

## **Critical Pedagogies in Praxis: A Multiple Case Study with Graduate Teaching Assistants' Co-constructing Community and Amplifying Undergraduate Student Agency through Dialogic Discourse**

The United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics detailed that graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) hold approximately 136,820 positions across four-year college institutions in the United States (2017). Bomotti (1994) estimated. "freshmen and sophomores spend from 30 to 50 percent of their undergraduate classroom hours in contact with TAs in some institutions." However, a research gap is evident in which GTAs' philosophies and practices are often excluded in higher education research (DeCesare, 2003; Lal, 2000; Shahjahan, 2008). This research study contributes to higher education research to showcase GTAs' philosophies and practices, and acknowledges GTAs as instrumental contributors to undergraduate education. The research questions guiding this study are: (a) How do GTAs describe their teaching philosophy and critical pedagogies? And (b) How do GTAs practice critical pedagogies?

This qualitative multi-case study examines four GTAs' philosophies and practices at the University of California Los Angeles within foreign language and humanities classrooms. Through purposive sampling, GTAs were selected based upon these criteria: (a) have prior secondary/post-secondary teaching experience, (b) hold a teaching assistantship, and (c) self-identify as critical pedagogues. Critical pedagogy in this research study draws upon Freire's (1970) humanizing education paradigm which: (a) dissents against banking models of education, (b) views teachers *with* students as co-constructors of knowledge to challenge one's own oppression through praxis (thought converged with action) to act upon the world. Qualitative data collection (semi-structured teacher philosophy/pedagogy interviews, classroom and office hours observations) occurred over a twelve-week period. Data analysis was conducted through two rounds of coding: in vivo and values-based coding (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Theoretical and conceptual frameworks relating to critical pedagogy, specifically critical consciousness development (Freire, 1970/1974), informed patterns and emerging themes represented within and across GTA philosophies and practices during data analysis. This study contextualizes how GTAs utilized generative themes (e.g., identity, mental health, human rights, environmental improvement and sustainability) and problem-posing dialogic discourse in their classroom routines reflective of students' identities and lived experiences. The implications of this study suggested that large-group and small-group problem-posing dialogic discourse as GTA pedagogical approaches cultivated classroom community,

assisted students in navigating challenges within/outside of higher education, and amplified undergraduate students' agency and dispositions towards civic action. Additionally, a key finding in this study was how each GTA was a liaison between undergraduate students and university-based organizations/resources that were related to the dialogic discourse that resulted from classroom and individual meetings with students.

## References

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