Supporting Students in Writing for Critical Social Change in K-12 Schools

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Abstract

Drawing on critical literacy theory, critical composition pedagogy includes as a key component writing to effect social change. In this article, we explore research on writing instruction with elementary and secondary school aged children (K-12) to examine how educators structure writing for impact, including if students are writing for social change, and the effects on students of including this element. Two primary purposes of writing for impact in the literature were raising awareness and persuading others to take action. The first purpose was subdivided into sharing experience and communicating ideas, while the second purpose was subdivided into practical social change and critical social change. Writing for critical social change was less observed, even though this purpose is embedded in the National Council of Teachers of English's (NCTE) vision statement and resolution on critical literacy, critical approaches to writing, and critical theory more generally. Three major effects on students due to writing for impact were identified in the literature: 1) increased criticality and positive identity development; 2) increased student engagement; and 3) increased writing quality, with different purposes for writing aligning with different outcomes. Social transformation was the major effect for one study in this review.

Supporting Students in Writing for Critical Social Change in K-12 Schools

The world's social and political climate has been shaped by continuous instances of racism, prejudices, and misuses of power. In the wake of George Floyd's murder and subsequent protests in the United States, the National Council of Teachers of English's (NCTE) presidential team released a statement addressing the systemic oppression that pervades the country, stating:

> Injustices and acts of brutality are real. In fact, they are revolting. Racist acts keep recurring, and systems of oppression continue to exist, proving the need for systemic and structural change. That change can begin with protests, but ultimately it must happen through action. As educators, we are poised to lead the way through our teaching. (Zuidema et al., 2020, para. 2)

Teachers are mandated to create opportunities for students to address social and political issues both locally and globally. English language arts teachers, who are charged with aiding growth in reading, writing, speaking and listening, are well-positioned to take on this task. As students speak against issues such as racism, oppression, and inequality through multimodal, multi-genre compositions, they strengthen their authorial voices and their ability to interact with the world around them in relevant and productive ways and effect social change.

Just a couple of years ago, NCTE released a resolution on "English Education for Critical Literacy in Politics and Media" (2019a) along with a revised vision statement (2019b). Both documents support students writing for impact, defined as students writing to have an effect on someone or something, particularly students writing to push for social change. The resolution emphasizes students being prepared to "keep track of, publicize, and combat semantic distortion by public officials, candidates for office, political commentators, and all those who transmit through the mass media" (para. 2). The word "combat" suggests students do more than critique

media; they should also distribute their critiques and create counternarratives. Working in

tandem with the resolution is NCTE's vision statement, which states members will engage in

instruction, assessment, and research supporting "diverse learners in their journey to become

critical thinkers, consumers, and *creators* who advocate for and actively contribute to a better

world" (NCTE, 2019b, para. 4, emphasis added). The Council's resolution and vision urges

teachers to support students as they become critical thinkers who respond to the world they

inhabit through the production of impactful, multimodal texts.

Yet rather than writing to achieve a desired, valued outcome with a particular audience—

to write to impact an audience, students in K-12 classrooms often write to demonstrate

proficiency or to achieve a particular grade. Although teachers do need to assess students'

writing skills, which may periodically include responding to isolated prompts, students also need

to write for authentic purposes, including writing for social change such as combating racist

policies. By using the term "impact," we emphasize students writing to achieve desired effects

on audiences, including changes in knowledge, opinion, policy, or actions. Yet how writing for

impact is conceptualized and implemented in literature on writing instruction varies widely. In

this paper, we explore research on writing instruction with elementary and secondary school

aged (K-12) children to examine how educators structure writing for impact. As we analyzed

literature, we were interested in how writing for social change showed up in educational spaces

incorporating writing for impact, and if we saw examples of writing for social change in

classroom settings. We also examined student outcomes associated with different forms of

writing for impact. To support our analysis, we employed the lens of critical composition

pedagogy (Morrell, 2003; 2008), part of a broader theory of critical literacy.

Critical Composition Pedagogy

Critical literacy instruction is greatly informed by the work of Paulo Freire. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000), Freire suggests teachers and students must forge relationships that dismantle the divide of power in our society and carry out political action. Critical literacy education includes praxis, defined by Freire as reflection paired with action. Employing this notion of praxis, critical literacy is activated through practices of teaching and learning where teachers and students co-examine society through dialogue and develop efforts that speak against subjugation and repression. Literacy initiatives based on Freire's emancipatory education are neither tidy nor neat. Teachers and students who commit to the work of writing for impact must be willing to disrupt and unravel customary forms of writing instruction to provoke agency, awareness, and change.

Applying Freirean principles to writing instruction, Morrell (2003, 2008) articulates a theory of critical composition pedagogy that emphasizes the need for *critical textual production*, which requires students engaging in critical literacy practices to critique the status quo through reflection on selves and society, reading across multiple perspectives, dialogic discussion, and research. Then, students are encouraged to realize praxis by proposing solutions to social issues through writing. Students may choose to effect changes by sharing findings through petitions, protests, publications, presentations, social media, or other means. Morrell (2008) emphasizes that when critical literacy is applied to writing instruction, "even those texts that emerge from the classroom have a purpose and audience much larger than the teacher or the classroom: students produce texts that change the world" (p. 86). However, although critical composition pedagogy emphasizes impact beyond the classroom, as students write to provoke change, they must first make sense of their emotions about the environments in which they exist. For this reason, a key

tenet of Morrell's (2003) framework is "historicity," meaning instruction must start with students' experiences. Speaking against systemic oppression, racism, and inequality requires students to survey their personal history, feelings, and accounts with the aforementioned societal issues. As students compose autobiographical narratives and reflective pieces, they are better equipped to pose cogent questions and strengthen their stances in public writing. Further highlighting the need for students to develop and situate their writing both in the internal world and external world, Giroux (2011) states,

> Critical pedagogy asserts that students can engage their own learning from a position of agency and in so doing can actively participate in narrating their identities through a culture of questioning between the private and public while changing forms of self- and social recognition. (p. 10)

Teachers enacting critical composition pedagogy facilitate discussions and create writing opportunities that support iterative cycles of examining self, examining society, rearticulating self, and reforming society. In our search for exemplars of writing for impact, we used critical composition pedagogy as a lens for identifying writing instruction that incorporated critical textual production.

Search Methods and Criteria

To identify research for our preliminary review, we conducted searches in major literacy journals focused on writing, including *English Journal*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, and *Journal of Literacy Research*; conducted searches in ERIC databases (ProQuest; EBSCOhost); and also reviewed reference lists in articles to find books aligned with our focus. Search terms included keywords such as "audience," "publishing," "composing," and "writing" in general and title searches. We mainly focused on peer-reviewed, empirical articles in K-12 settings published

between 2000-2018. As we selected readings, we considered in and out of classroom instances of writing for impact. Many chosen articles focused on writing that targeted a specific cause or issue that student writers wanted to address. Through our search process, some articles were excluded because they focused on college-aged students, preservice or in-service teachers, or because they were theoretical. We were particularly interested in articles on students being able to speak to community issues, local injustices, and their personal experiences in K-12 classrooms, based on our grounding in critical theory (Freire, 1970/2000). Our review is preliminary in nature as we seek to uncover instances of writing for social change in K-12 settings. As we explored these instances, we identified emergent themes that contribute to this field of scholarship and also promote continued inquiry into critical literacy and writing for critical change.

Through these methods, we identified 25 articles and books focused on writing in K-12 spaces. We were selective in our review, rather than exhaustive, seeking to examine research in varied contexts and written by both practitioners and researchers. We organized our selected literature by creating a chart of the student population, project and method, modalities of writing, audience and desired impact, and effects on students found in each reading. The chart supported synthesis and strengthened our primary goal: to explore a variety of ways writing for impact was conceptualized.

Findings

A Spectrum of Purposes

Our preliminary review revealed an array of purposes that may be useful for researchers and practitioners who are either designing or investigating writing instruction and who are interested in pushing classroom practices towards critical composition pedagogy. Table 1

presents a spectrum of purposes ordered from internal to external impacts with the scope of

impact widening from left to right (see Table 1). Two primary purposes in the literature were 1)

raising awareness and 2) persuading others to take action.

Table 1

Writing for Impact: Spectrum of Purposes

Primary Purpose: Awareness Audiences: Self, collaborative/classroom (internal); Generalized public[a] or specific, imagined audience[b] (external)		**Primary Purpose: Action** Audience: Specific, actual audience (external)	
Sharing experience	Communicating ideas	Practical social change	Critical social change
Burtch (2018) Desler (2009) Everett (2018) Johnson (2017) Lewison & Heffernan (2008) Muhammad (2015) Pandya et al. (2015) Putnam (2001) Sepúlveda (2011) Singer & Shagoury (2005) Stevenson & Beck (2017)	Crespo (2003) Gambrell et al. (2011) Lalik & Oliver (2007) Mirra, Filipiak, & Garcia (2015) Pandya et al. (2016) Rodesiler & Kelley (2017) Wolbers (2008) Wood, Stover, & Kissel (2013)	Atwell (1998) Wollman-Bonilla (2001)	Cammarota & Fine (2008) Ehst & Caskey (2018) Morrell (2008) Powell, Cantrell, & Adams (2001)

[a]When communicating ideas, students sometimes write for an external audience by publishing work so

others can read it but without identifying a specific audience.

[b]This specific, imagined audience is also an "invoked" audience; one that may exist in reality but the

writer does not actually communicate with this audience.

Some writing projects contained both purposes but generally one purpose was dominant. We

discuss each primary purpose and subpurpose in the next sections and describe research aligned

within each subpurpose. Importantly, writing for social change often includes elements of raising

awareness, such as explaining why strip mining is problematic and the research demonstrating the problem, before launching into a call to action (Powell et al., 2001). However, the primary purpose is to push a particular audience to an action that addresses the social issue.

In Table 1, we also consider audience for particular purposes and whether it is an internal audience, such as writing for self or for colleagues in a classroom or collective, or if it is an external audience. For an external audience, we distinguish between writing for a generalized public or specific, imagined audience, both of which are often "invoked" audiences (McGrail & Behizadeh, 2016) versus specific, actual audiences. An example of a specific, actual audience is a student writing a letter to a city council member and delivering this letter. We found that writing to raise awareness was associated with writing for self, a generalized public, or imagined audiences while writing for social change was associated with writing for specific, actual (versus imagined) audiences.

Raising Awareness

Under raising awareness, we theorize two subpurposes: sharing experience and communicating ideas, although these have extensive overlap. Regarding sharing experience, an exemplar in this category is Sepúlveda's (2011) literacy collaborative with twenty-four transmigrant high school boys. Sepúlveda met with "*El Grupo*" twice a week for five months during school hours to read, discuss, and write poetry around the theme of "border crossing," literally and metaphorically. Students then shared poems with members of the collaborative. In Sepúlveda's study and other scholarship in this category (e.g. Johnson, 2017; Muhammad, 2015; Stevenson & Beck, 2017), the purpose for writing is identity development and collectively raising consciousness, which are also valued student outcomes. Notably, none of these collaboratives were in traditional classroom spaces.

In an example of communicating ideas, Singer and Shagoury (2005) detail a year-long curriculum on social activism with a class of diverse 9th grade students in an urban setting. Students read self-selected texts on social activists, participated in reading and writing workshops to develop literacy skills, shared diverse perspectives during class discussions, and finally created and shared multimodal activist projects, accompanied by written "artist statements" in a gallery walk. The desired impact in the final project was communicating ideas to other classmates about an issue that mattered to them (such as supporting local libraries or combating clear cutting forests). Each project included a call to action in which students shared ways other students could address the issue.

Although both Sepúlveda (2011) and Singer and Shagoury's (2005) projects centered on social changes, the final projects were directed towards raising awareness within a peer community. To move towards realizing social change through writing would have required students to identify audiences who could effect change and then address these audiences. In both of these examples, the audiences are real but internal to the classroom or collaborative. Students are writing to impact each other and themselves.

Other research blends sharing experience and communicating ideas. For example, Lalik and Oliver (2007) reported on a year-long project focused on critiquing dominant media messages about female bodies. The first author worked with a group of four eighth-grade girls and engaged them in a range of literacy activities including exploring their identity through journal writing, composing biographies, critiquing representations of girls' bodies in magazines, and conducting an inquiry project investigating peers' perceptions. Through journal writing, the girls were able to share their experiences with one another and use them as starting points for social critique. The final inquiry project was directed towards gathering and sharing data with

others, aligning this element more with communicating ideas. For the final project, the audience
was the collective rather than an external audience.

Taking Action

The second primary purpose for writing was advocating for action that would produce
social change. Reviewing our set of articles, we noticed a difference in terms of *practical* social
change, which we defined as being focused on an issue unrelated to oppression, or *critical* social
change, defined as focused on an issue of oppression, such as racism, sexism, ableism, the
school-to-prison pipeline, and so on. This latter subpurpose aligns strongly with critical
composition pedagogy.

For example, Atwell's (1998, 2014) classic text on structuring reading and writing
workshops in middle schools includes multiple examples of authentic, real-world writing that
seeks to impact specific, actual audiences. In one writing project, students wrote a petition to the
school principal to procure a bus to take them to local basketball games—a request which was
successful. In another project, students wrote letters to their local television station to critique the
station's coverage of an election. However, in Atwell's text, there are not examples of writing
focused on privileges or "isms" of oppression, such as racism, sexism, ableism, or classism. One
slight example of attention to sexism is in a community profiles project. All of the profiles
written by students were on women due to Atwell's concern that "there is particular difficulty
here [in Maine] in recognizing the work of women and the contribution it makes to the life of the
community" (Atwell, 1998, p. 476).

Importantly, Atwell (1998, 2014) allowed students to identify their own "territories of
writing," so students *could* choose to bring social justice topics into their writing, but in
modeling her own writing topics and processes, Atwell tended to not write about social justice

issues. Thus, Atwell's writing projects are strongly rooted in authenticity yet do not attend to social justice. A lack of attention to social justice does not mean that these projects are not worthy or laudable, yet when an entire curriculum excludes consideration of local, national, or global injustices related to systemic oppression (e.g. racism, sexism, ableism, etc.), this is problematic (NCTE, 2019b).

The right-most column in Table 1 represents research in which students advocate for social change focused on oppression, which we termed *critical* social change. One exemplar of this work is Powell and colleagues (2001) project with fourth-grade students to prevent strip mining of a local mountain. Composing acts included soliciting funds to support their advocacy, communicating with local news organizations, arranging a press conference, organizing a rally, and presenting findings and proposals for next steps. A final collaborative writing task in Powell and colleagues' (2001) project was a ten-page proposal to a city official, which "included an analysis of the problem, data on the unique plant and animal life on the mountain, a rationale for the students' suggestions, and five recommendations" (p. 777). With the help of other activists, students achieved their goal and realized social change. The audiences for different writing artifacts within the project were specific and existed outside the classroom. Also, audiences in this case were actual audiences, not invoked or imagined. However, this project took place over an entire year, making it difficult—if not impossible—to implement a complicated, time-intensive project such as this with a required, scripted ELA curriculum.

Other examples of critical social change were found in Cammarota and Fine's (2008) book entitled *Revolutionizing Education*, which describes multiple youth participatory action research (YPAR) projects with adolescent and college-aged youth. In this volume, different authors (including YPAR participants) detail projects including 1) analyzing push-out culture in

schools, creating a youth guide for passing the GED, and engaging in a speaking tour about

educational inequities; 2) analyzing gentrification and stereotypes and creating websites, a

research report, and a sticker campaign to disrupt negative stereotypes about young women of

color, and 3) identifying and documenting structural inequities in a school and then pressuring

administration to make changes.

Only the last example in Cammarota and Fine's (2008) volume was in a school setting,

and this was also the only example in which the desired social change was realized, in this case,

physical school improvements and more multicultural classes. In their book review, Echeverri

and Hytten (2008) wonder if social transformation occurred in many of these projects. They

write, "While much of the meta-talk in the book is about social transformation, what we most see

as readers is the ways in which engaging in PAR changed the lives of the individual participants"

(p. 517). Although we believe the YPAR projects documented in Cammarota and Fine's (2008)

book are worthy enterprises even if they did not yield social transformation, Echeverri and

Hytten's (2008) critique pushes us to consider how these projects might be extended to achieve

critical social change.

Writing for Impact and Effects on Students

Across this spectrum of writing purposes, researchers linked writing for impact to student

outcomes. Three major effects on students due to writing for impact identified in the literature

are: 1) increased criticality and positive identity development; 2) increased student engagement;

and 3) increased writing quality (see Table 2). Some studies focused on other outcomes, such as

improved social skills in Pandya and colleagues' (2016) study, so these studies are not included

in Table 2. Other studies found multiple effects of students writing for impact, so a primary

outcome was selected. We also explore trends regarding methods, linking employed

methodology to effects on students.

Increased Criticality and Positive Identity Development

In the first subset of scholarship that found increased criticality and positive identity

development, the majority were ethnographic or descriptive projects with rich, detailed

description of students writing for impact (Everett, 2018; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Johnson,

2017; Morrell, 2008; Muhammad, 2015; Pandya et al., 2015; Sepúlveda, 2011; Stevenson &

Beck, 2017). One project employed textual analysis (Lewison & Heffernan, 2008). Additionally,

writing samples included in this body of research were often powerful in terms of student voice

and ideas, suggesting high quality student writing emerged from these projects in tandem with

increased criticality and positive identity development. All of these studies with the exception of

Cammorota & Fine shared the primary purpose of raising awareness.

Table 2

Major Outcomes for Articles

Increased criticality and/or positive identity development	Increased student engagement and/or motivation	Increased writing quality	Social transformation
Everett (2018) Cammarota & Fine (2008) Johnson (2017) Lewison & Heffernan (2008) Morrell (2008) Muhammad (2015) Pandya et al. (2015) Sepúlveda (2011) Stevenson & Beck (2017)	Desler (2009) Ehst & Caskey (2018) Gambrell et al. (2011) Mirra, Filipiak, & Garcia (2015) Putnam (2001) Rodesiler & Kelley (2017) Singer & Shagoury (2005) Wood, Stover, & Kissel (2013)	Atwell (1998; 2014) Wolbers (2008) Wollman-Bonilla (2001)	Powell, Cantrell, & Adams (2001)

One example of powerful writing leading to increased criticality and positive identity development comes from Ava, a black, queer youth in Johnson's (2017) after school writing club who explored their sexual orientation in tandem with messages received from society and his school. Ava wrote in one journal entry:

> The halls want me to be something less than I am . . . I have to walk a little less and talk a little less. I want to hold his hand. I want to dance in the hall. Dancing takes me to another land. It sends me to a land of milk and honey. (p. 24)

Johnson (2017) argues that through the activities of the writing club, Ava and other students were supported in seeing the fractured nature of their identity and examining how this fracturing was created by the dissonance between who they wanted to be and imposed societal norms. Through writing, students created an integrated sense of self and a more critical stance on their school and the wider society. Thus, the primary purpose of the club was to share experience in ways that helped students make sense of their own identity and increased criticality of heteronormativity. The outcomes of increased criticality and positive identity development are crucial, particularly when working with linguistically and culturally diverse youth who have experienced marginalization in schools and society.

Increased Student Engagement

Other studies found writing for impact increased student engagement and/or motivation (Desler, 2009; Ehst & Caskey, 2018; Gambrell et al., 2011; Mirra et al., 2015; Putnam, 2001; Rodesiler & Kelley, 2017; Singer & Shagoury, 2005; Wood et al., 2013). Unlike the studies finding increased criticality and positive identity development, these studies were less likely to emphasize effects on students, sometimes focusing more so on activities and products rather than how writing for impact affected students. Yet like the studies centered on criticality and identity,

these studies tended to also share the primary purpose of writing to raise awareness, generally to share experiences.

As an example, Rodesiler & Kelley (2017) focused on students sharing fictive experiences. They described a collaborative project where middle school students wrote, revised, edited, and published a middle grades novel. The authors found that writing for publication, specifically engaging with editors and receiving editorial feedback, increased student engagement in the project. Rodesiler and Kelley (2017) wrote:

> Throughout their interactions with professional editors, students were treated as writers.
> There was no mistaking the roles of everyone involved. Students were expected to write
> as writers and receive feedback as writers. Afforded that respect, students asked for
> copies of the feedback to reread on their own. Many asked questions about the editorial
> suggestions and looked forward to the next round of critique. (p. 26)

In this project, the editors were a specific, actual audience, with the generalized public being the ultimate audience. Across these studies, students wrote for authentic purposes and audiences, often to share experiences, yielding increased student engagement.

Increased Writing Quality

Both authorial teams with projects focused on the subpurpose of practical social change documented how this purpose linked to increased writing quality (Atwell; 1998; 2014; Wollman-Bonilla, 2001). In Atwell's case, this claim is supported by extensive, detailed exemplars from student writing. In Wollman-Bonilla's article, this claim is supported by the researcher's observation. Wolbers (2008) also focused on increased writing quality in their study of deaf and hard of hearing students co-writing a "Morning Message," a short, collaboratively written personal narrative that was shared with the entire school community. Wolbers used a pre- and

post-test design to measure writing quality. Additionally, other researchers noted increased writing quality as a secondary outcome. Articulating multiple outcomes, Morrell (2008) suggested that engagement in critical literacy projects increased criticality, engagement, and achievement for participating students based on his observation and supported by excerpts from student writing.

Social Transformation

The one article in our set that yielded social transformation was Powell, Cantrell, and Adams (2001). They also found that participating in the activist project increased student agency and political self-efficacy. Importantly, we do not believe that realizing critical social change is necessary for enacting critical composition pedagogy. Yet like Echeverri and Hytten (2008), we are curious how teachers might design critical composition units like Powell and colleagues did that are deeply integrated into the sociopolitical realities of their communities and municipalities, perhaps increasing the possibility that these projects designed for impact actually realize the changes students and teachers wish to see.

<div align="center">**Discussion**</div>

We found a variety of purposes associated with writing for impact: sharing experience, communicating ideas, effecting practical or critical social change, and sometimes a combination of these. Audiences tended to vary by purpose, with expressive purposes often having an internal collective as audience; external communication being directed to a generalized public or specific, imagined audiences; and social change focused on impacting specific, actual audiences (McGrail & Behizadeh, 2016). This preliminary review suggests there is an evidentiary base for the practice of writing for impact, including writing for critical social change, yet outcomes used as evidence of success vary widely, as do methodological approaches. There are many different

outcomes valued in the literature, including criticality, identity, critical consciousness, engagement, as well as writing quality. This review tentatively suggests that incorporating a broad array of purposes for writing for impact could help students in ways that are not easily measured, such as positive identity development and increased criticality, and even possibly aid in social transformation.

Regarding implications for research, we urge researchers and practitioners to study the effects of enacting variations of writing for impact in different contexts. In particular, it would be beneficial to ascertain if/when/how writing resulted in systemic shifts, such as revamping of a local or state law or the healing of a community where racism had left deep wounds. Currently, we do have a few examples of these outcomes (e.g., Powell, Cantrell, & Adams, 2001) but these exemplars are limited. The recent occurrences of protests and calls for social justice actions, such as reforming or defunding police, provide fertile ground for such research opportunities as these events are nationwide. Thus, the time is ripe to offer rays of light in which educators, teacher researchers, schools, and communities used these events as an impetus to heal rather than hate. From the #metoo movement to #blacklivesmatter campaign, the current moment warrants research of educational spaces that seek to employ critical composition pedagogy and critical literacy to alter the trajectory of future society.

To make a case for incorporating writing for critical social change in teaching practices, teachers and teacher leaders can note benefits outlined in this paper. Currently, educators can cite Morrell's (2008) research demonstrating increased criticality, engagement, and achievement, and Powell, Cantrell, and Adam's (2001) project yielding increased agency and political self-efficacy. Although students should write to impact different audiences and for varied purposes, we are particularly interested in students writing for critical social change. Writing for critical

social change was less observed in the articles we read, particularly in classroom spaces, even though this purpose is embedded in NCTE's vision statement (2019a), NCTE's resolution on critical literacy (2019b) and critical approaches to writing (Freire, 1970/2000; Morrell, 2003; 2008), and critical theory more generally (Janks, 2013; Luke, 2014). In addition to sharing the evidentiary base supporting writing for impact as a valued pedagogical practice, teachers can share with administrators and/or parents calls and resolutions from NCTE over the last couple years urging ELA educators to incorporate critical literacy into their classrooms, particularly around discussing and combating racism.

Importantly, we are not saying that particular purposes or outcomes are more valuable than others; rather, we believe students should have opportunities to write for multiple purposes and varied audiences. We emphasize critical social change because in the United States, writing for critical social change is particularly neglected, in part due to standards that focus on skills and genres rather than social practices and a sociopolitical discourse (McCarthey & Mkhize, 2013; McCarthey & Woodard, 2018). Additionally, we recognize that curriculum, standards, and assessments are not necessarily supportive of writing for impact, especially not writing for *critical* social change. Teachers are often constrained by textbooks that "represent accepted authority" (Hairston, 1982, p. 80) but do not reflect critical perspectives. Furthermore, Echeverri and Hytten (2008) noted that taking revolutionary action that yields social transformation, even in out of school YPAR spaces, may be particularly difficult to achieve.

While recognizing self-transformation by youth as an important outcome, Echeverri and Hytten (2008) wonder "what it would look like to narrate structural change" and "how the actions undertaken by the youth [could move] beyond individual transformation to concrete social change" (p. 518). Currently, multiple student-led movements *are* achieving actual social

transformations, such as March for Our Lives (https://marchforourlives.com/[1]), Black youth councils within the Black Lives Matter movement (https://blacklivesmatter.com/[2]) and Movement for Black Lives (https://m4bl.org/[3]), and youth-led climate activism projects such as Zero Hour (http://thisiszerohour.org[4]). Forging connections with social justice-oriented movements may help extend the important work done within the YPAR community from individual to social transformation. For ELA teachers in K-12 classrooms, examining policy statements, art, petitions, and other methods of advocacy and activism of student-led social justice groups can support students in identifying ways they desire to take action against injustice. As the United States reckons with its legacy of White supremacy and racism, ELA teachers can aid in the movement for racial justice by expanding their repertoire of practice, including broadening writing purposes and incorporating critical composition pedagogy.

Returning to Zuidema and colleagues (2020) call for antiracist ELA education, they emphasize, "As literacy educators, our aim is to help students and communities to imagine a better, more humane world and to take the steps to achieve it" (para. 5). Taking those steps requires writing for critical social change be included in K-12 classrooms, and we hope the spectrum of purposes for writing for impact and the evidence supporting increases in writing quality, increased criticality, identity development, and increased engagement can support educators in classrooms and outside of classrooms in findings ways to support students in writing for critical social change. English language arts educators need to help students move from bystanders to social injustices to allies, accomplices, and civic actors combating injustice. By centering on real-world contexts and actions, critical composition pedagogy helps students academically, socially, personally, and civically.

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