions of learners, beginning on the first day of school with the youngest learners" (Vasquez, 2017a, para. 6). Similarly, the need for critical literacy to be defined by individuals within their own contexts has been noted by Pandya and Ávila (2014) and Vasquez, Tate, and Harste (2013). Comber emphasizes teachers' dispositions as well, including their discursive resources and repertoires of practice (Comber, 2006). From this perspective, critical literacy is "an evolving repertoire of practices of analysis and interrogation which move between the micro features of texts and the macro conditions of institutions, focusing upon how relations of power work through these practices" (Comber, 2013, p. 589).

Researchers have noted the importance of not only analyzing texts but also designing and producing them (Janks, 2010; Kamler, 2001; Luke, 2013). For instance, Janks (2010) talked about the need for students to "produce texts that matter to them in different formats and for different audiences and purposes and [for teachers to] allow them to draw on and extend their range of semiotic resources" (p.156); teacher-researchers working with Comber noticed children's increased investment in their writing when they were producing texts, such as brochures and posters, to inform the local community about caring for their wetlands. Understanding the position(s) from which we design and produce texts (Janks, 2010; Vasquez, 2017a) also demonstrates to students why critical reading is so important. In other words, students learn as much about critical analysis from being actively involved in the

design and production process as they do from their questioning of texts produced by others.

Critical Literacy Practice around the Globe

Different instantiations of critical literacy have taken root in different places around the globe, including South Africa (Granville, 1993; Janks, 1993b, 2010; Janks, Dixon, Ferreira, Granville, & Newfield, 2013; McKinney, 2004), Australia and New Zealand (Comber, 2001, 2016; Luke, 2000; Morgan, 1997; O'Brien, 2001; Sandretto & Tilson, 2014), the United States and Canada (e.g., Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2014; Vasquez, 2001, 2010, 2014b), as well as the transnational work of Larson and Marsh (2015) and Pahl and Rowsell (2011).

In South Africa, Hilary Janks (1993a, 1993b) developed strategies, which she referred to as a pedagogy of reconstruction, for young adults and adolescents in South African schools. These strategies used critical literacy as a tool in the struggle against apartheid in the form of a series of Critical Language Awareness (CLA) workbooks. The books were created "to increase students' awareness of the way language was used to oppress the black majority, to win elections, to deny education, to construct others, to position readers, to hide the truth, and to legitimate oppression" (Janks, 2010, p. 12). For instance, while exploring sentence types, the different effects of sentences, questions, and commands were discussed. In looking at the choice made between sentence types, students considered the ways in which these options created different positions for writers and readers or speakers and listeners. Interestingly, teachers in Australia also found these books very accessible and used them in their classrooms.

The concept of design and redesign was first introduced to the field through the New London Group—a transnational group of researchers, educators, and visionaries from the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom—in their paper on multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996). Janks (2010) used the concept of redesign to talk about critical literacy as not simply critical reading, but also critical writing that takes seriously the

idea that production also needs to offer socially just positioning for readers. But in a world where texts are increasingly multimodal, literate production entails more than words, and "design" allows for a multiplicity of sign systems to be included. Redesign includes the idea of reconstructing texts and practices in ways that are socially transformative. For instance, as part of Comber and Nixon's (2014) work with teachers on critical literacy, social action, and children's representations of place in Australia, Janks (2006) worked with a teacher in South Africa and her grade four students to produce a book on fun and games for their student counterparts in Australia. The result made use of multimodal pedagogies (performance, drawing, and words) and multilingual resources to create a book in the students' South African language, which they then translated to English for the children in Australia. Janks (2006) explained "We wanted students to see themselves as knowledge makers, who could produce artifacts (a book, a video) rooted in their own lives that would be valued beyond their own local context. We wanted grade 4 children to imagine themselves as agents whose placed and embodied knowledges mattered to their peers on the other side of the world" (p. 14). In the end it was the knowledge that children in Australia were the real audience that gave the children's work meaning.

In Australia, workbooks were created from a critical literacy perspective to deconstruct literary texts (Mellor, O'Neill, & Patterson, 1987; Mellor, Patterson, & O'Neill, 1991). For instance, *Reading Fictions* (Mellor et al., 1991) included two sections that focused on intertextuality and re-readings in which students were invited to explore how they came to particular readings of text and how they might choose among different readings or interpretations of the same story. Also in Australia, materials were produced by Freemantle Press (Kenworthy, Martino, & Kenworthy, 1997; Martino, 1997) that were derived from postcolonial and feminist theories. Some of these materials, developed by educators and researchers such as Morgan (1992, 1994) and Gilbert (1989), informed work done in middle school and high school settings on reading texts critically. In South Africa, Sibanda's (2009)

and Ferreira's (2014) research examined critical literacy work in secondary school classrooms, while Morrell (2008) provides powerful examples of critical literacy pedagogies with urban youth in the United States.

Critical literacy work with younger children began to take place in the 1990s in Australia. Jenny O'Brien and Barbara Comber (O'Brien, 2001) documented O'Brien's classroom research with young children in which they created spaces for critical literacy in an elementary school classroom, using newspaper and magazine advertisements as the basis for doing critical analysis. This work focused on critically reading and deconstructing texts to help students question versions of reality in the world around them. For instance, O'Brien (2001) explored ways in which Mothers Day advertisements worked to position readers of such texts in particular ways, thus helping her students probe the representation of women and setting them purposeful reading, writing, and talking tasks.

In Canada and the United States, Vivian Vasquez (2001, 2004) worked with children from ages three to five, questioning issues of social justice and equity and using both children's literature and the everyday as texts (i.e., food packaging, media ads, popular culture). In one example, her students critically analyzed the gendering of toys and children through an analysis of the McDonald's Happy Meal after one of the girls in the class took issue when the person behind the counter assumed that they wanted the toy doll in their Happy Meal rather than the toy car. Reading the world as a text that could be deconstructed and reconstructed created opportunities for Vasquez (2001, 2004, 2010, 2014b) and her students to deconstruct, disrupt, reconstruct, and sometimes dismantle problematic practices within and outside of the school.

Accounts of critical literacy work in early years classrooms have been published by Wohlwend and Hall (2016), Sanchez (2011), Share (2015), and Vander Zanden (2016), among a growing number of others. In downtown Los Angeles, for example, Jeff Share (2015) worked with teachers and students from kindergarten to fifth grade on analyzing media and creating their own alternative representations, including creating animation or writing and performing original plays. Also working with media as well as technology in the United Kingdom, Jackie Marsh (2016) reported on critical literacy evident in the work of children aged five and under while creating virtual worlds using tablets. She notes that critical work was in evidence as children decided on which mode or media to use in their creations, as well as when they reviewed the texts they had produced, editing them based on their critical reflections.

Explorations of critical literacy have also begun to take place in East Asian classrooms. For instance, in a study done in South Korea, Kim and Cho (2017) share the ways a Korean preschool teacher used problem posing to create spaces for working with children's books from a critical literacy perspective. While reading books, the children engaged in critical discussions as their teacher had them think about the texts from different perspectives, allowing them to challenge and evaluate the meaning conveyed in the books. In one example, while reading a Korean edition of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Jikyungsa, 1995), the children engaged in discussions focused on questions like, Why did the queen hate the princess? and How would the story have been different if the princess were ugly?

In Columbia, Mora (2014) worked with his education students on using critical literacy as a tool for doing policy and advocacy work in second language education settings. One of his students, Ana Karina Rodriguez Martinez (2017), developed a strategy she referred to as Critical Literacy Read-Alouds (CLRA) for use in her preschool classroom. Part of the strategy required her students to reflect on the storyline in books in terms of their own lives as a way to help them question the worlds represented in books. They used traditional fairy tales like *Cinderella* and *Snow White,* as well as books like *Seven Blind Mice* (Young, 1992) and *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!* (Scieszka, 1989). The strategy was a powerful means to engage her students in discussing social issues such as gender and equity.

Such projects are consistent with Luke's (2004) argument for the need to do social justice work in relation to experiences of physical and material

deprivation in diverse communities throughout the globe. In this regard, critical literacy . . .

> should be adopted and adapted and should continue to emerge across a spectrum of political economies, nation states, and systems from autocratic/theocratic states to postcolonial states not only as an epistemic stance but also as a political and culturally transgressive position that works to create spaces for transformative social actions that can contribute to the achievement of a more equitable social order. (Vasquez, 2017a, para. 11)

Work done by researchers such as Kim and Cho (2017), Mora (2014), and Rodriguez Martinez (2017) are important in that they bring into the fold demonstrations of important critical literacy practice from places around the globe that are often less visible in the field.

Orientations to Critical Literacy and Influential Models for Instruction

There have been various complementary orientations to critical literacy and models for doing literacy work that have shaped the field. In this section, we highlight some of these to further contextualize the ways in which critical literacy has circulated in different spaces and places. Three influential models rooted in particular orientations to critical literacy will be addressed here: Freebody and Luke's Four Resources Model, Janks's Interdependent Model, and Green's 3D Model of Literacy.

Allan Luke and Peter Freebody's (1999) Four Resources Model has played a central role in making critical literacy accessible across continents. Their model has been widely adapted in classrooms from preschool to tertiary education settings around the globe. The Four Resources model focuses on four types of literacy practices that readers and writers should learn, including, 1) learning to be code breakers—recognizing, understanding, and using the fundamental features of written text, such as the alphabet; 2) learning to be text participants—using their own prior knowledge to interpret and make meaning from and bring meaning to text; 3) understanding how to use different text forms; and 4) becoming critical consumers of those forms— learning to critically analyze text and understand that texts are never neutral. Michelle Knobel and

Colin Lankshear (2004) challenged Luke and Freebody's model, stating that it did not support literacy practices in an increasingly digitized world. They offered examples of literacy practices in a digitized world assumed by authors of digital texts, including roles such as text designer—one who designs and produces multimedia or digital texts; text mediator or broker—one who summarizes or presents aspects of texts for others, such as a blogger; text bricoleur—one who constructs or creates text using a range or collection of available things; and text jammer—one who re-presents text it in some way, such as by adding new words or phrases to an image as a way to subvert the original meaning (Knobel & Lankshear, 2004). Communicating in a digital environment and using new digital technologies have enabled us to work with texts that are becoming increasingly multimodal. It is easy now to insert images, video, voice over, movement, and sound to what might once have been only written words. We are now able to use multiple sign systems— semiotics—to make meaning.

Larson and Marsh (2015), however, claim that Lankshear and Knobel's (2004) model focuses on text production over text analysis. In comparison, Hilary Janks's (2010, 2014) model for critical literacy includes both text analysis and text design. Her Interdependent Model (Janks, 2010, 2014) for critical literacy includes four dimensions: power; diversity; access; and design/redesign distilled from a careful reading of the literature in a range of related areas as they pertain to education—anti-racism, Whiteness, feminism, post-colonialism, sexual orientation, critical linguistics, critical pedagogy, sociocultural and critical approaches to literacy, and critical discourse analysis. The four dimensions are crucially interdependent and manifest themselves differently in different contexts and different classroom projects.

Earlier approaches to critical literacy did not necessarily foreground the spatial dimensions of power (Comber, 2016). Yet insights from theories of space and place alongside literacy studies can create opportunities for designing and enacting culturally inclusive curriculum to support the needs of diverse learners. The fact that the spatial dimensions of everyday life are so visible in schools makes them

an ideal subject of study for teachers and children. A combination of spatial, place-conscious, and sociomaterial analysis can provide teachers with excellent resources for working across the curriculum on questions and issues that matter to students, such as the condition of local trees or parks, the safety of their neighborhoods, the survival of indigenous species, and so on (see Comber, 2016). Dixon (2011) took the work on spatiality further by stressing the interrelationship of space and time in early childhood education.

Finally, Green's 3D Model of Literacy is a multidimensional framework that argues that there are always three dimensions of literacy simultaneously at play: the operational, which means learning how the language works and ways that texts can be structured; the cultural, which involves the uses of literacy and in particular the ways that cultural learning is involved with content learning; and the critical, which refers to the ways in which we act and see in the world, along with how literacy can be used to shape lives in ways that better serve the interests of some over others. Green's model is therefore a useful frame for unpacking links between literacy and culture.

The complementary and competing orientations and frameworks highlighted in this section show the complexity of critical literacy and provide a backdrop for educators to develop important elements for their critical literacy pedagogy. In the following section, we share what we see as key aspects drawn from the literature on critical literacy.

Key Aspects of Critical Literacy

In spite of the fact that critical literacy does not have a set definition or a normative history, the following key tenets have been described in the literature. It should be noted that such key tenets would likely take on a different shape depending on one's orientation to critical literacy, the level at which one is working, and one's social context.

- Critical literacy should be viewed as a lens, frame, or perspective for teaching throughout the day, across the curriculum, and perhaps beyond, rather than as a topic to be covered or unit to be studied. What this means is that critical literacy involves having an

ingrained critical perspective or way of being that provides us with an ongoing critical orientation to texts and practices. Inviting students to write down the messages that they see in public transport, to take photographs of graffiti or billboards, to cut out advertisements from magazines, or to collect sweet wrappers to bring to class helps them to read the everyday texts they encounter critically. Do it often enough and they will learn to "read" their worlds with a critical eye.

- Diverse students' cultural knowledge (drawn from inside the classroom and the children's everyday worlds [homes and communities]), their funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2006), and multimodal and multilingual practices (Lau, 2012) should be used to build curriculum across the content areas and across space and place. Inviting children to bring culturally meaningful artifacts to school enables meaningful discussions about and understanding of things that matter to different communities.

- Students learn best when what they are learning has importance in their lives; as such, using the topics, issues, and questions that they raise should be central to creating an inclusive critical curriculum. Listening to students' concerns or their responses to picturebooks enables teachers to know how they are reading and problematizing their worlds. It is our job to show them how to assume agency and act to make a difference, however small.

- Texts are socially constructed from particular perspectives; they are never neutral. All texts are created from a particular perspective with the intention of conveying particular messages. Texts work to have us think about and believe certain things in specific ways, and as such they work to position readers in certain ways. We therefore need to question the perspectives conveyed by the writer. Even maps are social constructions based on selections of what to include and exclude, and whether to put north at the top and Europe at the center.

- The ways we read text are never neutral. Each time we read, write, or create, we draw from our past experiences and understanding about how the world works. We therefore should also analyze our own readings of text and unpack the position(s) from which we engage in literacy work. If you agree with a text, it is easy to read it sympathetically and hard to read it critically. However, if you find a text offensive, it is hard to engage with it. But we have to do both; we have to engage with texts on their own terms—both to learn from them and to critique them—and we have to recognize that our identities shape how we consume and produce texts. For example, engaging with colonial texts helps us to understand colonialism and prepares us to produce texts that argue for decoloniality.

- From a critical literacy perspective, the world is seen as a socially constructed text that can be read. The earlier students are introduced to this idea, the sooner they are able to understand what it means to be researchers of language, image, gesture, spaces, and objects, exploring such issues as what counts as language, whose language counts, and who decides, as well as exploring ways texts can be revised, rewritten, or reconstructed to shift or reframe the message(s) conveyed. Classroom work (Vasquez, 2014b; Vasquez & Felderman, 2012) has included the social construction of maps, language policies, construction of the child, classroom spaces, and how the furniture in them is arranged.

- Critical literacy involves making sense of the sociopolitical systems through which we live our lives and questioning these systems. This means critical literacy work needs to focus on social issues, including inequities of race, class, gender, or disability and the ways in which we use language and other semiotic resources to shape our understanding of these issues. The discourses we use to take up such issues work to shape how people are able to—or not able to—live their lives in more or less powerful ways. For instance, in O'Brien's (2001) study,

children worked with a catalogue promoting Mother's Day and discovered that the mothers in the photographs were all youthful (age), White (race), well-dressed and wearing make-up (class), good looking (gender), and able bodied. In addition, the goods advertised were normatively gendered (washing machines, perfume, jewelry) and often pricey (class).

- Critical literacy practices can be transformative. They can contribute to changing inequitable ways of being and problematic social practices. This means students who engage in critical literacy from a young age are prepared 1) to make informed decisions regarding issues such as power and control, 2) to engage in the practice of democratic citizenship, and 3) to develop an ability to think and act ethically. As such, they would be better able to contribute to making the world a more equitable and socially just place.

- Text design and production, which are essential to critical literacy work, can provide opportunities for transformation. Text design and production refer to the creation or construction of multimodal texts and the decisions that are part of that process, including the notion that it is not sufficient to simply create texts for the sake of "practicing a skill." If students are to create texts, they should be able to let those texts do the work intended; for instance, if students are creating petitions, they should address an existing issue rather than an imagined one, and if they are writing surveys, they should conduct them and analyze the data.

- Finally, "critical literacy is about imagining thoughtful ways of thinking about reconstructing and redesigning texts, images, and practices to convey different and more socially just and equitable messages and ways of being that have real-life effects and real-world impact" (Vasquez, 2017b, para. 19). For example, critically reading a bottle of water as a text could include examining the practice of drinking bottled water and changing that practice in support of creating a more sustainable world.

New Directions

New directions in the field of critical literacy include: finding new ways to engage with multimodalities and new technologies (Albers, Vasquez, & Harste, 2017; Comber, 2016; Marsh, 2017, 2018; Vasquez, Woods, & Felderman, 2019; Pandya, 2019); engaging with spatiality, time, and space (Dixon, 2004); place-based pedagogies (Comber, 2016; Comber & Nixon, 2014); working across the curriculum in the content areas (Comber & Nixon, 2014; Janks, 2014; Vasquez, 2017b); and working with multilingual learners (Fajardo, 2015; Lau, 2012, 2016).

These new directions for critical literacy, among others that may develop, reiterate and remind us of what educators who have been working in the field of critical literacy for some time have maintained (Comber, 2016; Janks, 2014; Luke, 2014; Vasquez, 2014b)—that there is no correct or universal model of critical literacy. Instead, "how educators shape and deploy the tools, attitudes, and philosophies of critical literacy is utterly contingent . . . upon students' and teachers' everyday relations of power, their lived problems and struggles" (Luke, 2014, p. 29) and the ways in which teachers are able to navigate the politics of the places and spaces in which their work unfolds. This seems particularly urgent at a time when facts are no longer considered relevant or important, when among so many other social issues, xenophobia and transphobic hate crimes are on the rise, countries are closing their borders to thousands of desperate migrants, children are being separated from their parents, and when global warming threatens the very survival of the planet. Critical literacy as a way of being and doing in the world contributes to creating spaces to take on these sorts of issues, engaging learners in powerful and pleasurable ways and creating spaces to achieve a better life for all.

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