# SUSTAINING SUSTAINERS: MOVING CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES ACROSS CLASSROOMS AND COMMUNITIES

By

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# ABSTRACT

## SUSTAINING THE SUSTAINERS: MOVING CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES ACROSS CLASSROOMS

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This alternative format dissertation explores how four early career teachers and their early career teacher educator practice culturally sustaining pedagogies across classrooms and communities. Using constant comparative methods and multiple lenses on teacher knowledge and learning to teach across identities, literacies, and inequities, it generates three articles for three different potential journal audiences: 1) “Practice-ing A Flow: Moving Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies from Preparation to Practice” (e.g. *Journal of Teacher Education* or *Research in the Teaching of English*), 2) “Driving Together: Humanizing Research Toward Mentorship for Justice-Oriented Teaching” (e.g. *English Journal, English Education*), and 3) “Preparing to Leave: Teachers and Teacher Educators Approaching What Could Be (e.g. *The Atlantic, Huffington Post*). Each article takes up a different aspect of the research and advances insights and implications of relevant interest for these journal audiences.

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# DRIVING MOVEMENTS: AN INTRODUCTION

The year before I began this dissertation, the cohort of twenty one teacher-interns I worked with collectively traveled 1400 miles to campus for our class. A few interns taught close by, but the majority needed to budget at least an hour for the drive. They would make the trek fourteen times that year, braving what many felt was the worst winter our Midwestern state had seen in a long time. I'd driven their roads too. With so few in-person meetings, I felt it important to be physically with them, offering whatever help and guidance I could, bridging the miles in the best way I knew how. It wasn't much. Only a half-day with each of them. But many said the time we spent talking about what they were teaching, talking with their students and mentors, and discussing their job materials was valuable. They seemed glad I was there. We acted as a grounding presence amongst the evanescent, all preparing to leave from our program's natural conclusions: with degrees, certifications, and commitments, and toward new classrooms, communities, and identities.

Those early morning drives gave me a great deal of time to think. Oftentimes leaving before 7am, the darkness outside, and the many miles on long stretches of highway, made it easy for my thoughts to drift toward questions driving me out there. Between our university and their classrooms lay roads and distances both material and ideological, and my physical movement toward their classrooms often made me wonder about all that converged across our pedagogical landscapes. Who were the many students, languages, and literacies meeting that day? How did these teachers attempt to engage with this convergence through asset-based and culturally sustaining teaching approaches? Were they--could they have been--prepared enough to do so? What did it

mean that I--a White, cis-hetero male, continually learning how to understand my own identities and positionalities and how to further divest from my privileges , who had left the secondary classroom--was the person to mentor them there? And, would I still be taken seriously as a teacher educator and researcher if I admitted my lack of knowing and of seeking answers? Each time we met at the university, we carried these questions with us: a critical luggage of educators committed toward justice.

I have regularly been compelled by what happens within, between, and across pedagogical spaces. As a student, teacher, and teacher-educator, I learned and taught across institutions in the northwest, northeast, and mid-west: private and public, alternative, letter-grades and none, Ivy-league, rural, urban, and suburban. None the same. All dynamically situated in ways uniquely reflecting students and communities. I've been a high school English teacher, college writing instructor, and now a PhD-student-candidate-teacher-educator-researcher. What has remained constant across these roles and spaces is regular attentiveness to institutional boundaries and my regular learning to resist and move in ways most attentive to the plurality of needs, backgrounds, and values of the students I teach and learn with.

Schools across my experiences were so different from one another. Some looked almost brand new with the latest in educational technologies, sparkling hallways, and copious amounts of young adult literature for students to choose. Others had roofs leaking into buckets and whole classrooms and wings completely empty: left that way as students and parents moved out to other schools or better economic promise elsewhere. In these classrooms we all settled for moments. There, students brought with them various identities, literacies, and language practices. The early-career

teachers I've worked with often did the best they could with what they had, many times bringing to our university classroom successes, challenges, and questions from where they travelled. So we all navigated our collective terrain together: doing what we could within, between, and across our classrooms to further learn to realize justice in the best ways we knew how.

As I neared my dissertation work, I began to reflect on what it would mean to engage in co-inquiry with some of these early-career teachers I worked with in teacher preparation. At that point, I knew this would be the only direction I wanted to go. I came to the university after teaching high school and wanted to ask and answer questions that would really matter to students and teachers. I quickly found myself at odds with some of the prevailing approaches to research, relationships with participants, and even how some I worked with saw "practitioner-oriented" work as less serious, less academic, and too messy to be published in the journals that rarely touched the desktops of practicing teachers. I am in a continual process of further understanding why this is, how the colonial project of American education and educational research are implicated, and how my own Whiteness and dominant identities are connected. It would take a semester for me to write my first proposal for work related to this project. I reflected regularly about just what it would mean to take a stance of "humanizing" (Paris & Winn, 2013) co-inquiry with some of these early-career teachers, as well as the extent to which research might really be able to address our collective struggles. I wondered if (and still do), in the end, I needed to "refuse research" in order to truly support them in the ways they needed (Tuck & Wang, 2014). Was research what we really needed?

In the end, I moved carefully, listening to the guidance of these teachers in

dialogue with the pedagogical commitments we hoped to further realize. In the end, I accepted their collective invitations to learn alongside them, asking and answering questions of CSP practice that might further de-center de-humanizing approaches to teaching and research, but at the same time refusing to push into spaces just for that research, often providing the support they indicated they needed, letting them and students lead, providing critical feedback based on the commitments to CSP we said we wanted to realize, but being continually wary of entering spaces and making claims about knowledges and values not mine to make, in spaces where I hadn't been invited yet. This began because of my research, but I didn't want it to just be about research, as I was coming to better understand how research and the purported values surrounding it were part of the colonial enterprise. I was coming to realize that perhaps some of the stories I told about why I wanted to go to graduate school were false.

Perhaps the impact I hoped to have was based on narrow and colonialist notions of education that would only continue to reify what I purportedly wanted to resist?. Would the classroom and institutional spaces we currently navigated allow for us to do work in this way? What would our identities, classrooms, and institutions allow? Could we know how to move in the ways we needed to in order to respond toward the classrooms we wanted? Were these boundaries we could begin to cross? What would it continue to mean to learn how to be in solidarity with the youth and communities where we taught? And how would we be careful to not reify what we were learning to resist? We were positioned within—and across—the educational spaces we were attempting to change.

Eventually, we--Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie (pseudonyms for this study),

new teachers, learning to apply culturally sustaining and other asset-based lenses across their classrooms, and I--chose to work with each other since we were all attempting toward culturally sustaining, justice-oriented, and more humanizing approaches to research and pedagogy. All of us new in our roles. All of us students and teachers. All of us wondering--together--how we could best navigate the educational spaces we knew needed to be different: somehow.

Many of our words across this study hint at precarious senses of agency, feeling outward and reflecting inward about our capacities to resist and move. What is heartening is that we do move: toward the justice-oriented spaces we are trying to imagine together. This study is about these attempts at movement and the relationships that helped to sustain us. This study is about where we're going together: new teachers collectively attempting to grapple with what it means to teach and learn with one another toward the justice-oriented pedagogical spaces we believe in. Overall, this dissertation is about the justice-oriented work we are committed to realizing and what it will take to move us and others in driving it forward.

## Who we are across our space(s)

My drive to answer questions in this study stemmed from being new to secondary and teacher education classrooms myself, continual work trying to better understand and address how my identities and Whiteness privileged and positioned me, and an emerging disenchantment about what I was coming further recognize as colonizing and distancing approaches to teaching and research. I spent three years as a full-time high school English teacher before coming to a PhD program in Teacher Education, and often found myself learning different approaches along with my students: a function of

both the complexity of our jobs and of the level of experience we all had. I received little pedagogical support and guidance in my new role(s) and attempted to teach in the best ways I knew how. My newness allowed me to better see classrooms from an early-carer perspective, offering some insight perhaps much closer to their experiences than some senior colleagues. My identities allowed and obscured in the work, something that I at-times surfaced with participants, and at others just didn't know how or could not recognize when I should. What I did try to do across the work is to attempt a further de-centering of myself, a connected further divestment in the colonial practices of teaching and research I was further (be)coming to recognize, and a further supporting of these teachers learning to do the same with youth. As tough questions and a dearth of answers emerged for us, I at times felt the inadequate imposter, but also the liberating license, a product of my privileging as a university researcher, to question the manner in which we all worked, constantly thinking about how I--and they--may not see based on how we were institutionally positioned I. I was continually learning to learn alongside early career teachers across my university work and in this dissertation study. I will be doing so long after I submit this dissertation.

I ultimately decided to work with Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie because of their justice-oriented commitments and what they potentially represented about the various identities and various schooling contexts of that teacher-intern cohort. The majority of students across my courses were White females (reflecting the larger statistics in teacher education). They represented a spectrum of intersecting identities, communities, and students (both of our class and across their eventual teaching assignments beyond our program). Ben, a White male, initially taught English in a for-

profit urban charter high school school in a largely Black community, then in a non-profit urban middle school charter school in a largely Black community, finally taught in a for-profit urban charter middle school in a mixed community comprised of Black and middle-eastern students, and then eventually left teaching. Rachel, a White female, now taught high school English in traditional public school in the mostly White suburban community where she grew up; Simone, a Black female, taught English in a non-profit charter middle school in a mostly Black and suburban community where she grew up; and Stevie, a White female, who initially taught English and History in a traditional public middle school in a large rural community comprised of both Black and White students, eventually returned to teach English in a traditional middle school in a mostly White suburban community where she grew up. Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie shared a common set of teacher preparation experiences in a large, top-tier mid-western teaching program and commitments to practicing "culturally sustaining pedagogies" (CSP) (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

It was during their teacher education training that I, a former high school English teacher, from a rural setting, having then taught in both urban and rural settings (including the rural area where I grew up), came to know them as their English Education instructor across multiple methods courses and into their full-year teaching-internship experiences (totaling two years). These teachers' coursework and training in both a college of education and an English department, in the field, classroom assignments, and classroom discussions, often focused on theories and pedagogies that took a justice-oriented, asset-based, sociocultural, dialogic, and "culturally sustaining" approach to classrooms, literacies, and communities (such as Early, 2006;

Gutierrez, 2008; Juzwik et. al., 2013; Kinloch, 2011; Kirkland 2008, 2009; Lewis & Petrone, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2007, 1995; Paris, 2012; Rose, 2009). We began our research when they were ending their first year of teaching. I then spent a year with Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie from Spring 2015 through Spring 2016.

Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie were committed to CSP and justice-oriented teaching in practice. They regularly challenged me to think of how what we learned in our methods classroom could be moved amongst all of the different classroom spaces where they all now taught. And I knew from the start of our work, that I wouldn't want to take a traditional approach with them in this research and the dissertation I'd produce. I was upfront with them about the emerging nature of this project, of my perspectives on research, and my hopes to learn with them. We were going to seek answers together in the most humanizing ways we could.

## Orientations in/to Our Research

"Humanizing research" importantly renders researchers and participants co-inquirers alongside one another: pursuing questions of mutual concern and for the betterment of all involved. As a humanizing endeavor, my research is built out of "relationships of *care* [my emphasis] and dignity that dialogically seek to address the traditionally colonizing, inequitable approaches in (English) classrooms and (English) classroom research" (Paris, 2011, pp. 137-140). As much as I could, and was learning how to do across this work, I attempted to approach this research alongside Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie, co-researching the negotiation of justice-oriented pedagogical spaces across English classrooms, the contours of our methodology importantly match the focus of our research as we honor the "dialogic spiral" that is the foundation of our humanizing

approaches with each other and with our students (Kinloch and San Pedro, 2014). This co-researching took the form of co-creating the research questions, deciding together what methods would work best for the inquiry and would fit best with teachers' schedules, and schooling contexts, and regularly engaging in conversation about what we were collectively noticing and across the work and should be discussed in the eventual written pieces that resulted. Modeling this approach alongside them is a key part of their growth in doing similarly with students they work alongside. In fact, this may be just as powerful as the classroom teacher education work we do: matching our various theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological commitments in ways speaking louder than university classroom modeling and teaching, and more fully beginning to de-center power structures within which all of us attempt to do our work.

Our humanizing, co-research approach began with the mutual "selection" of Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie to work alongside in this study. Selection as a process carries a lineage of dehumanization as it places the power solely in my hands. As Paris (2011) points out, it's a colonizing term bestowing on me "unilateral power" in the process of engaging participants in a study. He further suggests making this process a dialogic one, allowing participants choose us as we choose them (pp. 140-1). This dialogic process is akin to what Winn and Ubiles (2011) conceive of in the "admission" process to humanizing research approaches. I began the process of this study by sharing roughly-sketched out research questions and commitments connected to co-constructing culturally sustaining spaces with teacher-interns in our class, and emphasized the co-inquiry I imagined happening. Along they way I've been upfront about the emerging nature of this project. Potential participants initially responded to my

study proposal and research questions in focus group meetings and individual conversations, speaking into the study, questions, methodology, and methods from inception. Their feedback was extremely helpful, guiding many of my revisions, and grounding us in Lamont Hill's (2009) humanizing, critical concerns of who we all will be with and for each other, and how we all want our readers and the English education community to see our work.

We are also grounded in larger traditions of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR aims to address larger social inequities through collaborative co-inquiry with participants in the communities of which they are part: challenging through its focus and methodology the "the positivist trope of feigned neutrality and objectivity" in educational research that continues to prop-up colonizing and dehumanizing agendas (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2008, p. 8; 2009). As I hear and read participants' words and questions, I've been regularly struck by how much they mirror my own. At many points I've felt as if my words could be theirs and theirs could be mine. The questions are ours. We are necessarily close.

And where some may see this closeness with participants as liability, I see it as strength. Who else would know how to ask these questions in this manner? I would argue they are best asked and answered together--right next to one another--and not at a distance. I have been extremely aware at all points across this work of our closeness and have attempted to account for it at steps along the way: both through mandated IRB procedures and through my own reflections. I will no doubt miss things and be blinded at times by the limits of my identities, the focus of our research questions, and overall admiration for their courageous work. There are also points where we were still

distanced, institutionally, physically, and ideologically, and where this research didn't--or couldn't yet--be co-. This manifest in a spectrum of ways, from schedules (because of our roles) that didn't allow for the same role in the research, to not being able to co-write this final work because of IRB constraints, to still navigating the ongoing development of our dynamic relationships (from student, to mentee, to colleague, to friend, and back again).

But, as complex as our relationship and approaches are, they will render a much clearer picture of the landscape we all face as new English Educators committed to justice in classrooms and research. We are the best individuals to tell our collective story and what implications it may have for our current moment in English Teacher Education. This is why readers will see my questions and struggles reflected across this dissertation. It is through these approaches that I continually learn to assert--in espoused theoretical *and* methodological commitments--a deeper engagement alongside participants with issues of literacy, pedagogy, and power across classrooms and research.

### Orientations in/to/through this Dissertation

It is in the air at my institution the number of dissertations that went from defense to proverbial drawer: a means that ended. Some would go back and revisit this dissertation product, excising appendages for further means where traditional and book-length dissertations are less likely published as whole works. I want something more useful, more portable, more immediate. I continue to wonder about the impacts of ideas grounding my work for a variety of audiences both close and distant: teacher educators, researchers, secondary English teachers, and those who simply care about our public

education system. I provide multiple ways into my work. It can stand as a whole or in pieces: equally important depending on your vantage points. Overall, just as has been a core theme across this work, I hope it can move: living and inspiring across audiences in ways that might further justice-oriented work.

For this dissertation, I explored three core questions:

1. *How do early career teachers practice culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP)?*
2. *What do early career teachers experience as they practice CSP?*
3. *How do I mentor early career teachers as they practice CSP?*

Each question afforded and constrained, lending itself better to certain perspectives and eventual publications than others. In crafting three different articles, directed to different audiences, I was able to foreground certain questions and answers, and then move pieces of ideas across each text. So, for example, in identifying an initial pedagogical framework in the first article that mainly answered questions one and two, I was then able to focus specifically on question three and identify an accompanying and complementary mentoring framework that supported the pedagogical framework from the first article. The third article then allowed me to explore stories emerging across all questions that didn't neatly fit into either the first or second articles. It also afforded further freedom in addressing the implications and audiences outside my immediate discourses and the academy.

To help anchor readers in this "alternative dissertation," I offer some guiding orientation below, providing succinct frames for each individual article (outlining imagined audiences, publication and genre considerations, and my hopes for their impact). I also provide some information about how each piece contains echoes of the

others, adjusted based on publication and genre constraints, but still also attempting to push on the edges of what would, perhaps, normally be the concern of the publication and its audiences. My overall focus across these articles was that ideas could move: across genres and compelling audiences, surfacing new possibilities within and across research, policy, and practice.

## Contours of My "Alternative" Dissertation

### Article 01: "Practice-ing A Flow: Moving Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP) from Preparation to Practice" (*Journal of Teacher Education* or *Research in the Teaching of English* Researcher Audience)

For an overall dissertation genre that still must, in ways, be anchored in traditional conventions of academic research, this article serves as the foundation out of which the other articles are written and showcases traditional academic bona fides. I adhere to the conventions of a traditional journal article: abstract, literature review, research questions, methodology and method, analysis, discussion, findings, and conclusion. I also use what I would consider more insider language to the fields of Teacher Education, English Education, and to literacy and language researchers, as well as a robust set of academic citations to illustrate the comprehensive approaches I took for research questions, methodology and methods, analysis, and to inform my conclusions. Whereas these traditional elements of academic research are more foregrounded in this article, they become more backgrounded in the the second and third articles as audiences and purposes change. I also, because of genre length restrictions and focus, dedicate this piece to specifically exploring my first two research questions.

The major contribution I hope I can make through this first article is framework of participant experience that involves a recursive process of CSP in practice: *A Flow*

(*knowing, remixing*, *struggling,* and *flowing*). I also introduce *Practice-ing A Flow*, a potential framework for CSP and justice-oriented teacher preparation that involves a clear and critical focus alongside early-career teachers on *knowing, remixing, struggling,* and *flowing* and further co-discovering the necessary practices to further *A Flow*. This framework additionally highlights the need for work on developing the practices necessary to meet institutional resistances in classrooms and further support commitments to CSP and justice-oriented teaching leading into, out of, and across classroom and community work.

This article can hopefully help both teacher researchers and educators better understand what implementing CSP and justice-oriented teaching might entail across current practice. In engaging with this piece, I hope teacher preparation programs, teacher researchers, and teacher educators will be able to get a further window into the pedagogical moves of practitioners and the practices necessary to support these moves from preparation to practice. Much of these teachers' (and my) aptitude clearly focused on learning curriculum design through the lens of CSP and other justice-oriented theories. This is a necessary but not sufficient skillset out of teacher preparation, as further activist and advocacy practices are necessary in response to resistance and struggle and to sustain CSP and CSP practitioners. Further, mentoring support will be necessary to move with early-career teachers toward *Practice-ing A Flow*.

**Article 02: “Driving Together: Humanizing Research Toward Mentorship for Justice-Oriented Teaching”; *English Education, English Journal*; English Educator, English Mentor, English Practitioner Audience)**

For this article, I begin to shift my audience focus, genre considerations, and concerns further toward practitioners: teacher educators, teacher mentors, and teachers. Here, I dedicate the bulk of focus to what I noticed it took for me to support the pedagogical framework I discussed in the first article. In this second article, I still adhere to similar research conventions (albeit using MLA conventions because of the specific journals toward which I’m focusing), providing theoretical grounding, analysis, and discussion. However, I focus solely on answers to my third research question, providing insights into the practical “mentoring moves” I made (*centering, co-designing, encouraging, challenging*), examples of them, and further discuss what these mentoring moves allowed us to do.

The major contribution I hope I can make through this article is an initial mentoring framework necessary to support CSP from preparation to practice. I imagine teacher educators, mentors, and teachers being interested in knowing what it might take to support an emerging potential pedagogical framework to sustain CSP. There are implications for how we engage with and support early career teachers taking up CSP as teacher educators and mentors, how teachers themselves might seek out the necessary mentoring they might need for this work, as well as the very real policy implications for teacher preparation programs and districts in sustaining this work. While my first piece is one of more traditional research focus and on implications of a theory for pedagogical practice, this second piece extends a focus on this practice toward the mentoring necessary to support it.

I would hope that, by engaging with the second piece, practitioners would not

only find practical use in these findings, but might also seek out the pedagogical framework these mentoring practices support from the first piece: moving back-and-forth across ideas and journals. What is left after focusing specifically on the answers to my research questions across these first two articles is a wider audience outside of academic journals interested in our current moment in teaching, teacher education, and American education.

**Article 03: "Preparing to Leave: Teachers and Teacher Educators Approaching What Could Be"; *The Atlantic, The Huffington Post*; Wider Public Audience)**

This article represents the largest departure from traditional research and dissertation genres. In being directed toward audiences outside the academy, I focus on teacher leaving, teacher shortages, equity-oriented teaching, and our current moment in American public education. While still focusing on interview and observation data from this study, it is more narrative-driven. I integrate the words of participants into paragraphs to tell our story, greatly reducing the number of citations, and provide a great deal more explanation of the few citations used that might be unfamiliar to some audiences. Also, in being directed specifically toward a digital format, I cite using hyperlinks without end citations (as is done currently on *The Atlantic* online). Here, I also hope to bridge across the genres and journals of the first two articles, inviting both those audiences to this third genre. Also, by building out of the analysis and ideas emerging from the first two articles (and using some of the citations from the first two articles), I hope to introduce these ideas to wider public audiences interested in equity and the American educational system.

The major contribution I hope to make through this piece is to compel a wide public audience to think differently about the current state of the American educational

system and the teachers who teach, don't teach, and ultimately decide to leave teaching. Instead of blaming schools and teachers for our current moment, perhaps readers can further see--or begin to see--how classrooms are implicated in larger structural inequities, the very complex work that it will take to address these inequities both inside and outside classrooms, and the need to support the courageous teachers and would-be teachers who want to engage on the front lines. I hope to raise larger questions about what it means to leave teaching and public education--physically, emotionally, and ideologically--at this moment. I also hope that, in introducing these layers of leaving, readers further understand their own implication in the state of inequity in education and society and are compelled to act in ways that provide the necessary responses needed across classrooms and communities.

Overall, what I aspire to produce is a dissertation that can stand--in many ways--on its own. It can be approached through individual articles *and* as a cohesive whole, moving across audiences and genres. Readers, whether researchers, practitioners, or public, will find value and multiple points of entry. Ultimately, whatever ways readers approach my work, I hope it drives them to move: to new vantage points, genres, ideas, and ideologies. Mostly importantly, I hope it moves them to take up imminent equity work across classrooms and communities.

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PRACTICE-ING A FLOW: MOVING CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES FROM PREPARATION TO PRACTICE

**Abstract**

Teaching across cultures, literacies, and inequities has been a major issue in American education since its beginnings. As one approach, Paris (2012) and Paris & Alim (2017) have recently offered "culturally sustaining pedagogies" (CSP) for a fuller realization of what it means for teachers to sustain marginalized youth literacy practices and learning in justice-oriented teaching. This "humanizing" (Paris, 2011) multiple-case study looks at how four early career teachers and their early career teacher educator practice CSP across classrooms and communities. Using constant comparative methods, and "sensitized" (Charmaz, 2006) by lenses on teacher knowledge and learning to teach across identities, literacies, and inequities, it generates a framework of participant experience that involves a recursive process of CSP in practice: *A Flow* (*knowing, remixing*, *struggling,* and *flowing*). This study further introduces *Practice-ing A Flow*, a potential framework for CSP and justice-oriented teacher preparation that involves a clear and critical focus alongside early-career teachers on the recursive practices of *A Flow*. These frameworks further highlight the need for work on developing the practices necessary to respond to institutional resistances to CSP and justice-oriented teaching leading into, out of, and across classroom and community work.

Teaching within and across cultures, literacies, and inequities has been a major issue in American education since its beginnings. Often used as a monolingual homogenizer either forcing or granting access, while still preserving economic and linguistic

advantages for a select few, American education has been an orchestrated meeting of races and languages toward sorting and erasure of communities of color in the maintenance of a White settler colonial nation-state (Bazerman, 2013; Dominguez, 2017; Labaree, 2010; May, 2012; Wiley, 2014). Intimately connected have been narrow notions of what counts as literacy ignoring the literate practices of many students of color and non-dominant students and their families (Gee, 2012; Collins & Blot, 2003). Well known, also, is the “demographic divide” between a largely White and middle class female teaching population and students in this country across racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic lines. According to Boser’s (2014) recent study based on NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) data, the differences (and connected divides) between White teachers and students continues to grow. Unfortunately, much research and policy has framed this “divide” in “simplistic and binary terms” (Anderson & Stillman 2013, p. 41) that oftentimes serves to obscure the complexities inherent in the meeting of diverse students, teachers, and identities. And these perspectives, often framed as the importance of granting access to past, outdated orientations toward dominant classroom practices, limit a collective ability to see how power in relation to literacies and languages operate (Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014).

The American schooling system has seen persistent opportunity issues between White students and students of color amidst a largely White teaching core (Boser, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2010), a thriving school-to-prison pipeline (Winn & Behizadeh, 2011), and a deepening “educational debt” to Black and Brown students and communities (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Meanwhile, our society continues to grapple with legacies of institutionalized racism and “White fragility” (DiAngelo, 2011), and connected

and persistent bias and discrimination across race, language, class, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability (e.g. Apuzzo, 2015; Badger, 2016; Winerip & Gebeloff, 2016). This continuing legacy is now further manifest through a “Trump Effect”:  emboldened hateful behavior against people already marginalized by educational institutions(Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). There has, and will continue, much justice-oriented work to be done inside and outside of classroom to support all learners and address deep inequities.

The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards (2013) adopted by many states to guide their teacher education programs emphasize an “explosion of learner diversity” and connected need for teachers to “customize learning for learners with a range of individual differences” (p. 3). Further, scholars such as Darling-Hammond (2010), Ladson-Billings (2006), and Paris & Alim (2017) have anchored our future success as an educational system and nation in our ability to teach across racialized and other systemically marginalized identities. So, it’s essential to prepare our current and future teachers for what it means to best teach across the fluid plurality of identities, cultures, literacies, and power converging in classrooms. One approach to teaching across cultures, literacies, and inequities--particularly racialized ones--has been to prepare early career teachers to take an “asset” or “resource”-based approach to students and communities, teaching them to value the outside-of-school practices of youth of color and build curriculum in connection. Out of these teacher preparation programs, the hope is that teachers will center practices of communities of color and other groups systematically marginalized

by educational institutions and potentially do so in ways de-centering what has traditionally been dominant: leading to better outcomes for all students.

This article reports on the results of a multiple-case study following four early career teachers prepared in “culturally sustaining pedagogies” (CSP) (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017) and other asset-based and justice-oriented approaches to cultural and literate practices in their teacher preparation program at a large, public, midwestern university. Out of their preparation, these teachers represented many different identities and taught across a variety of classrooms and communities. This allows for an important opportunity to better understand how these teachers learn to practice their preparation for working with students across cultures, literacies, and communities, what they experience as they do so, and how I, an early-career teacher educator, attempted to mentor them along the way.

What follows in part one of this article is a grounding in previous work focused on the complexities of teaching and learning to teach, the complexities of teaching and learning to teach toward justice across identities and inequities, and the complexities of moving reform-oriented practices from teacher preparation out across classrooms. I then outline CSP, it’s grounding in previous literacy and language research and asset-based approaches to teaching and learning, and what CSP potentially offers as further solution. The second part of this article explores the diverse group of participants and classrooms in this work as well as methodology and methods. Attempting a more “humanizing” (Paris & Winn, 2013) approach to research alongside participants in co-inquiry, and using constant comparative methods (Charmaz, 2006) across interview, focus group, observation, and curriculum artifact data with these participants across

communities, I generate a framework of participant experience that involves a recursive process of CSP in practice: *knowing, remixing*, *struggling,* and *flowing*. Overall, I introduce *Practice-ing A Flow*, a potential framework for CSP and justice-oriented teacher preparation that involves a clear and critical focus alongside early-career teachers on movements across justice-oriented pedagogical practices. This framework further highlights the need for work on developing the practices necessary to respond to institutional resistances set to maintain the White imperial project and further support commitments to CSP and justice-oriented teaching leading into, out of, and across classroom and community work. Finally, in part three, I discuss the tension and promise that emerged from this work as well as the implications for research, practice, and policy toward future teaching toward justice across classrooms and communities.

## Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

### Teacher Knowledge & Learning to Teach

Teaching, as Hollins (2012) conceives, is a

> "multidimensional process [requiring] deep knowledge. . .in a wide range of areas and the ability to synthesize, integrate, and apply this knowledge in different situations, under varying conditions and with a wide diversity of groups and individuals" (p. 395).

And to do this, well known are Shulman's (1986, 1987) conceptions of the necessary *content knowledge*, *pedagogical knowledge*, and the hybrid of *pedagogical content knowledge* that bring together deep disciplinary and methodological understandings toward the enactment of teaching practices. Koehler & Mishra (2008) further add to

these necessary knowledge bases *technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK)* toward the the effective integration of various technologies for teaching and learning. Out of these layered knowledge bases, teaching happens in classrooms that mark the convergence of truly “relational work” (Lampert, 2010): both in terms of relationship to students and to disciplines, and where “the particulars (students, ideas, and circumstances)” all meet (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 10). In classrooms, the teacher is “the central mediator” of curricular resources akin to a “music producer who remixes different digital audio files in the process of composing music.” This remix is heavily reliant on not only a teacher’s disciplinary knowledge, but also “knowledge of the local area and their knowledge of students” (Clandinin, 2016, p. 11). Essential knowledges and relationships meet and mesh--and are hopefully built out of--to support the work of teachers and students across classrooms and communities.

Teaching certainly requires much of practitioners, as it “strives toward ideals that are inherently contradictory, and that [happen] in real time where the merits of alternative courses of action must be weighed in the moment” (Kennedy, 2006, p. 206). Shulman (2004) has even framed teaching as the “most complex, most challenging, and most demanding, subtle, nuanced, and frightening activity that our species ever invented” (p. 504). And learning to teach is more than “acquiring skills and best practices. It involves adopting the identity of a teacher, being accepted as a teacher, and taking on the common values, languages, and tools of teaching” (Lampert, 2010, p. 29) in a dynamic teacher learning process with oneself and in relation to professional classroom contexts (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). This teacher learning happens across careers: both within teacher preparation (“inservice”), in the first three years of

teaching (“induction”), and through and beyond year four (“continuing professional development”) and contains discrete learning needs across this spectrum of professional identities. Learning to teach involves the continual--and deliberately mentored--professional development of a critical and reflective teaching identity in relation to practice and the growing knowledge of institutional contexts, learners, disciplines, and communities (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). And learning to teach across identities, literacies, and toward justice means even more.

**Learning to Teach Across Identities, Literacies, and Toward Justice**

Teaching happens in classrooms comprised of dynamic student and teacher identities performed through literate and linguistic practices regularly “refashioned,” “unbounded” and, like Hip-hop cyphers, in constant “flow” (Pennycook, 2005). This fluidity marks “intersections” (Crenshaw, 1989) of identities, privilege, and power. What power, for example, a Black, heterosexual woman has in certain classrooms and communities will be different than what a White, gay man experiences because of the intersecting ways that our society--and specific community contexts--privilege Whiteness and heterosexuality and position both Blackness and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) people. Further, these intersections act differently, for example, in classrooms comprised of mostly Black and Brown students or with intersecting groups of White, Black, and Brown students. For these dynamic intersections to be taken up with necessary nuance, teachers must have a deep knowledge of learners, learning, literacies, and power structures, and a necessary willingness to build substantive relationships with students to support this delicate work. Hollins (2011) has importantly pointed out that “perhaps the most important aspect of teaching is how well the teacher

knows the learner" socioculturally, so as to connect disciplinary literacies with the existing literate practices of learners (p. 397). To know the learner in this way means a continual process of building knowledge and relationship through which to make the necessary and connected decisions with curriculum and pedagogy.

This process of knowing the learner is no small task for a novice or experienced teacher and continually involves challenges on many levels: from attempting to engage different learners in different kinds and levels of authentic disciplinary work simultaneously, to adjusting practice(s) moment-to-moment, to designing holistic assessments that take into account both who students are as well as overall learning goals for courses, to facilitating "complex and risky forms of social organization" (Lampert, Boerst, & Graziani, 2011, pp. 1364-7). Additionally, educators committed to further knowing student cultures may also navigate complex "discourses of authenticity" as they attempt to "keep it real" with students (Low, Tan, & Celemencki, 2013; Lamont Hill, 2009). Justice-oriented pedagogies further require sociolinguistic approaches to languages, knowing how to integrate sociolinguistic approaches in pedagogical practices, and an ability to engage students in how fluid sociolinguistics intersect with race, power, and inequity (Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2014; Paris, 2011). This work also importantly requires a "decolonial mindset that must be developed, cultivated, lived, and deeply felt" (Dominguez, p. 226, 2017). Preparation toward this complex work has been at the forefront of many teacher education programs across the years. And these programs have been the site of much inquiry in attempts to figure out just what early career teachers can be prepared to move with from their teacher preparation into

practice (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Cochran-Smith et. al., 2015). But this movement has been difficult for a variety of reasons.

**Challenging Justice-Oriented Movement from Teacher Education into Practice**

Scholars have identified and conceived of the challenges of introducing new practice(s) from teacher education into classrooms as a "two worlds" problem (Feiman Nemser & Buchmann, 1985) where early-career teachers experience the dissonance between training contexts and discourses and their first classrooms, eventually leading to "problems of enactment" (Kennedy, 1999) where they have difficulty realizing the reform-oriented practice(s) they may have initially committed to in teacher education. This presents deep tensions as teachers attempt to learn through enactment of "concrete" and "symbolic" practice(s): the practicalities of the classroom everyday, the categories individuals and institutions use to organize and (re)define teachers and teaching, and the preparation and response to how this spectrum of practices play out around and through them (Britzman, 2007). As a solution, Grossman, Hammerness, and McDonald (2009) called for "pedagogies of enactment" in addition to "pedagogies of reflection and investigation," organized around the "core practices" of teaching and substantially restructuring teacher education programs to help early career teachers integrate theory and practice "fluidly." But reform-oriented preparation movement has been persistently challenging.

Labaree (2010) has articulated why it has persistently been so difficult to move knowledge and connected reforms from teacher education into classroom practice(s). He distinguished between the many levels of schooling when it comes to any sort of reform and has broken them down into the levels of "rhetoric" (at the level of policy and

teacher education), “formal structure” (school district level), “teaching practice” (teacher planning and decision-making), and “student learning” (the actual learning impact). And as he aptly points out, one of the major challenges for school reform is “whether it can move through all four levels of the system, from the rhetorical periphery to the core of teaching and learning in classrooms,” and that most reform stays at the level of the rhetorical, being bandied about by teacher education professors and lawmakers: easily done as these stakeholders interact within similar discourses and do not have to actually navigate the challenging movement from teacher education out across classrooms (109-130). Any justice-oriented work is also further resisted by institutions largely structured to maintain White, monolingual, middle-class, cis-hetero, patriarchal superiority.

Critical geographers add further perspective on this challenging movement. As Soja (2010) invoking Said (1993) importantly points out, “None of us is completely free from the struggle over geography” (p. 35). And this struggle is not just about the material and physical, but also “about ideas, about our images and imaginings” (Soja, 2010, p. 36). This “dynamic” perspective sees “all of the spaces and places in which we live, from the home and the school-room to the city and global economy, [as] socially constructed,” which renders classrooms as sites of resistance to moving reform from teacher education out into practice but also “not immutable or naturally given” (Soja, 2010, p. x). Soja sees public spaces such as classrooms, “as a localized urban expression of the notion of common property or, as it was once called, the commons” where the focus should be on the local, the plural, the democratically collective, and not private or public interest imposed from above or afar (Soja, 2010, p. 44-7). As teachers

attempt to move practices from teacher preparation out into their first classrooms, they navigate an unjust terrain and engage in resistance and struggle against imposed and thoroughly embedded notions of White supremacy and intersecting systems of domination further reinforced through increasing federal and state standardization, testing regimes, and privatization through charter schools. Add to this a contemporary educational climate persistently "deprofessionalizing" and "dehumanizing" (Carter Andrews, Bartell, & Richmond, 2016), and moving promising, justice-oriented core practice(s) from teacher education out across diverse classrooms and communities becomes that much more essential, possible, and challenging.

Recently, Picower (2012) has argued that preparation and support for justice-oriented teaching must not just focus on work in classrooms but also prepare early-career teachers to take action *as activists* outside classrooms. It is this outside of classroom work she believes will sustain teachers when their inside classroom work becomes difficult. She identified a spectrum of teacher learning toward being social justice educators that moves from being "oppositional preservice teachers" resistant to justice-oriented approaches and engaging with race, power, and privilege, to "emerging social justice educators" that believe in social justice education and build teaching about inequity into classrooms, and eventually "developed teacher activists" who engage even more holistically and publicly in justice-oriented work inside and outside classrooms and with a larger and sustaining vision of social change. Ultimately, she points out that "emerging social justice educators must begin to see that the struggle for justice is one that requires more time and dedication than the already difficult job of classroom teaching" (p. 112). Her work with elementary teachers learning these practices provides

an important call and clarity for what it might continue to take to support teachers in learning to teach toward justice. However, it's unclear whether these same approaches might work similarly with secondary teachers, tasked differently with disciplinary work, and how it might work across other institutional contexts. Further, still many teacher education programs and studies focusing on preparing teachers for justice-oriented teaching have discovered little eventual success toward movement into teaching practice(s).

For example, Anderson & Stillman (2013) found, in their review of teacher preparation research, that teachers in student teaching, despite even attending programs focusing on preparation for teaching diverse learners and toward social justice, "present fairly reductive notions, of context, culture, and diversity and their relationships to learning" (p. 41) and suggest further work and research need attend to the complexities of context, culture, and the mediated nature of [pre-service teachers'] and K-12 students' learning" (p. 59). Additionally, Cochran-Smith et al.'s (2015) recent review of the research focused on teacher preparation for working with diverse learners continued to find the majority of preparation and connected research focused on shifting teacher beliefs on diverse learners and were often not coupled with how to manifest these beliefs toward influencing pedagogical practice. They found "little evidence of [a] profound shift in perspective that many researchers consider fundamental to becoming equity-minded/socially just teachers" ( p. 116). Currently, some teacher education programs are shifting toward a preparatory focus that anchors early-career teachers in the "high leverage practices" that have been shown to improve student learning and development. Some of these practices are beginning to attend to the fluid nuances of

teaching across disciplines, identities, and injustices (TeachingWorks, 2016). Overall, though, much is still left to understand about what justice-oriented preparation may mean for eventual classroom practice. CSP now offers one potential approach and answer to the complexities of teaching toward justice.

**CSP for Justice-Oriented Movement from Teacher Education into Practice**

"Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies" (CSP) seeks toward a fuller realization of what it means to sustain diverse and "dynamic" youth of color and non-dominant youths' literate and cultural practices and learning across classrooms and communities. CSP offers much in challenging the narrow assumptions inherent in the static, contemporary framing of the "demographic divide." CSP involves "supporting young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (p. 95). Overall, CSP (and its asset-based approaches to youth of color and non-dominant youth) potentially poise teachers, teacher educators, and researchers to better engage with the fluid nature of literacies, language practices, teaching, and learning, as they play out across classrooms in all their sociocultural complexity.

CSP builds out of a deep lineage of Literacy and Language Studies research (e.g. Labov, 1972; Smitherman, 1977; Scribner and Cole, 1981; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984) which helped to situate literacy and language practices and their values in specific sociocultural contexts and not solely based in classrooms. Since then, literacy and education scholars such as Moll & Gonzalez (1992) with "funds of knowledge," Ladson-Billings (1995) with "culturally relevant pedagogy," Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson (1995), Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejeda (1999), and Gutierrez (2008) with "third

spaces have variously built upon and attempted to extend the ways in which teachers may both recognize and value the situated literacies and language practices of the diverse groups of students they teach, designing curriculum in response. Contemporary literacy scholars now highlight the oft-overlooked literate practices of youth, and especially, youth of color and other non-dominant youth, across differences and communities (Alim, 2007, 2011; Baker-Bell, 2013; Blackburn, 2012; Kirkland, 2008, 2011, 2013; Kinloch, 2011; Lamont Hill, 2009; Mahiri et. al. 2004; Paris, 2011). All of these scholars have helped to challenge narrower conceptions of what counts as literacy, shift toward “asset-based” classroom approaches, and illuminate the beauty and richness of literacy and language practices across communities of color and other communities marginalized by . But CSP attempts to push this work further.

CSP asks those committed to teaching toward justice to push beyond approaches grounded only in “tolerance,” “responsiveness,” and “relevance,” and toward “culturally pluralist” classrooms sustaining both “within-and-across-group” cultural and linguistic practices of communities of color. Here, CSP seeks to “perpetuate and foster--to sustain--linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation.” This is an essential step, as CSP views literacies and language practices of communities of color not through White Middle Class norms of achievement, instead, being “centered on contending in complex ways with the rich and innovative linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian, Pacific-Islander, and other youth and communities of color.” It further asks “What would our pedagogies look like if [the White gaze] (Morrison, 1998, as cited in Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2) (and the kindred patriarchal, cisheteronormative, English-monolingual,

ableist, classist, xenophobic, Judeo-Christian gazes) weren't the dominant one?" (Paris & Alim, 2017, pp. 1-2). It is from this view that justice-oriented teaching begins.

CSP further resonates with The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards for teacher preparation (2013) which urge, "teachers [need] recognize that all learners bring to their learning varying experiences, abilities, talents, and prior learning, as well as language, culture, and family and community values that are *assets* [my emphasis] that can be used to promote their learning"(p. 4).

CSP potentially helps those teaching across identities recognize and respond to the assets of socioculturally situated and dynamic youth of color , their literacies, and communities, while at the same time engaging them with traditional, dominant texts and practices (e.g. standard english, canonical texts). But how does CSP, as advocated in theoretical educational research reform, reach and influence the complexities of classroom practice(s)?

**The Potentials of Learning CSP Toward Justice-Oriented Practice(s)**

If reaching classrooms and communities, CSP potentially poises teachers and teacher educators to better teach in solidarity with communities of color and other communities marginalized by the White imperial project.,. And, despite some initial understanding about ways that CSP could be enacted in practice (Paris & Alim, 2017). Much work still needs done to better understand the extent to which practicing teachers could implement this justice-oriented CSP and to what end, as well as how the complexities of teaching across identities are mediated across dynamic teaching contexts.

Research on the implementation of CSP stands to provide further insight into one approach for teaching across identities and against inequities, as well as allow for investigation into how justice-oriented reform through teacher education may eventually show up in classroom practice. Additionally, research on the implementation of CSP may stand to speak into contemporary calls for the development of necessary practices out of teacher education toward teaching students across various communities (Cochran-Smith et. al., 2015; McDonald et. al., 2013). This research may also provide further vision for how best to support new teachers in applying the pedagogical practices they are committed to in teacher education out into their first classrooms and sustain them across future work.

Overall, what is at stake in this inquiry is the future success of our teachers and students in a globalized society where, "cultural and linguistic flexibility is not simply about giving value to all of our communities; it is about the skills, knowledges, and the ways of being needed for success in the present and future" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 89). If, as Paris (2012) hopes, CSP is to be a change in "stance, terminology, *and practice* [my emphasis], then research on CSP must be powerfully connected to the complexities of current and future teaching practice(s): what Gutierrez and Penuel (2014) have pointed to as the barometer for "rigorous" educational research. It is in this focus that researchers and teachers can best understand just what it means to sustain this work in classrooms toward the justice-oriented sustaining of students and teachers across communities. To begin to better understand what it means to implement CSP in classroom practice, it is necessary to work with teachers across communities attempting to do so. This study intends to build on and extend prior work by looking across the

experiences of four early career teachers as they practice CSP. Below, I outline the research questions guiding work with these teachers committed to practicing CSP.

## Research Questions

Emerging out of their program and into this research, these teachers espoused a commitment to practicing CSP in their full-time teaching. Given this commitment, I wondered how they would practice CSP, what they would experience as they did so, and how I would mentor them in this process. Throughout the research, we explored the following questions:

1. *How do early career teachers practice culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP)?*
2. *What do early career teachers experience as they practice CSP?*
3. *How do I mentor early career teachers as they practice CSP?*

In asking these questions with these teachers, I sought a better understanding of the pedagogical complexities of teaching across multiple identities toward sustaining students' cultures, literacies, and communities, and what it meant to do so early in a teaching career. Below, I outline and analyze the experiences these teachers committed toward better understanding just what it means to prepare for this justice-oriented reform work out of teacher preparation.

## Methodology

### Participants and Settings

Across this work, I attempted a "humanizing" approach to research (Paris & Winn, 2013). My humanizing approach began through the mutual agreement with participants to work alongside me in this study. This agreement was an alternative to a traditional "selection" process. As a process, "selection" carries a lineage of dehumanization

because it places the power solely in my hands. As Paris (2011) points out, it's a "colonizing" term bestowing upon me "unilateral power" in the process of choosing study participants. He further suggests making this process a bilateral or dialogic one, allowing participants to choose us as we choose them (p. 140-1). This dialogic process is akin to what Winn and Ubiles (2011) refer to as  the "admission" process.

I began the dialogic selection process for this study by sharing roughly-sketched qualitative research questions connected to CSP with potential teacher participants, emphasizing the iterative co-inquiry I imagined happening (and along the way, I was upfront about the emerging nature of this project). Out of this initial dialogue emerged a group of interested participants who shared a similar commitment to figuring out what it would mean to implement CSP theory in practice. We then agreed to work with one another, with my eventual decisions based on their: (a) commitment to practicing CSP, (b) diversity of identities, and (c) variety of communities across which they taught.

The eventual group consisted of Ben, a White male, who taught English in a for-profit urban charter high school in a largely Black community, then in a non-profit urban charter middle school in a largely Black community, and finally in a for-profit urban charter middle school in a mixed community comprised of Black, Bengali, Yemeni, and Pakistani, and Polish students. He eventually left teaching after disagreements with school administration; Rachel, a White female, teaching high school English in a traditional public school in the mostly White suburban community where she grew up; Simone, a Black female, teaching middle school English in a non-profit charter school in a mostly Black and suburban community where she grew up; and Stevie, a White female, who initially taught English and History in a traditional public middle school in a

large rural community comprised of both Black and White students, eventually returning to teach English in a traditional junior high school in the mostly White, suburban community where she grew up (all names of participants are pseudonyms).

Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie shared a common set of teacher preparation experiences in a large, top-tier, mid-western teaching program, which included field placements and shared commitments to implementing CSP in their early-career classrooms. It was during this training that I, a White male, former high school English teacher, from a rural setting, having then taught in both urban and rural settings (including the rural area where I grew up), came to know them as their English Education instructor across multiple methods courses and into their full-year teaching-internship experiences (totaling two years). These teachers' coursework and training in both a college of education and an English department, in the field, classroom assignments, and classroom discussions, often focused on theories and pedagogies that took an asset-based, sociocultural, dialogic, and "culturally sustaining" approach to classrooms and communities (such as Early, 2006; Gutierrez, 2008; Juzwik et. al., 2013; Kinloch, 2011; Kirkland 2008, 2009; Lewis & Petrone, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2007, 1995; Paris, 2012; Rose, 2009). This set of common pre-service experiences, which led to vastly different teaching contexts after their college graduation, made for an optimal multiple-case study (Yin, 2013), because it allowed for a wide view across very different intersections of identities and contexts. We started our dialogic inquiry for this study during the spring of their first year of teaching and concluded in the spring of their second year of teaching, spending a total of one year working together in their

classrooms and then periodically checking in with one another after I stopped observations.

## Research Methods

### Multiple case study.

I used a multiple case study (Yin, 2013) as a lens through which to investigate how these teachers practiced CSP across classrooms and communities. Case study, as my empirical approach, is well suited for this inquiry. I am attempting to better understand CSP "in-depth and within its real-world context," and that, as with much qualitative classroom inquiry, "the boundaries between [teaching] phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 16). Multiple-case study is specifically suited to a research question and inquiry such as mine that is attempting to see *how* teachers implement CSP toward teaching across differences and communities. Through it, we generated data across multiple classrooms where multiple identities converged that may or may not reflect the identities of the teacher. Here, I am allowed a window into how these multiple teachers practiced CSP amidst these multiple convergences, and could select as evidence multiple converging sources across classroom cases. These multiple cases provided an initial window--for participants and me--into what it means for early-career teachers to practice CSP across a variety of classrooms and communities.

As an approach that looked to better understand CSP with real teachers in real classroom contexts, a multiple-case study provided an initial chance to investigate the extent to which the implementation of these pedagogies were possible within and across classroom spaces as they emerged out of the "intellectual, moral, and emotional realities of practice" (Ball & Cohen, 1999). For the scope and focus of this study,

participants and myself focused on the creation of culturally sustaining curricula in practice (e.g. classroom texts, activities, & assessments). This approach allowed participants and myself to build data towards preparation and theories to improve on this justice-oriented work. Multiple-case inquiry provides rich descriptive data out of which to speak back to and build practice and theory. It also provides potential suggestions and implications for teachers and teacher preparation programs interested in CSP and preparing teachers for justice-oriented teaching across identities in the future.

**“Humanizing” cases.**

As I mention above, work with these teachers was based out of “humanizing” approaches to research and inquiry (Paris, 2011; Paris & Winn, 2013). Humanizing research importantly renders researchers and participants co-inquirers alongside one another: pursuing questions of mutual concern and for the betterment of all involved. As a “humanizing” endeavor, my research is built out of “relationships of *care* [my emphasis] and dignity” that dialogically seek to address the traditionally inequitable approaches in (English) classrooms and (English) classroom research (Paris, 2011, p. 137-140). I attempted to take this approach alongside these teachers, , co-researching the negotiation of CSP in English classrooms, so that the contours of our methodology importantly match the focus of our research as we honor the “dialogic spiral” that is the foundation of our humanizing approaches with each other and with students (Kinloch and San Pedro, 2014). I believe modeling this approach alongside teacher participants is a key part of their growth in doing similar things with the students they work alongside. Humanizing methodology pairs well with the tenets of a multiple-case study

anchored in practice and emerging in reflexive response with participants. In conducting this multiple-case study we generated qualitative data through classroom observations, interviews, focus groups, and classroom artifacts.

**Observations, interviews, and focus groups.**

Across the year, we generated qualitative data in bi-weekly observations of a focus class selected by the teachers. In these observations, I would watch them teach this focus class, taking detailed observation notes where I would pay specific attention to how these teachers were practicing and how they and students responded in the process. After this observation, I would conduct semi-structured interviews where I would ask them questions about what I noticed in their teaching and how it potentially connected with our overall work toward CSP. These observations would lead to monthly focus group meetings where participants would gather around common readings connected to CSP, share what they were experiencing in their classrooms through curriculum artifacts (see below) and emerging questions, and help other participants continue to come to better know their students and communities.

**Curriculum artifacts.**

To get a further window into the curriculum these teachers were designing and the processes involved, I oftentimes conducted interviews and focus groups in relation to curriculum artifacts. These artifacts might include lesson plans, handouts, presentation slides, and assessment prompts. Inspired by Halbritter and Lindquist's (2012) Artifactual Interview protocol, I would often ask participants to bring artifacts they felt represented

both success and challenge in relation to their CSP work and then discuss their selection of these artifacts.

Overall, these multiple sources allowed me to triangulate data and develop a "converging line of inquiry" (Yin, 1994, as cited in Barone, 2011, p. 23) out of which to make claims through my analysis.

### Data Analysis

Across my data collection, I used constant comparative methods (Charmaz, 2006) toward the development of codes to organize the patterns linking my analysis. Using the research questions as guide, and "sensitized" by theoretical lenses on teacher knowledge and learning to teach across identities, literacies, and inequities that "provide a place to start, not end," I engaged in my coding processes (ibid, p. 17). I moved through iterative stages of coding: selective, line-by-line coding of observation notes and interview and focus group transcripts, then collapsing and merging codes toward a more "focused coding" that helped extend themes across data to triangulate and test their efficacy and influence (ibid, p. 42-60). From this initial coding and theme-building process, I was then able to make claims about the data. To document emerging understandings about coding, themes, and claims, I generated both voice and written memos across the data collection and analysis processes. To test codes, themes, and claims, I conducted member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) both during the process of interviews and focus groups and after settling on themes and claims, further triangulating across the data.

## Findings

In this section I will outline my findings in relation to my research questions and specifically focus on teacher participants' pedagogical practices as they emerged across the study.

### Findings Related to Participants

Across analysis, the evidence indicated that participants engaged in a recursive pedagogical process, *A Flow*, which involved: *knowing* and deepening their perspectives on students' identities and cultural and literate practices; *remixing* these cultural and literate practices with the ones required in their district and school curricula; *struggling* as they met resistances connected to knowing and remixing; and then attempts at *flowing* in response as they wanted to continue practicing CSP. Below, I outline the thematic contours of *A Flow*: *knowing*, *remixing*, *struggling*, and *flowing*.

#### Knowing.

Participants across the study regularly designed opportunities for *knowing* students and their dynamic cultural and literate practices. Knowing was about continually building awareness of who student are, their communities and cultural practices, as well as what their schooling institutions allowed and constrained. From the beginnings of our work, they attempted to center conversations about culture with students and come to further learn alongside students just what identities and cultural practices converged in their classroom spaces, "[resisting] static, unidirectional notions of culture and race that reinforce traditional versions of difference and (in)equality without attending to shifting and evolving ones" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). They continually strove to know the students

they worked with through “asset-based” lenses and saw knowing students as an ongoing process.

This process of knowing was not just a beginning of the year survey asking students about their favorite ice cream. These teachers attempted noticing and co-constructing experiences through which to continue knowing students and deepen their and students understandings of culture. For example, Ben and Simone challenged themselves and students early to consider interrogating what should constitute certain “heritage” and “community” practices (Paris, 2012):

**Ben**: Part of what I’m getting at is also the generational perspective to where it feels difficult to validate particular elements of Black youth culture that don’t mesh with the expectations that their parents would have for them (Interview, April 25, 2015).

**Simone**: ...even though I teach in an all-Black school, not all of their experiences are the same. I can’t assume that all of them will like a Hip-Hop lesson or like this idea of Black Twitter because they are all Black (Interview, April 24, 2015).

And Rachel and Stevie challenged themselves and students early to (re)discover the cultures that had become invisible to them through unquestioned Whiteness and toward a further problematizing and divestment from both this Whiteness and other privileged identities. This move through CSP was toward further solidarity with communities of color and people marginalized by the institutions of schooling (e.g. Women, LGBT people):

**Rachel**: One of my kids said that our city has no culture. And I laughed, because I think he was just thinking about “diversity.” And so I challenged him to think about his definition of culture (Interview, September 25, 2015).

**Stevie**: So, first to introduce that, I showed them random pictures around our town: people, places, things. They did a see, think, wonder, and then they brainstormed a definition of culture as a class (Interview, September 23, 2015).

All teachers were coming to know alongside students just how culture was being (re)defined, what cultural practices were present, and what they might be sustaining. And this knowing work continued to show up in assignments.

For Ben, it meant a personal symbol project for students to create symbolic representations of elements of their identities in a form of their choosing (Appendix 1, Spring 2015). For Rachel, this meant setting students up to investigate aspects of their cultures and privileges in the halls at school, stepping back and considering them critically (Appendix 2, Fall 2015). For Simone, this meant inviting students to write letters with goals for themselves inside and outside of the classroom, reflecting on the stereotypes that played out in their school and lives, and staking claims early on about what they wanted to learn before they went to high school. This surfaced early conversations about race, police, and authority (coming up as students responded to Q 11) (Appendix 3, Spring 2015). And for Stevie, it meant creating a *Humans of Hertown* blog (modeled after the *Humans of New York* blog) through which she could begin to know students' cultural practices in their largely White and rural town and how those might intersect with communities different than theirs (e.g. individual Syrians in the *Humans of New York* blog), having students then add posts across the fall (Appendix 4, Fall 2015).

This initial knowing was further coupled with a building knowing of their own sense of what constitutes culture and a deepening sense of cultural practices in the

community contexts where they taught. Over the course of the study, this would mostly lead to further comfort and confidence with providing more of these spaces, making them even more critically oriented, and then further attempting to “remix” students’ cultural and literate resources with the various dominant curricular resources available and required in their specific schooling contexts.

**Remixing.**

Clandinin’s (2016) lens on teachers as “remixers” emerged as an initially helpful frame for describing a piece of what Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie were practicing through CSP. They clearly saw students and communities as valuable resources in co-creating curriculum. Remixing involved an inviting and co-bringing together of multiple youth and community practices (e.g. student language(s) and literacies) within what was required by the dominant institution of school (e.g. Standard English practice(s), Argument Essay Unit connected to standards), attempting to facilitate critical movement between these practices, and further changing how both students and school practiced . The complexities of this knowing and remixing changed over the course of the study, as teachers added further student curricular resources for these remixes in response to their continual process of knowing students and providing more critical spaces through which both they and students could interrogate power and identities in relation to the dominant curriculum and their communities.

This remixing took a variety of early forms, inviting students to explore issues important to them in a required assignment:

**Ben**: I ask them what they're passionate about. What do [they] like talking about? What was the last argument [they] had? Kids are killing each other over Jordan's. Should Nike be doing something (Interview, May 1, 2015)?

Or it could mean making assignments more open for a remixing with student identities:

**Rachel**: It's going to be open, there's a little blurb about all the different identities influencing them and how that's connected to culture (Interview, October 7, 2015).

It could mean paying attention to a TV show students mentioned in casual conversation and then remixing it into class:

**Simone**: I did bring in a NY Times article review on Empire and they read through that. Because that's all they would talk about every week (Interview, April 24, 2015).

Or it could mean providing open space for students to remix practices into the classroom that they used outside the classroom, as Stevie discussed in our interview on October 21, 2015:

**Erik**: Why social media [for this assignment]?

**Stevie**: All my kids in this hour, all they want to do is get on their phones and on social media. Like, yesterday, one kid specifically showed me his Instagram account and the pictures he took. And at lunch they take selfies and post them on Snapchat. They're really into Snapchat right now. So that's something I see them talking about and using on a daily basis.

All teachers continued to attempt to open more of these remixing spaces, deepening their sense of students' cultures and curricular resources, creating more critical spaces to reflect on them, and further deepened the extent to which these resources were present in future assignments and classroom work. For Ben, this

eventually included further critical spaces for students in his last school to share about multiple elements of culture converging in the places around them and beginning to discuss related dynamism and power (Appendix 6, Winter 2016). For Rachel and Stevie, this eventually meant something as large as multi-month "activism" research projects (inspired, initially, by ideas from Rachel) where students had full autonomy to both select the issues most important to them as well as the ways in which they chose to act to change these issues, making decisions about what they hoped to sustain across classrooms and communities in the future. Through this, Rachel and Stevie highlighted local issues of race and equity, challenging students to further interrogate their own Whiteness and identities and see connections with communities very different than theirs. Students created their own protest art, waged small social media campaigns, and even published op-eds in the local newspaper on issues ranging from combating rape culture in schools, equal rights for gay couples, immigration, the Flint water crisis, and the dangers of how teenagers constructed some of their masculine identities (Appendix 7 & 8, Spring 2016). And for Simone, this meant classroom discussions where students engaged further with issues of race, culture, and equity in their local communities and what they hoped for moving forward (Appendix 9, Winter 2016).

However, depending on schooling and community context and resources (for example, having more substitute teachers than full-time staff in Simone's building), comfort with the connected management of students, the connected ways state testing and common assessment structures exerted influence on choice and time, and overall confidence at points relative to what a teacher knew and felt comfortable implementing

because of these various factors, these teachers' experiences didn't follow a neat and linear progression. These teachers experienced a range of resistances as they attempted to implement their growing work with CSP: many they did not anticipate, struggling in response.

**Struggling.**

By the end of our year together, each teacher had accumulated experiences and connected confidences in certain areas of the work, but also experienced some *struggling* in response to the resistances they faced. It is clear that knowing students and remixing curriculum were necessary but insufficient practices for responding to the internal and external resistances and connected struggles that surfaced when learning to practice CSP. These struggles manifest in response to the way administrators, students, parents, and community responded (or they assumed they'd respond) to their curricular choices, as well as various testing and assessment regimes at place in their schools to maintain the superiority of White and other dominant practices in their schools.

For Ben, he experienced the challenge of shifting between three different charter schools across just one year of our working together (the first one closed due to not making necessary student enrollment numbers; the second one laid him off during Fall 2016 due to mispredictions in their enrollment; and the third one required strict adherence to policies and curriculum that he hadn't had the opportunity to be trained in). Ben was only at his second school for a couple months, then unemployed for a couple months, and then was under strict surveillance by administration following some of his

initial attempts toward CSP-oriented work, greatly limiting much of his attempts and movement beyond this struggle:

**Ben**: My dean and principal are in my classroom twice a week. It’s really just policed. I need to be able to justify why I’m doing this instead of something that’s preparing them for a test. (Focus Group, January 30, 2016)

For Simone, this meant a little more freedom with her curriculum, but some internal struggles about whether certain conversations about culture and equity would be appropriate for her younger students, thinking in one of our focus group conversations about how administration might react if they had overheard the impromptu discussion she had with her students about colorism, wondering whether she was ready to facilitate further conversations likes this:

**Simone**: I kept wondering what I would’ve done if my administrator had walked in? In my school and in the Black culture we don’t really talk about light skin and dark skin. (Focus Group, October 17, 2015)

For both Ben and Simone, they additionally experienced dominant and strict state and connected local testing regimes, limiting their possibilities to teach toward racial and other justices, and oftentimes dedicating significant class time to Standard English Grammar, writing, and test prep. Schedules were often disrupted for both this prep and then the actual testing which included a battery of tests required to show school growth--through White and other dominant definitions of achievement--to both state and charter operators.

For Rachel, resistance and struggling came in the form of some common and required text choices and assessment structures, but were also manifest in the form of

at-times resistant students and administration, especially to her work engaging students in Whiteness and privilege:

**Rachel**: And [my administrator] gave me “basic” [in my observation] for “student engagement”...It just made me feel super discouraged. And we went back and forth on that. And he marked me down for not “cold calling” people. And that’s an ideological difference. And I said that in a conversation like this I would feel very uncomfortable cold calling students, especially in a class of White males. I’m not going to cold call a student and ask them how privileged they’ve been (Interview, November 4, 2015).

For Stevie, this also came in the form of some common and required text choices and assessment structures as well as the overall weight she was allowed to give to any attempt at CSP-focused experiences:

**Stevie**: Yeah, I have to this...And it’s very structured. We have a common rubric with the whole 8th grade. I don’t love it, but it has to be done. It’s a literary analysis of a [required] short story focused on theme. (Interview, November 18, 2015).

Stevie also struggled with some students and parents as they attempted CSP-focused work that questioned Whiteness and privilege. All of these struggles, again, stemmed from institutions and ideologies rooted in maintaining a White imperial project. Overall, though, both Rachel and Stevie were able to continue building classroom experiences and assessments toward further opportunities for students to choose what they hoped to sustain in their classrooms and communities and how these choices would include students and identities different from theirs. They had considerably more freedom in doing so compared to Ben and Simone.

All participants deepened their learning to practice CSP, some providing larger and larger curricular space to interrogate their and students' identities and privileges, centering marginalized identities, and considering what they hoped to sustain in their classroom and local cultures moving forward. We found that just as dynamic as cultural and literate practices are, so are the pedagogical practices necessary to sustain them. The contours of this dynamic process became even more evident in response to the resistance and struggling these teachers experienced, inviting the necessity of their *flowing* to continue our work.

**Flowing.**

The need for *flowing*--beyond resistances in practice--became evident through their struggling. Flowing meant movement and/or stillness in response to resistances, ever-toward the more just ends these teachers were attempting to realize. The ability to recognize the dynamic "cultural flows" (Pennycook, 2005) of students' and teachers' cultural and literate practices in classrooms is an essential first step in the iterative process of knowing and remixing, but must be coupled with the pedagogical movement, flowing, beyond the resistances and struggling they will no doubt face as they take up pedagogies counter to the dominant ones. Flowing was mitigated by a variety of factors, including the specific schooling context, teachers' growing and dynamic knowing of students' cultural and literate practices, responses to the remixing of these cultural and literate practices in curricular structures, the building knowledge of the unique institutional contexts and connected resistances where they taught, as well as the connected levels of confidence to continue to engage in these pedagogical processes.

With this group, across identities and schooling contexts, this process of flowing followed recursive and both linear and non-linear progressions.

For Ben and Simone, their flowing was extremely challenging, as they attempted to fit CSP within further narrowing curricular spaces caused by continued test prep and stifling testing schedules. For Ben, this would eventually mean attempting to make the regular and required textbook readings support conversations about what students thought about their multiple identities and what they hoped to sustain in their local community:

**Ben**: We just had a really good reading from our curriculum called "The War of the Wall." A woman paints murals and she's coming into this southern town. She's from NY. There's a lot of cultural differences. So, we're going to do that to better understand some of the surface and deeper cultural elements (Interview, February 3, 2016).

Although, he saw the space to this work shrink further while under more-and-more surveillance by his principal and other administration to adhere to a prescribed teaching and testing structure, regularly having his schedule co-opted.

For Simone, this would eventually mean flowing past some earlier apprehensions, inspired by what she saw going on outside the classroom:

**Simone**: ...there were things that happened that inspired me to [take up more work with race, power, police, and community] like Beyonce and the SuperBowl and the protests that have been happening (Interview, February 17, 2016).

She further centered conversations about race, power, police, and community, and further sought response from students to images and inequities in their local communities (Appendix 10, Winter 2016), all the while starting and stopping these

conversations to adhere to more regular and required test prep and testing that also co-opted large chunks of her schedule. Rachel and Stevie had much more curricular freedom.

For Rachel and Stevie, their flowing meant further building confidence to engage alongside students with their multiple identities and intersecting levels of privilege and power, despite their own apprehensions connected to both anticipated and experienced resistances from students, parents, and administrators. For Rachel, defending herself in response to administrator resistance became a turning point:

**Rachel**: I actually think the observation experience pushed me farther because I had to defend my position to an administrator. That may not affect everyone in the same way. But, at least for me, it was the moment where I became confident in what I was doing and how it was important for me. It made me defend it, and I became stronger in the process (Interview, February 24, 2016).

For Stevie, like Ben, she came to find further ways to meet struggling posed by required standards and texts and flowing toward her final work of the year:

**Stevie**: Yeah. I know we're going to do some informational reading...But I also want to bridge it with the argument protest unit... (Interview, March 3, 2016).

Eventually, toward the end of our time together, both Rachel and Stevie would construct standards and school-aligned experiences where students engaged in original research focused on investigating issues of importance to them and their multiple identities and engaged in some form of public protest and activism in connection (Appendix 7 & 8, Spring 2016). Again, both Rachel and Stevie had considerably more curricular freedom

in flowing, as Ben and Simone were tasked with more regular and required test prep and testing.

When looking across all teachers’ experiences with CSP in practice, it’s clear their work followed a recursive pedagogical process of knowing, remixing, struggling, and flowing: A Flow (Figure 1). This process is as equally dynamic as the cultural and literate practices they were slowly coming to learn with students to sustain and begins to answer the call from Pennycook (2006) that “pedagogy needs to get with the flow” (p. 41). Across our experiences, I learned an equally dynamic and iterative mentoring process (Skogsberg, 2017). And alongside one another, we moved into and out of our various institutional contexts, continuing to learn just what it meant to learn to do this work in practice, supporting each other in the best ways we knew how. While we came to understand more about ourselves, students, schools, and the movement of what we committed to at the start of this study, our development didn’t follow a neat and linear progression, and instead constantly shifted and demanded practices we were more or

less prepared to enact based on our positionalities.

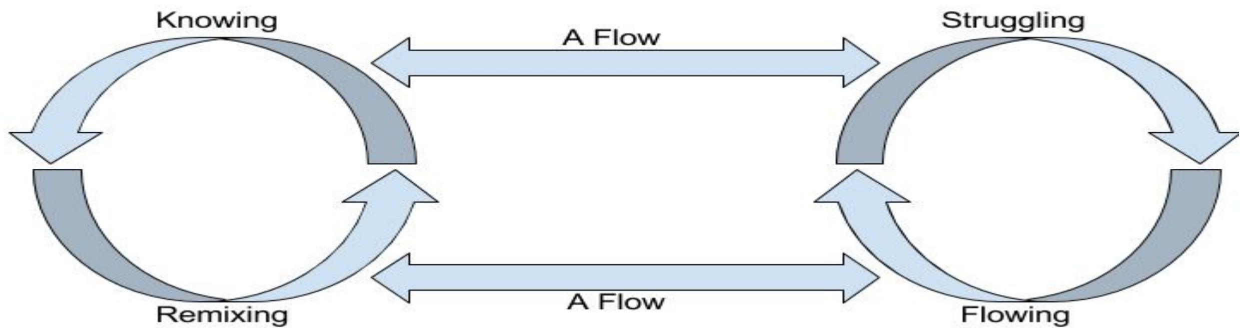


*Figure 1: This is a visual representation of the recursive pedagogical process of A Flow.*

Overall, Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie reported more confidence in practicing *A Flow* in their emerging work with CSP and with further engaging issues of equity across the study. They continued the process of *knowing* students and communities and *remixing* student and traditional school-based literacies into curriculum (inviting deeper and more critical integration of students' identities, cultures, and literacies). Their resistances and *struggling* varied based on identities, communities, and schooling contexts (e.g. Ben and Simone had considerably less curricular freedom than Rachel and Stevie). All lacked confidence and ability at times for *flowing* when struggling against resistances they faced in learning to practice CSP (esp. when they ran up against dominant schooling approaches).

Now, standing in the pause marked by the ending of institutional years and programs, an initial picture is emerging of what it means to learn to practice CSP, as

well as what it will mean to further attempt to sustain the sustainers of CSP if this work will be more fully realized across classrooms, identities, and inequities. And, just as Paris & Alim (2014) acknowledged about their theoretical calls for CSP, I too find myself on the edges of what we know and can practice in classrooms committed to these approaches. At these edges, some answers are emerging for what it may mean to further prepare for work in CSP and other justice-oriented teaching, as well as a clear focus for necessary work in teacher education moving forward: *Practice-ing A Flow*.

## Conclusion

### Toward *Practice-ing A Flow* Across Classrooms, Identities, and Inequities

**Ben**: [I'm] seeing the youngest students in the building and thinking "Oh God, will I still be doing this when they're old enough for me to teach them?" And I do believe it will get better. I've just been kicked around so many different schools (Interview, March 23, 2016).

**Rachel**: And I truly love our program. And I'm arrogant about it. It definitely formed the best parts of me and I love the social justice focus. But after I learned all those things, I'm now at this HS where nobody knows what I'm talking about (Interview, October 7, 2015).

**Simone**: I remember in my internship I had a two paragraph rationale for every lesson and every unit. And you're not going to read that out to your principal. They're going to ask you what this is, how does it connect to the standard, and why are you teaching it (Interview, February 17, 2016)?

**Stevie**: The seeds of social justice were a big deal and I see that being different than some of my colleagues. So, I think the motivation was right, and we did learn about how

to frame texts around these things. But, some of the practical, how to take this further and application to your local community or how to deal with pushback [wasn't there] (Interview, February 24, 2016).

Emerging from my work with Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie was a clear need for *Practice-ing A Flow* across teacher preparation and mentored induction. *Practice-ing A Flow* involves a clear and critical focus alongside early-career teachers on *A Flow* and developing its practices: *knowing, remixing, struggling,* and *flowing*. Participants in this study were learning to practice CSP through an ongoing process of *knowing* and *remixing* student and school curricular resources, meeting resistance and connected *struggling*, and were, in some ways, able to begin *flowing* in response. However, the extent to which this recursive process resulted in a fuller and deeper realization of CSP--and the connected "critical pluralism" that CSP calls for--depended on the nature of struggling these teachers faced in relation to their specific classroom contexts and their collective abilities for flowing through this struggle.

Particularly clear is the difference between the extent to which Ben and Simone and Rachel and Stevie were able to move into further spaces to do this work. The strength of testing regimes to maintain White colonial nation-state schools and White and other dominant definitions of "achievement" were soberingly clear for Ben and Simone as they struggled to engage CSP with their Black and Brown students. . These boundaries even became so rigid and burdensome, that they were large part of the reason Ben is no longer a classroom teacher. It is painfully ironic that it was Rachel and Stevie--largely working with White and more affluent students--were provided more

space for CSP. Although, it was very clear that all teachers in this study experienced some form of struggle against the White nation-state schooling project.

Since my approach in this research was never to distance myself from participants and our co-learning, our work--both in results and form--now provides pieces of a promising teacher preparation framework: *Practice-ing A Flow*. Our further success in the practicing of CSP and other justice-oriented approaches from teacher education across classrooms will be anchored in our collective abilities as teacher educators to engage alongside teachers committed to it. This framework provides one step. It not only allows for better highlighting the dynamic nature of the cultural and literate practices we hope they would sustain, but also to better understand the very dynamic nature of the pedagogical practices necessary to do so in relation to the real resistances and connected struggles they will face, and further seek the specific nature of its practices based on the intersecting identities of teachers and and students practicing it.

It was clear these teachers were “emerging social justice educators” (Picower, 2012) approaching their work toward justice in dynamic and nuanced ways recent research calls for (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Cochran-Smith et. al. 2015). But the racist, sexist, gendered, and other dominant resistances and struggles that surfaced within and across their classrooms and schools, and the difficulties they had in responding, still raise questions about the best ways to further sustain all of us committed to practicing CSP and other justice-oriented teaching. With CSP’s larger goal of a critical pluralism inside and outside of classrooms, part of that might mean attempting to prepare teachers toward further becoming “developed teacher activists”

that are engaging justice-oriented work outside their classrooms as a means to better understand how social change happens (Picower, 2012). Perhaps this would better sustain them. We can still do more to that end. However, I still wonder about the extent to which we can better prepare early-career teachers for justice-oriented work, as confident activists and advocates *in* classrooms and out into communities. We can work on both fronts. And teacher preparation--especially if focusing early career teachers on justice-oriented teaching--has a responsibility to do so.

We must find further ways in teacher preparation to highlight and experience *Practice-ing A Flow*. We can provide experiences across their university classwork and fieldwork where they have opportunities to move--with justice-oriented mentoring support--through the recursive processes of *knowing*, *remixing*, *struggling*, and *flowing* with CSP and other justice-oriented practices in response to their unique teaching contexts, further surfacing strategies to continue these pedagogical movements. Approaching teacher preparation work through CSP, engaging in the necessary critical conversations about this process, and even creating hybrid curricula that mixes and meshes students' cultural and literate practices will not be enough to provide what a teacher may need as an activist and advocate challenging how institutionalized power and oppression operates in clear and opaque ways. Overall, it will mean engaging in ways--through policy and research--different than we ever have before.

This study provides reason to continue co-learning with teachers practicing CSP and other justice-oriented approaches across identities and classrooms. What might it continue to mean to create the specific conditions for *Practice-ing A Flow* from teacher preparation out across classrooms and identities? For early career teachers and

teacher educators? For students? To further understand this, it means ourselves moving more outside the academy: building and further understanding the necessary connections and alliances with partner schools and teachers, and remaining a consistent presence across the experiences of our graduates. It means further supporting schools in co-facilitating mentoring toward practices we advocate for in preparation. It also means becoming activists and advocates alongside the teachers from our programs committed to the approaches they've learned from us. And it means finding further ways to connect our various and intersecting movements for justice.

In *Can Education Change Society?* Michael Apple (2013) answers his titular question with a qualified "yes" if we can seek further ways to connect intersecting resistance efforts in ways that speak and act truth to power across educational landscapes. He labels this a seeking of "decentered unities":

"spaces that are crucial for educational and larger social transformations that enable progressive movements to find common ground and where joint struggles can be engaged in that do not subsume each group under the leadership of only one understanding of how exploitation and domination operate in daily life" (Apple, 2006, 2013, p. 13).

In taking up the research questions in this study alongside one another, and across such very different identities and classrooms, we were able to co-discover the ways in which systems of power and oppression affected identities in different ways across our work. We found out how we were implicated in each others' lives and communities, and we were able to begin strategizing alongside one another about how to continue *flowing*. Education can change society and is currently being used to do so by many

institutions, interests, and individuals (including resisting the justice-oriented efforts of teacher preparation). We can do better. Teacher preparation in CSP and other justice-oriented approaches will succeed to the extent that the activists and advocates committed to it are in solidarity moving and driving with one another: learning to and through *Practice-ing A Flow* across identities, classrooms, and inequities, and toward justice.

# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1 (Spring 2015)**

**Personal Symbol**

Creating a Personal Symbol is a way of thinking about what is important to you and your identity. A personal symbol might be based on an animal or a collection of other symbols, or it might be something totally abstract that represents part of your personality.

Today you will answer some more guiding questions that will help you think about your personal symbol in a more structured way. You will be asked to choose a symbol for different aspects of your personality, then combine them into one unique symbol.

| In the space below, draw a symbol to represent how you like to spend your free time. | In the space below, draw a symbol to represent a belief that is important to you. | In the space below, draw a symbol to represent a goal that you have for your life. |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

Practice

The designer of the flash created 150 different versions of the flash logo before he was satisfied, before it just felt right. In the space below, try combining 2 or more of your symbols in different ways.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

When you are finished, turn over the page to begin thinking through your presentation. Our symbols are typically visual in nature, but a symbol may also be a word picture that can be captured in audio or shared verbally with the class. Over the long weekend, begin to think about your symbol and how you would like to present it. These are the options that are available to you. If you have an idea that is not on this list, let me know so I can approve it for you.

| Type of Presentation | Requirements. |
|---|---|
| Lyrical Lesson or Simile Poem | Create a one page poem or rap in which you compare yourself to the image that you chose as your symbol. |
| Sculpture or Object Study | Create a sculpture of your symbol, or if your symbol is something that already exists, bring it in. In one page, explain in a creative way how your symbol represents you. |
| PowerPoint Presentation | Create a PowerPoint presentation with no less than 6 slides explaining how your symbol represents your interests or your values. |
| Video or Similar Digital Medium | Create a video, slideshow, or other self-running digital presentation that describes, in no less than one minute, how your symbol represents your interests or your values. |
| Painting, Drawing or Sketch | Create a high quality painting, drawing or sketch of your symbol, including a one page paper explaining how the symbol represents you. |
| Graphic Design | Use graphic design tools (i.e. Photoshop, GIMP or Pixlr.com) to create a high quality product that represents your symbol, and explain in one page how your symbol represents you. |

| Graffiti Art | Use spray paint and a poster board or another material to create a graffiti tag representing your symbol and write a ½ page rationale of how that symbol represents you. |
|---|---|
| Poster | Create a poster out of high quality materials to display your symbol, including a 300 word explanation of how the symbol represents you. |

**Appendix 2 (Fall 2015)**

## Hallway Conversation Assignment

*Language, Colloquialisms, and* [redacted] *Social Norms*

While reading *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, we have seen that some of the best examples of the social norms of Janie's community are revealed through the conversations that take place in the novel. For example, when Janie walks through town at the beginning of the novel and the town's people comment on her relationships, clothing, and actions, we are able to infer many aspects of "deep culture" in their community.

**Your assignment** is to write about the social norms of *your* community [redacted]y writing a passage featuring conversations of the halls of [redacted] You can be creative here - maybe you want to write about different conversations you hear walking through the hall, like Janie experiences in the beginning of the novel, or maybe you want to write about yourself discussing things with people in the halls, as Janie speaks to Pheoby about social norms at some points in the novel. You may work by yourself or with 1-2 others.

**In your story, you should:**

- Address 2 social norms, each based on an aspect of "deep culture" (see Cultural Iceberg Handout)
  - One of these norms should be something you agree with and want to sustain, and the other should be something you disagree with/ want to change.
- Use at least 2 colloquialisms (consult colloquialisms handout, or think of some your own).
- Mimic the way people actually speak, here. Write phonetically (don't worry about grammar), as Hurston does in *Their Eyes Were Watching God.*
- Show the way you *feel* about these social norms (use your dialogue to show whether you agree with this norm or disagree with it - just as Janie sometimes speaks up to people in her community about why she is breaking a social norm).
- Use *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to make sure you are writing dialogue in the correct way (punctuation, etc.)

**Examples of dialogue (new line every time someone new talks; punctuation inside quotes):**

The next morning Pheoby picked her way over to Janie's house like a hen to a neighbor's garden. Stopped and talked a little with everyone she met, turned aside momentarily to pause at a porch or two-going straight by walking crooked. So her firm intention looked like an accident and she didn't have to give her opinion to folks along the way.

Janie acted glad to see her and after a while Pheoby broached her with, "Janie, everybody's talkin' 'bout how dat Tea Cake is draggin' you round tuh places you ain't used tuh. Baseball games and huntin' and fishin'. He don't know you'se useter uh more high time crowd than dat. You always did class off."

"Jody classed me off. Ah didn't. Naw, Pheoby, Tea Cake ain't draggin' me off nowhere Ah don't want tuh go. Ah always did want tuh git round uh whole heap, but Jody wouldn't 'low me tuh. When Ah wasn't in de store he wanted me tuh jes sit wid folded hands and sit dere. And Ah'd sit dere wid de walls creepin' up on me and squeezin' all de life outa me. Pheoby, dese educated women got uh heap of things to sit down and consider. Somebody done tole 'em what to set down for. Nobody ain't told poor me, so sittin' still worries me. Ah wants tuh utilize mahself all over."

"But, Janie, Tea Cake, whilst he ain't no jail-bird, he ain't got uh dime tuh cry. Ain't you skeered he's jes after yo' money-him bein' younger than you?"

"Dis is uh love game. Ah done lived Grandma's way, now Ah means tuh live mine."

"What you mean by dat, Janie?" (112).

*Figure 2: This is the "hallway conversation" culture assignment sheet that Rachel created.*

## Appendix 3 (Spring 2015)

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carly-steyer/50-things-i-wish-id-been-taught-in-high-school_b_7153806.html

**THE BLOG**

*50 Things I Wish I'd Been Taught in High School*

**04/28/2015 12:58 pm ET | Updated Jun 28, 2015**
**290**

**Carly Steyer Undergraduate student at Stanford University, former editorial intern for HuffPost Voices**

**As I prepare to leave high school and head into college (aka the ~real world~), I realize I'm lacking knowledge in a lot of important areas. I can recite the quadratic formula from memory, name you 52 prepositions in the English language and write a 10-page research paper, no problem. (Note: some of those are more valuable skills than others.) But I find I'm alarmingly undereducated when it comes to real life skills, and I know I'm not alone in that.**

**I go to a wonderful high school and they really do try to raise us to be intelligent, well-rounded, capable citizens of world. Still, the current curriculum which plagues many high schools just doesn't prioritize the teaching of these life skills — or leave much room for it.**

**Some argue that it's not a school's job to deal with these issues, and while that's a valid point, we high schoolers spend 40 hours a week at these institutions — we ought to be learning about these things somewhere. School seems like the most logical place, but the bottom line is that I really wish I'd been taught the following things sometime in my adolescence.**

**1. How to show your parents you love them, even as a moody teenager.**
**2. How to balance school work, extracurriculars, social life, family time, time to yourself and sleep without burning yourself out.**
**3. How to communicate to your parents that they're doing something wrong.**
**4. How to reach out to a friend you're worried about.**
**5. What lessons we need to learn for ourselves — and when it's okay to ask for help.**
**6. The value of self-love and self-care.**
**7. How to avoid unnecessary drama.**
**8. What kind of person makes a good friend.**
**9. What taxes are.**
**10. How to pay taxes (including when and how to file a tax return).**
**11. How to respectfully challenge authority.**
**12. How to search for good jobs.**
**13. How to take out a loan — and one that won't leave you in massive debt.**

**14. When to engage in small talk and when to demand more interesting conversation.**
**15. The importance and benefit of unplugging from media sometimes.**
**16. How to navigate the healthcare system.**
**17. How to cope with problems related to mental health because they are just as valid and worthy of attention as physical health problems.**
**18. Why to vote.**
**19. How to vote.**
**20. How to network professionally.**
**21. Time management skills. (There's not nearly enough time devoted to this — you're just thrown in without much help and are expected to figure it out for yourself. It's really tough.)**
**22. How and when to authentically and sufficiently express gratitude.**
**23. Which meals to cook when you're on a student or recent graduate budget (all we ever hear about is Ramen... not exactly the greatest plan health-wise).**
**24. Self-defense skills.**
**25. Handy skills -0 how to repair things for yourself.**
**26. How to present yourself in a job interview.**
**27. How to avoid giving unnecessary apologies.**
**28. How to figure out when you really do owe someone an apology.**
**29. How to give a good apology.**
**30. The difference between equity and equality.**
**31. How to get a passport.**
**32. How to evaluate a contract to see if you're receiving fair treatment.**
**33. How to determine whether or not a charity organization is credible and worthy of donations.**
**34. How to ask for a raise.**
**35. How to check yourself to verify that you actually deserve a raise.**
**36. Where to go when you don't feel safe at home.**
**37. How to write a résumé.**
**38. How to balance a checkbook.**
**39. How to budget. (See jumpstart.org to verify that most of us are pretty tremendously delusional about how much things cost and how we allocate money.)**
**40. What our rights are when interacting with the police.**
**41. How to change a tire.**
**42. There is a difference between gas and diesel and if you put the wrong one in, it may ruin your car (not a fun lesson to learn from experience).**
**43. How to deal with grief.**
**44. How to navigate social media outlets (as in, what not to post, how to manage cyber-bullying and how to anticipate potential negative impact on your self-esteem).**
**45. How to deal with the guilt of privilege, which we all have in one way or another.**
**46. How to be aware of our respective privilege and advantages.**

**47. How to confront someone who's just doing the wrong thing (they tell us we should, but we hear a lot less about how to actually go about the process).**
**48. How to be less dependent on technology.**
**49. How to intervene when a family member needs help.**
**50. How to adequately cope with stress in a healthy way. (This one really gets to me, particularly given the amount of stress school provokes in young people.)**
**After high school, we're let loose in the real world to fend for ourselves. And yes, there is tremendous value in having to learn from experience and work your way through challenges as you encounter them. Those of us who aren't taught these things will probably be just fine. But it really does make an already difficult period of adolescence and young adulthood even tougher. Without general education on these topics, we're far more likely to get ourselves into trouble financially, socially, politically and even on day-to-day tasks and decisions.**

## Appendix 4 (Fall 2015)

### Culture

Behaviors and Practices: Things people do and say.
Attitudes: How people act on a daily basis: at school, at work, with friends, etc.
Core Values: Learned ideas of what is considered good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, wanted or unwanted, etc.

Forces that Influence Culture:
+Education
+The Media
+Economics
+Family
+Religion
+History

***How can bigger human stories help me understand myself and my place in the world? Why does my story matter? How do stories connect us?***

**How do I access Blogger from home?**
1. Go to www.blogger.com and log in with your school email address
2. Click on the saved draft of your post, edit, and publish

**Blog Post #2:**

**Step 1: Post your video/link on the blog: www.blogger.com**

**Login with school email and password!**

**Step 2: RESPOND to ONE video essay.**

**-Your responses should get to the heart of what this person is trying to say through her/his beliefs/story.**
**-Your responses should be developed, thoughtful, respectful, and effective.**
**-Answer ALL of the following questions using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.**
**1. What is this person's *story*?**
**2. Why does this person's belief matter?**
**3. How does this person's story/belief relate to problems/events/debates happening in the world?**
**4. How can this person's story help me understand myself and my place in the world?**

## Appendix 5 (Fall 2015)

### Community Interview Assignment
***Intersectionality (Intersectional Identity)***

Choose someone from your community (family, friend, acquaintance) to interview about their intersectional identity and how they have experienced the world because of it. You can interview whoever you want, but push yourself to find someone who may have a different experience than you (and keep in mind, you will have a better project if they respond deeply). Remember, this interview should be conducted with the utmost respect and intellectual integrity. Additionally, your interviewee may not be well-versed in some of these ideas, so it is also ***your job*** to guide them to understand the questions fully by using what we have discussed in class, if need be.

**Aspects of Identity to Consider:**

- Sex
- Race
- Socio-Economic Status
- Region (where someone is from - can be especially interesting if they have moved!)
- Age
- Sexual-orientation
- Family status (can be something like divorce or marriage, or something like the particular way they were raised, what their parents were like, or their family's heritage)
- Occupation (or parents' occupations)
- Political affiliation
- Religion
- Education level
- Other ideas you or your interviewee have!

**Directions**: Using the list of identity-forming aspects, have your interviewee choose the TWO that they think have been the most influential in their life (or, if you know your interviewee quite well, you might want to choose the identity pieces and ask about those you are most interested in). **Then, ask the questions provided on the worksheet, as well as one of your own creation.**

After recording your interview responses, your task is to type these responses up in a more fluid paper. You should not merely list their quotes, but rather should write a paper in your own voice and analysis, while integrating quotations and paraphrases from your interviewee.

### <u>Interview Questions</u>

(Record your responses here, on additional paper, or via voice recording)
***if you use voice recording, be sure to transcribe the responses onto this sheet after)

**First Aspect of Identity we are discussing:___________________________________________________**

***(be specific about this- write "sex: female" ; "region: grew up in Arkansas" or "socioeconomic status: low"***

1. How has this aspect been important to your identity?
   Response:

2. How does this identity influence how you interact with others in your community?
   Response:

3. What privileges have you experienced because of this identity? Or, do you think power / privileges have been withheld from you? How have you been victim to stereotypes or expectations based on this identity?
*(feel free to explain some of these ideas to your interviewee)*
   Response:

4. Make up a question that you think would be interesting to ask your interviewee. (you can use the same question for both identity aspects). My question is:

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Response:

**Second Aspect of Identity we are discussing:___________________________________________________**

***(be specific about this- write "sex: female" ; "region: grew up in Arkansas" or "socioeconomic status: low"***

1. How has this aspect been important to your identity?
   Response:

2. How does this identity influence how you interact with others in your community?
   Response:

3. What privileges have you experienced because of this identity? Or, do you think power / privileges have been withheld from you? How have you been victim to stereotypes or expectations based on this identity?
*(feel free to explain some of these ideas to your interviewee)*

Response:

*4. My question is:*

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

Response:

## Appendix 6 (Winter 2016)

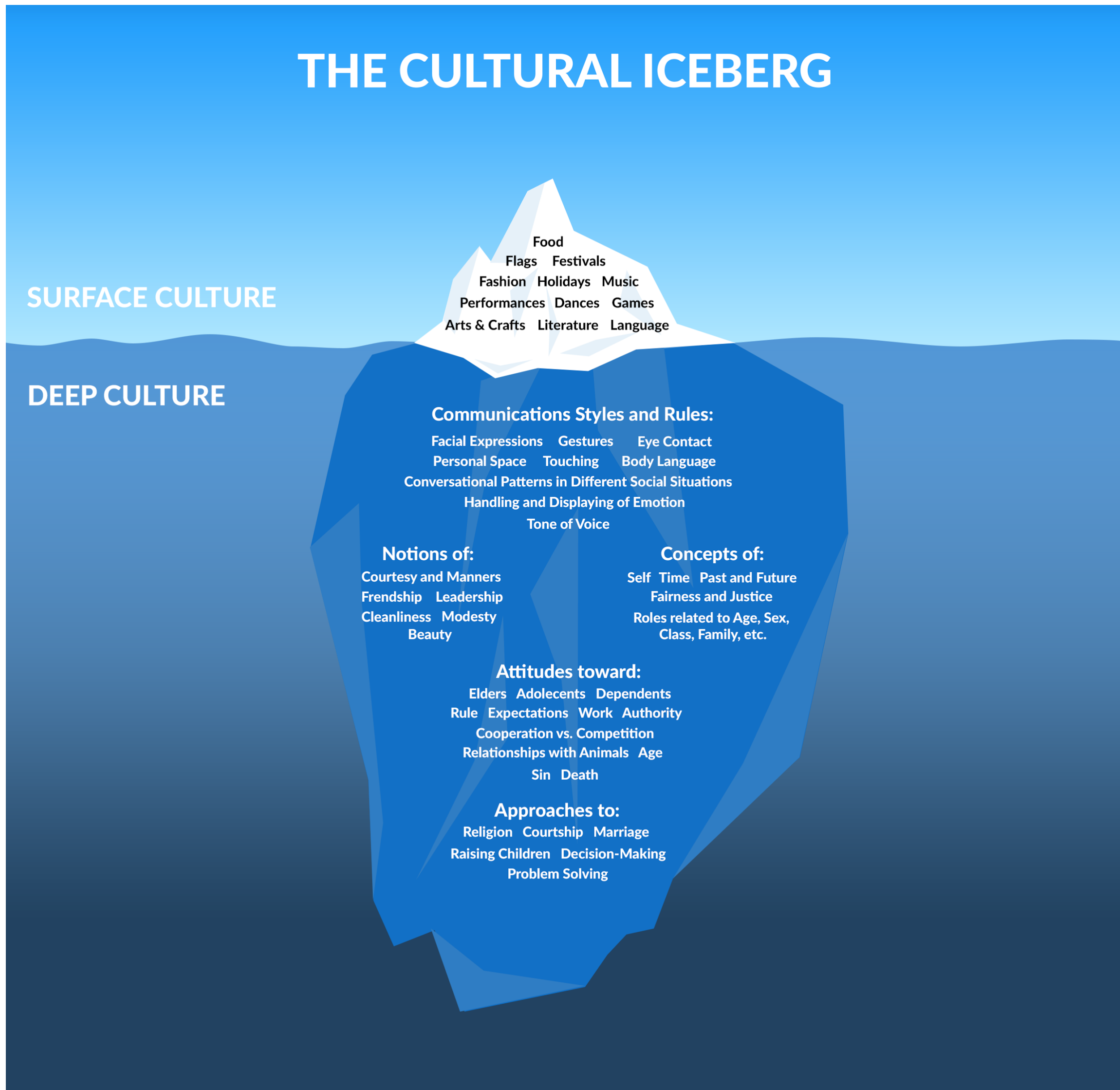


*Figure 3: This is the "cultural iceberg" visual representation of "surface" and "deep culture" (Hall, 1977) that Ben used for his assignment sheet.*

The cultural iceberg is a helpful metaphor to understand which parts of culture are visible and which parts of culture are hidden beneath the surface.

Write an item from the cultural iceberg in each box to compare the boys in The War of the Wall with the "Painter Lady." How are their cultures different? How are they similar?

Similarities | Differences

| | |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |

Now let's think about the culture of a place and how we interact with that culture. Use the table below to record your thoughts about the surface culture and the deep culture of our community, the way that you experience it. There is no correct answer, just your own opinion based on your unique experiences. Use the cultural iceberg from the first page to help you.

| Surface Culture | What Our Community is like | How I experience it |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

| Deep Culture | What Our Community is like | How I experience it |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Now in the box below, pick one part of surface culture and one part of deep culture that overlap in one place and draw that place. Try to show very clearly how you experience culture in that place.

| |
|---|
| |

**Appendix 7 (Spring 2016)**

**SOCIAL ISSUE RESEARCH & ACTIVISM PROJECT**

**DESCRIPTION:**
**Riding the momentum of our previous activism unit, we will now be targeting more formal research on an important social issue. For this project, you will be working on your skills of researching, finding reliable sources, incorporating impactful quotations and paraphrases into your text, synthesizing others' views and evidence to strengthen your argument, and citing correctly.**

- **Label your project with the 3 parts (research, action, and reflection)**
- **You can pick something that is a global issue, or more of a local issue to a community (or perhaps something that qualifies as both!)**
    - ***Example: if you research "homelessness" as your issue, you might research global / national statistics, but also include some from this community.***
- **Choose a topic you are interested in! This can be connected to your previous protest art (and you could use your art as an action plan), or not!**
- **Utilize your computer lab / media center time wisely! You should be able to complete your research paper in class. If you are seen off task, points may be deducted from your total score.**

**PART I: RESEARCH YOUR ISSUE**
**This should address your issue and explain its importance, scale, background information, numerous sides / complexities, possible solutions, case studies, further implications, etc. YOU decide what the most important information is! It's *okay* for this to be biased, as long as it's supported by scholarly sources. You want research to back you up and be logical and unbiased, but there should be a "point" to your paper - you don't have to argue that poverty is "okay"**

**REQUIREMENTS:**

- ❏ **2-3 page research paper**
- ❏ **Must include at least 4 reliable sources**
- ❏ **Correct in-text citations (MLA style). *See owl.english.purdue.edu for guidance.***
- ❏ **This should include at least 3 EMBEDDED quotes, as well as paraphrasing (cited)**
- ❏ **Consider which quotations will be most impactful because of their language, vs. which information is better used in a paraphrase**
- ❏ **ACADEMIC TONE - THIRD PERSON (no I / we / you / us) - THIS IS RESEARCH**
- ❏ **Works Cited Page in MLA format. *See owl.english.purdue.edu for guidance.***
- ❏ **Plagiarism will result in a zero and referral to administration.**

**PART II: TAKING ACTION**

- **Think of a way to bring awareness to this topic or to help create a solution**

**● Examples: Relevant volunteer work, create a social awareness campaign, donate to a cause, create a video, post artwork, put posters in the school / around town, use social media, write a letter to someone (especially a government official / representative - someone who has power to help) , write a blog post, etc. (basically, a ton of different things)**
**● Get this approved by me**
**● In your final paper, provide some proof (pictures of whatever, the text of your letter, link to video)**

**PART III: REFLECTION ON YOUR ACTION (write 1-3 paragraphs)**

**REQUIREMENTS:**
**● Reflect on your action:**
**○ what you did, why you chose this action, how it went/ how it made you feel / whether or not you think it will be helpful, what you hope to gain out of this, and what else we can do**
**● How did your research inform / influence your action?**
**● What questions still remain for you now, where should we go from here, what further implications exist, and what else do you want to explore in your future?**
**● Use a personal tone here - it's about YOU! (can use "I" and "we")**

## OUTLINE OF ACTIVISM PROJECT

**Label your paper with the three required parts (they can be on separate pages, too, but should be in one document).**

**PART I: RESEARCH**

***Sample research outline (this can look different!)**

**I. Introduction**
**A. Background on what the issue**
**B. Thesis - what the issue is, why is this important, what's the point**
**II. Background on issue**
**A. Statistics and scale of the problem (who this affects, where, why, etc.)**
**III. Possible Efforts / Aid**
**A. What has been done, specifically**
**B. What else can be done**
**IV. Complications**
**A. Issues, roadblocks**
**B. possible solutions**
**V. Conclusion**
**A. Further implications / what else this affects**
**B. Implications for audience; where they can go from here**
**C. Reiterate thesis / why this is important**

**PART II: TAKING ACTION**

***As far as the paper goes, incorporate some proof / image of what you did (this can look very different depending on what it was). Examples: a photo of volunteering, a picture of a campaign you posted (like posters or social media), screenshots / link to a video, information on where you donated, full text of a letter or written piece and where you sent it, etc.)***

**Insert the evidence into this part of your paper, with a caption of what it is, and then you can explain your choices further in the reflection.**

**PART III: REFLECTION**

**I. Explain action plan:**

**A. What it was**

**B. Why I chose this**

**C. How it went (good and/or bad) - was this effective?**

**D. What I hope for**

**E. What else could I do?**

**II. Further implications:**

**A. How did your research inform / influence your action**

**B. What questions still remain for you now / what else do you want to explore in your future?**

**Appendix 8 (Spring 2016)**

**Flint Water Crisis**

*Figure 4: This is a slide with photos (Garza, 2016; Ortiz, 2015) that Stevie used to focus on the Flint water crisis. The first photo is by Ryan Garza, Detroit Free Press).*

**Detroit Public School Teachers**

*Figure 5: This is a slide with a video still (WXYZ-Detroit, 2016) that Stevie used to focus on the Detroit Public School teacher strikes.*

## Appendix 9 (Winter 2016)

# HAPPY BLACK HISTORY MONTH!

"The future belongs to those who prepare for it today" – Malcolm X

**Trivia Question: Carolina Panther's quarterback *Cam Newton* plays in Super Bowl 50 this weekend. He shares the last name with which Black Panther founder?**

Cam Newton

________ Newton

*Figure 6: This is a slide with photos (USATI & Vibe, 2016; Blankfort, 1968) that Simone used during black history month to discuss Carolina Panther, Cam Newton and Black Panther, Huey Newton.*

**Appendix 10 (Winter 2016)**

*Figure 7: This is a slide with cover photos from TIME (TIME, 1988; Allen and Laurent, 2015) that Simone used to facilitate conversations comparing American in 1968 to now.*

*Figure 8: This is a slide with a photo (Wilking and Freidersdorf, 2015) that Simone used to facilitate conversation about culture, race, police, and power.*

DETROIT, 1968

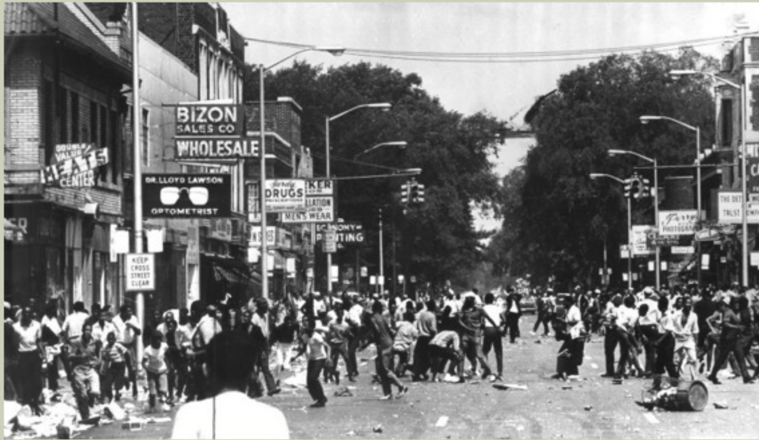


*Figure 9: This is a slide with a photo (Spina and McGraw, 2016) that Simone used to facilitate conversation about the Detroit rebellion and present day Detroit.*

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## DRIVING TOGETHER: HUMANIZING RESEARCH TOWARD MENTORSHIP FOR JUSTICE-ORIENTED TEACHING

**Simone**: I grew up on this side of the city and then also in [the much more affluent suburb]. The divide reflects my trajectory of life and the struggle my students are facing. They live this too. On the other side of the mall is one of the most dangerous parts of the city. And my students cross all of this. I would like to take you guys. It's a huge rectangle we'll make. I do it mindlessly. When I commute and visit my family, I'm numb to it. But I can't imagine if you're not from here. If you're coming from either side it's a shock (Focus Group, January 30, 2016).

On a cold Saturday in the Winter of 2016, Simone (all participant names are pseudonyms), a Black woman, prefaced what would be a slow drive across her neighborhood. I listened as she talked with me, a White, male English Educator and three other early-career White teachers, eating breakfast at a diner that had been a fixture across much of her life. Simone chose it for us since, as she points to above, it marked the center of the "divide." We had just ordered coffee, beginning to catch up about what had happened in our lives since we last spoke: puzzling alongside one another about the justice-oriented work we were learning to do together. We had been in diners across all of their communities. But this was the first time that any of them had wanted to drive us, to physically invite us further into their community.

Riding in Simone's Black Jeep, she would periodically slow, pointing out intersections and buildings outlining the contours of our movements. She had grown up in this community and was now teaching English in the charter school she attended. As she drove, we crossed many divides: geographic, racial, economic, ideological, blighted

houses and blinging mansions, just blocks apart, that she and her students traversed as they drove between school and home. Each teacher provided a similar outline when we had our monthly focus group conversations in restaurants across their communities. And even though this was the first time we had ridden with each other, a purposed driving together had provided much of the contours for our relationship.

That diner and that ride represented important learning spaces we occupied during our year-long study, reflecting and resisting with each other as we attempted to design more socially just English classrooms. We first met as English teacher educator and English teacher education students, now driving as researchers and participants, learning alongside one another what it meant to move justice-oriented teaching from our program out into practice across classrooms and communities. From the spring of 2015 to the spring of 2016, we met individually every few weeks as I observed their teaching, then met together monthly, digitally and in diners, sharing our various experiences and learning. Often, we wondered together, just what might our movements mean?

Through our work, we sought to 1) Better understand just how they practice "culturally sustaining pedagogies" (CSP), teaching and learning approaches meant to "sustain" marginalized youth literacy practices (e.g. African American Language practices, writing across youth spaces) alongside what has traditionally been dominant (e.g. Standard English, five paragraph essays) in a schooling system "[forwarding] the largely assimilationist and often violent White imperial project" (Paris and Alim, 2017, p. 2) What they experienced as they did so, and 3) How I, an early career teacher educator, learned to support and mentor them across their practice. CSP emerges as one promising approach to justice oriented teaching, focusing on sustaining the too-

often marginalized youth literacies and language practices of youth of color and other non-dominant youth alongside what has been traditional and dominant in English classrooms. But, in being recently introduced, much is still left to understand about what it means for teachers, teacher educators, and teacher mentors committed to this work in practice.

Out of our work, I began to identify a dynamic pedagogical model (Skogsberg, 2017) and mentoring moves--built out of "humanizing" (Paris and Winn, 2013) approaches to research--to support future justice-oriented classroom work. Below, I briefly outline previous work focused on preparing English teachers to advance social justice as well as the tenets of humanizing research guiding much of our work. I then outline the mentoring moves I made to support them as an illustration of both the dynamic nature of attempts to implement CSP in practice, as well as introduce the mentoring approach that emerged. I've illustrated these mentoring moves in context through short narratives constructed from observation, interview, focus group, and curriculum artifact data. All of them occurred in the late fall and winter of 2016, leading into and out of our drive with Simone. My intent is for these pieces of our collective story to create further conditions for dialogue amongst teacher educators toward better supporting a shared drive to advance CSP and other justice-oriented work across classrooms and communities.

## CSP, Social Justice English Teacher Preparation, and Mentorship Toward Practice

Moving social justice English teaching from preparation to practice is made of both immense possibility and resistance. It is work to live equitable lives but blocked at many

turns by individuals and institutions set against people of color and other identities marginalized by the White colonial project. Across this work, each of us brought varied experiences, “intersecting identities” and power that--just like collisions at intersections--meant our gender, racial, and class identities, could have multiple impacts and influences (Crenshaw, 1989). I chose to work with this group because of what they represented as they were now teaching across diverse communities where school could look and feel very different for them and students based on their identities as Black and White women and men across classrooms comprised of White, Black, and Brown students. What emerged across our time together was a clearer picture of just what is and will be needed to better support these and other teachers in dynamically practicing CSP and other justice-oriented teaching.

Preparing English teachers to teach diverse students and toward justice is not new. And thinking of schooling spaces as sites of resistance to White middle-class norms of achievement, where teachers center the multiple literacies and linguistic practices of youth of color and other youth marginalized by schooling institutions, as “assets” instead of “deficits” has often been coupled with these approaches in English classrooms (e.g. Kinloch, 2011; Kirkland, 2008). In fact, much research has been made of just how to do this, to what end, and often leaves many remaining questions. Recent research has added continued nuance to just what it means to prepare for and teach in these ways and has made suggestions for how ongoing research and preparation can best meet the dynamic challenges of teaching practice in contemporary classrooms (e.g. Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; McDonald et al., 2013; Picower, 2012) and the varying degrees of agency that English teachers have in doing so (Hartman, 2016; Macaluso &

Russo, 2016). Moving teacher preparation out across early-career teacher practice has been a challenge due to physical distance between institutions, connected ideological and even spatial power divides (Labaree, 2010; Paris, 2017; Soja, 2010), and the necessary substantive mentoring support that could provide the "connective tissue" for development of justice-oriented commitments from teacher preparation (Feiman Nemser, 2001).

Quality teacher mentoring does matter (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). But to get there, the research literature indicates that mentors "assist," and not just "assess" (Slick, 1997), moving early career teachers through their induction years (Feiman Nemser, 2001). Assistive mentoring is dialogic and involves mentoring alongside the mentee (Coombs and Goodwin, 2013; Beiler, 2010). It also involves preparing early career teachers for more "fluid identities" (Clandinin, 2009). Assistive mentoring can provide early career teachers with a "safety net" as they attempt to implement justice-oriented practices (Bickmore, 2013).

But, there is still much left to understand about what assistive mentoring looks like with early career teachers committed to justice-oriented teaching (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Of equal importance is the need to understand how early career teacher educators can best support these early career teachers navigating multiple dynamic challenges of moving back and forth between teacher education's place in a research-based academy and the practice-based values of K-12 schools (Loughran, 2014). Through my year with Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie, I strove to provide assistive mentorship that was dialogic, supported fluid identities, and provided a safety net for their justice-oriented work. What I discovered was that many of our answers came

through driving together, whether in a car, individual conversation, or critical group reflection. I also discovered that our emergent approaches provide some initial answers for future teachers, teacher educators, and mentors in further driving justice-oriented teaching work.

## Our Group

Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie shared the same set of preparation experiences at a large Midwestern university. And, for three of them (Rachel, Simone, and Stevie), it meant a return to the communities where they grew up. All were attempting to implement justice-oriented teaching practices through the lens of CSP and other asset-based approaches. But other areas of their identities marked departures: Ben, a White male, started teaching English in a for-profit urban charter school in a largely Black community, then in a non-profit urban charter school in a largely Black community, and finally in a for-profit urban charter school in a mixed community comprised of Black and middle-eastern students. Rachel, a White female, now taught in a predominantly White and suburban public high school and community. Simone, a Black female, now taught in a predominantly Black and urban charter middle school and community. And Stevie, a White female, initially started as an English and History teacher in a traditional rural public middle comprised of both White and students of color, and eventually returned to teach English in a mostly White and suburban community in the traditional public junior high school where she herself had attended. They all worked with me, a White male, former high school English teacher and graduate assistant teacher educator, who has taught on the east and west coasts, in rural, urban, and suburban districts, and left full-time teaching after three years. However, we all met various and at-times connected

resistances to our work for which we felt little prepared. We all attempted to navigate this together. And we all left with a clearer sense of what we wished we could've focused on in teacher preparation, now further experiencing classrooms that met multiple "intersections" (Crenshaw, 1989) and resistances to our work.

## A Humanizing Approach Driving Us

Across this work we regularly moved and thought across distant classrooms and communities. "Convenience" in data samples, locations, and participants (sometimes a guiding factor in educational research) was not our primary focus. And the neatness sometimes--seemingly--built in through physical, digital, and methodological distance and proximal closeness was not a priority. We were far and close. We had committed together to difficult work that necessitated relationship and continuing to learn how best to support one another. We would do what was necessary: me driving, oftentimes, a few hours every week to get to their classrooms, and Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie, giving up prep periods and some evenings and weekends to think together about what was emerging across their classrooms. When we were together, I attempted to mentor and question alongside them in the best--and most humanizing ways--I am still learning.

Humanizing research renders researchers and participants co-inquirers: pursuing questions of mutual concern and toward the betterment of all involved. As a "humanizing" endeavor, my research is built out of "relationships of *care* [my emphasis] and dignity" that dialogically seek to address the traditionally colonizing, inequitable approaches in [English)] classrooms and [English] classroom research (Paris, 2011, pp. 137-140). Our approach to research is also anchored in traditions of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR focuses on combating inequities through co-inquiry with research

participants and is focused, specifically, on the communities of which they are part. This challenges traditional, colonial, and dehumanizing "positivist [tropes] of feigned neutrality and objectivity" in educational researcher (Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009). This co-inquiry was manifest through co-design of research questions, methods, and regular member-checking and dialogue about what was emerging in the research. Because of our specific positionalities, this approach was a regular process, pushing on and meeting institutional and individuals limits (e.g. IRB constraints for authorship and the dissertation manuscript and teaching schedules). So, at times, it wasn't as co- as we perhaps hoped at the outset of the research. However, we continued to do the best we could to engage in more humanizing co-inquiry as best we could.

By taking this approach alongside participants, co-researching the negotiation of CSP and other justice-oriented pedagogical spaces across English classrooms, the contours of our research approach importantly match the focus of our research as we honor the "dialogic spiral" that is the foundation for further humanizing and justice-oriented approaches with students (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). Modeling this approach through research is a key part of their growth in doing similarly in their own classrooms: matching theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological commitments in ways that speak louder than university classroom teaching. But to do so has meant being closer than some may be accustomed in research, making my questions their questions and their questions mine.

Across my work as a graduate student and teacher educator, and especially evident as I see their words next to mine, is the feeling of "I/us" reflexivity that Kirkland (2013) so eloquently articulates that turns the "researcher lens inward" (p. 3). This is as

much a study about me as it is about them: all of us attempting to ask and answer similar questions in our classrooms in the best ways we know how. It is elements of this same humanizing approach to research that began to provide the contours of my mentorship approach across this study.

## Humanizing Research Toward Mentorship to Drive CSP Across English Classrooms

I witnessed Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie engage in a dynamic and iterative teaching process as they attempted to realize CSP in practice: what I've framed elsewhere as "Practice-ing A Flow" (Skogsberg, 2017). Not necessarily following a neat, linear and temporal trajectory, it involved a continuous process of *knowing* students' multiple literacies and communities, *remixing* them in both big and small ways into and alongside the curriculum they were tasked to implement by schools and districts, meeting various resistances and connected *struggling* in doing so, and then attempting to move, *flowing*, in response. To support their movements, my emergent mentoring followed an equally iterative process. Each teacher was provided very little in terms of district or school-provided mentorship focused on their teacher learning. And I was provided very little in terms of mentorship for my own teacher educator learning. In many ways, we mentored each other.

My mentoring moves involved regularly *centering* us in CSP, *co-designing* curriculum in ways both true to our collective commitments to CSP and in response to the resistances they were meeting, *encouraging* them as they resisted dominant responses to their teaching, and *challenging* them to persist in finding further ways to critically drive forward together in and beyond what we thought possible in practice.

These “mentoring moves” would not have been possible without our shared commitment to both CSP and a humanizing approach to our work. Both allowed for a continued closeness and parallel dynamism to respond to what emerged across their classrooms. Below, I offer explanations and examples of the mentoring moves I made, identified through the constant comparative analytic approaches (Charmaz, 2006) I used in the larger work informing this article (with data comprised of classroom observation field notes, curriculum artifacts, interviews, and focus group conversations). While displayed in this article with neat and distinct frames, these mentoring moves would often take on elements of one another, leading into and out of each, as we drove together in response to what we were experiencing.

**Centering**

**Rachel**: We’re going to talk about things that we’ve hinted at before. “Privilege,” you already know what it means. Intersectionality is a little harder, we talked about this with *Our Eyes are Watching God*. I have many things working with my identity, my gender, my race...I was taught to see racism as individual examples of meanness and not systemic... (Classroom Observation, October 7, 2015).

Much of my mentoring involved regularly *centering* us in shared commitments. This centering took the form of regularly *re-reading* our shared moments through core texts and of CSP and culture in education (e.g. Erickson, 2009; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014) and *guiding* back to both these texts and approaches in our collective research focus. I practiced this centering as a means to periodically gather us through shared theoretical frames and the magnitude of our work for each other and the field amidst what is both dynamic and fraught.

One example of these centering moves came as Rachel was facilitating a unit focused on *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* In our conversations leading into and out of that day's introduction of intersectionality to students, she was thinking about multiple ways her group of largely White students could find ways to better understand the experiences of the main character, Janie Crawford, a Black woman, and her growing sense of her own identities, while coming to better understand her and their own identities and levels of White privilege. Rachel had recently taken a summer course for her Master's degree on intersectionality, providing new lenses on multiple identities and power. She decided to bring intersectional lenses into her work with this text so as to offer her group of students similar lenses on their identities. After her teaching that day, as we talked about how students responded to intersectionality, Rachel began to think further about just what she was hoping to sustain with her students, wondering if she was going in the right direction. I saw this as an important time to underscore a main goal of CSP, *critical pluralism*, something we had recently been discussing in focus group, and that I saw as potentially a main point of her work. We discussed this in our conversation following my observation:

**Erik**: A main goal of culturally sustaining approaches is a critical pluralism. And that's the move you're making. And this is helping them to see how their lives are implicated in other lives in other communities.

**Rachel**: If there's one thing I want them to leave with is that everybody has got their own billions of stories and experiences that have made both good and bad things happen for them. Just different lives and privilege...So, when someone in the future talks about a lack of privilege, they know how that could be.

Through this mentoring move, we *re-read* Rachel's work back into our collective work, reminding us she was engaging with a "main goal of [CSP]" and *guiding* back to our collective theoretical focus. She then picked up this frame to clarify some goals she had for immediate work with *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and intersectionality.

My centering moves were meant to gather us through shared frames, underscore both the process and importance of the work she was doing, and further inspire her confidence in driving further. She went on to facilitate multiple critical conversations on elements of privilege (e.g. White, male, heterosexual) and even an intersectional interview assignment to further support students in taking these issues further out into her community (Appendix 1, Fall 2015). And, even when asked to defend some of her pedagogical decisions to an administrator, she would use our research and its theoretical centering as her defense. This centering continued to provide points out of which I could dynamically co-design curriculum with Rachel and the other teachers in this work.

**Co-Designing**

Ben writes "culture" on the board and begins his class with a question for students: "What is your definition of culture? Keep it local." Make sure to be thinking about how setting is connected" ***(*****Ben**, Classroom Observation, February 3, 2016).

There were multiple moments in mentoring where, as I engaged in co-inquiry with these teachers, we *co-designed* curriculum. This work in co-designing would oftentimes involve *joining* them to more fully understand their current positionality as best I could relative our collective commitments in the work as well as their current curricular constraints. I would then follow by *offering* curricular suggestions based on previous

experience and what I was noticing from my vantage points. My tact was always to join alongside them in getting closer and closer to realizing CSP based in their context, approaching as best as I could from their perspectives and offer possible curricular responses with--instead of for--them in an effort to continuing driving together.

One example of this co-designing came when Ben had recently been placed on a professional development plan that involved regular observations and more scrutiny from administration, making sure he was adhering to the charter-mandated curriculum and standards. As he outlined in our conversation after his teaching that day, he felt like he was increasingly being “policed.” He had just began at this new school after having now been at two other schools in just one year (a previous charter had closed and the other had misestimated enrollment). He was just beginning to know these students and starting to consider “culture” with them.

After he facilitated their surfacing of ideas related to culture, they launched into an organizer he created (Appendix 2, Winter 2016) to help them identify further elements of culture and cultural practice. I asked him to discuss his reasoning so as to better join in the work from his vantage point. We discussed his reasoning for this in our conversation following the observation, and he outlined where he hoped their work could go:

**Ben**: I want to have them look back at the past three years and see how they notice things shifting between home, school, and popular culture--like doing a cultural inventory to see where they fit on a cultural spectrum.

By beginning to *join* alongside him, I recognized he was planning to engage in the dynamism of cultural practices relative to place and time. In his attention to balancing

charter-mandated standards and texts, at one point he had mentioned “journey” being a theme he needed to explore. I offered that “journey” could be highlighted through work with this organizer:

**Erik**: I could see both elements of space and time coming up there, depending on how it fits with the curriculum. You could potentially do some nuanced approaches with journey that represent place and time.

Ben picked up on this thread, connecting back to mandated curriculum and our co-design, and further underscored the promise of what could be done with students as they thought about all that intersected in their community:

**Ben**: With the curriculum, we’re looking at a lot of evidence-based reasoning with informational texts and doing the same thing with biography and autobiography. And I’m wanting to do something specifically related to place. This place is this a really weird, isolated place, where it’s this dot of, this intersection of East Asian, Middle Eastern, and Arabic. Add to that the fact that we have the influence of a primarily African American city.

As a final idea in our discussion that day, I *offered* another consideration, remembering a previous conversation about cultural practice much-rooted in the regular part of their community soundscape:

**Erik**: Isn’t the [Islamic] call to prayer broadcast in the city?

**Ben**: It’s actually just a few blocks away. You hear it very clearly.

**Erik**: You could even integrate sound into this. Sound permeates all of these spaces.

This back-and-forth co-design of curriculum was a regular occurrence across our work. Oftentimes prompted by what they were tasked to do through school or district

mandates, standards, and what they were coming to know about students, I would co-design with them, identifying ways to remain connected to our work amidst all the restrictions and resistances, toward further driving together. I saw myself, as someone removed from many of their institutional constraints, offering an important outside perspective and other possibilities. Coupled with this iterative process of centering & co-designing was a connected and equally iterative process of encouraging and challenging toward the further movement of our work.

**Encouraging**

Simone displays a slide containing a photo of a child in front of police of a line of police. Underneath the photo she provides contextualizing info: “Ferguson, 2014.” As she looks out at her students, she poses a question to connect the children in the room with the child in the photo: “What do you think he’s feeling?” Student give a variety of answers, many of them focusing on “fear.” Simone reminds them this child had just saw a child a little older than them, Michael Brown, shot. As the conversation continues, students talk further about race, one connecting the fear felt with race, summing up roots of much explosive tension across the US: this child is scared because he’s Black and surrounded by White police officers (**Simone**, Observation, February 17, 2016).

As we co-designed, they met regular resistances both internally and externally, rooted in their resistance to the White colonial project of schooling. I often tried to purposefully encourage them as they experienced connected hesitancies and struggles. This encouragement was not empty praise, but instead was meant to instill strength and courage in continuing our collective work. My encouragement would take the form of *reinforcing* their courageousness in taking up our difficult work in practice and the

learning processes involved in being an early-career teacher. It also meant *witnessing* what they were accomplishing and their professional growth.

An example of this came as Simone was taking up issues of culture, race, police, and power with students (Appendix 3, Winter 2016). In talking with Simone after my observation, she remarks about how “uncomfortable” it is to do this work. I follow up with reinforcement, reminding that, in taking up the work we’re doing, discomfort is regular part:

**Erik**: There are going to be uncomfortable conversations. These are some of the ugliest parts of human beings and how we treat one another. It’s important to be deliberate in how we have them and constructing safer spaces [to do so]. With power the way it is, I don’t think there are truly safe spaces.

Here, I also try to *reinforce* feeling discomfort in learning how to have conversations that resist power structures bringing us to this moment and the importance of creating “safer spaces” within which to have them. These conversations are at the heart of answering what will be sustained. That reminds Simone of a previous comment a student had made about another conversation they had about race and power:

**Simone**: One of my students said, “Well you wouldn’t say that if your professor was in here,” implying that if you were here, because you were White, it would make me or you uncomfortable. So, I think that they saw you in here listening and it was powerful for them, because they now know that this is a conversation that we can have regardless of who’s listening…

Here, Simone further underscores her discomfort and growing comfort in continuing to have these necessary conversations. I then follow with further encouragement,

*witnessing* her growth into these spaces (as months before she communicated her trepidation in having these conversations connected to CSP):

**Erik**: I'm glad to see you feeling more comfortable doing it and want to encourage and applaud that. It's not easy to bring those conversations into classroom spaces--stepping into spaces less sure.

Teachers across this work experienced a variety of resistances, both internally and externally, in attempting to implement CSP. As was my motivation with Simone, I hoped my encouragement would provide a counterpoint to keep us collectively driving. Our closeness in the work allowed for a vulnerability toward a deeper mentoring relationship. And, as Simone initiated above, we were oftentimes able to be more vulnerable and candid with each other about our challenges, finding a kind of solace in collective recognition that this work wouldn't be easy or comfortable and that we were supporting each other in attempting to do it. It was because of this relationship that I felt I could challenge all of them further in realizing our collective commitments.

**Challenging**

As I enter the classroom, beginning to set down my backpack, Stevie approaches, looking worried and says they will be doing "grammar games" that day. She then apologizes that they aren't doing anything else, that there won't be "much to observe" (**Stevie**, Observation, January 26, 2016).

As these teachers would talk about the work they were doing and were hoping to do, I would attempt to challenge them in ways I believed could get us closer to realizing CSP. This would oftentimes mean *surfacing* ways they might be moving away from our collective commitments and then *nudging* them in ways that could help them remain

true to their espoused commitments, starting our process of once again centering in the tenets of CSP and our commitments to learning how to more fully realize it.

Across our time together, Stevie had found multiple opportunities to come to know more about the cultural and literate practices of students. She continued to remix them alongside the dominant curriculum. She had spent much of that fall on a *Humans of Her Town* (modeled after *Humans of New York)* (Appendix 4, Fall 2015) blog that provided opportunities for students to reflect on multiple elements of individual and community cultures. She was in the process of planning her next big required assignment, a research paper, in ways that would support students in further exploring critical aspects of culture and community, and in making public justice-oriented “activist” statements through their literate practices. She was clearly growing and deepening her work with CSP, finding ways this lens could help her and students take up justice-oriented work and the ways their lives were implicated in the lives of the Black and Brown youth Ben and Simone taught. That’s why her apology surprised me that day.

We had been regularly thinking about what we were attempting to sustain through our work, and she had been doing other work across that fall to help students think about the cultural practices that were and weren’t being sustained in their community. I asked her to further clarify her apology in our post-observation conversation, hoping to surface what seemed to be theoretically moving away from our collective commitment:

**Erik**: So, you apologized to me that I wouldn’t see anything today.

**Stevie**: I meant you’re not going to see a lot of things about culture.

In responding, she continued to *surface* something we were both missing leading into that day. It became clear to me that if she felt she wasn't "sustaining anything that day" she could be missing the dominant practices being sustained whether she recognized them overtly or not. I took this as an opportunity to underscore that we were always sustaining something, *nudging* our movement back toward our center:

**Erik**: Across our work as teachers, we're doing culturally sustaining work. It just depends upon whose culture you're sustaining...This very much was culturally sustaining. It was sustaining a set of Standard English practices…

This was an important moment to *surface* and *nudge* us back toward learning to practice CSP, reminding that, by prioritizing certain cultural practices (esp. the dominant ones), something is sustained. We later returned to this moment in a subsequent focus group meeting to continue collectively surfacing what we were choosing to sustain with students, regularly using this question ("What are you sustaining?") as a necessary challenging, centering, and further driving point. This question, partially inspired by this moment with Stevie, helped us inhabit a regular critical space where institutional and teacher choices always meant that something was being sustained, that dominant cultural practices needed to be made continually visible, and that by regularly doing this, we could continue moving our work together.

As these teachers attempted to implement CSP through a dynamic and iterative pedagogical process, I attempted to mentor them using an equally dynamic and iterative mentoring process of *centering*, *co-designing*, *encouraging*, and *challenging* (Figure 1). This mentoring process wouldn't have been possible if not for the humanizing approaches that supported our co-inquiry and continued to help us build and deepen

our relationships. Alongside one another, we drove into and out of our various institutional contexts, continuing to learn just what it meant to attempt CSP in practice, supporting each other in the best ways we knew how. Overall, we came to understand more about ourselves, students, schools, and the pedagogical and mentoring movements necessary to drive CSP from preparation to practice.

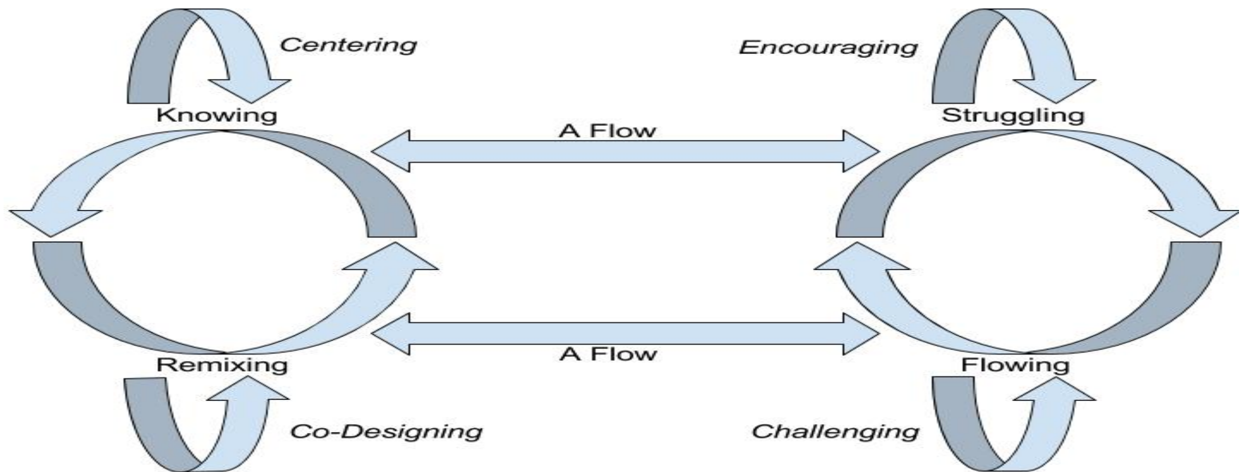


*Figure 10: This is a visual representation of the CSP mentoring process.*

**Driving CSP On the Move Together**

“Part of sustaining teachers and ourselves as teacher educators is knowing how to navigate, to live on and in, shifting landscapes (Clandidin et al. 2009, p. 146).

Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie represent similar but also very different intersecting identities and classroom spaces across which we all collectively moved with our commitments to CSP. Our pedagogical practices and my mentoring experiences necessarily varied based on so many intersecting factors and “shifting landscapes.” To begin learning how to respond to these shifting landscapes, our relationships in and through this research--cultivated by humanizing methodologies and connected mentoring approaches--were essential. These relationships provided a necessary

support in further learning how to realize CSP in practice that was largely absent from much of the formalized mentoring structures across our experiences.

For justice-oriented teachers, teacher educators, and mentors to continue learning how to do this work, we must drive together**.** But, absent our relationship through this research, supported by this methodological approach, would we have done so? With so much to resist, our collective provided essential support for navigating difficult and dynamic terrain. The four mentoring practices from our research and model (centering, co-designing, encouraging, challenging)--cultivated through our humanizing methodology--provide a starting point to continue CSP teacher mentoring work. It also provided a new perspective on what it might mean to provide dialogic mentorship for English teachers committed to further realizing CSP and other justice-oriented pedagogies. We drove with each other. And in doing so, we made visible some of the potential mentoring necessary to continue supporting early career teachers in driving justice-oriented teaching across classrooms and communities.

APPENDICES

## Appendix 1 (Fall 2015)

### Community Interview Assignment
***Intersectionality (Intersectional Identity)***

Choose someone from your community (family, friend, acquaintance) to interview about their intersectional identity and how they have experienced the world because of it. You can interview whoever you want, but push yourself to find someone who may have a different experience than you (and keep in mind, you will have a better project if they respond deeply). Remember, this interview should be conducted with the utmost respect and intellectual integrity. Additionally, your interviewee may not be well-versed in some of these ideas, so it is also ***your job*** to guide them to understand the questions fully by using what we have discussed in class, if need be.

**Aspects of Identity to Consider:**

- Sex
- Race
- Socio-Economic Status
- Region (where someone is from - can be especially interesting if they have moved!)
- Age
- Sexual-orientation
- Family status (can be something like divorce or marriage, or something like the particular way they were raised, what their parents were like, or their family's heritage)
- Occupation (or parents' occupations)
- Political affiliation
- Religion
- Education level
- Other ideas you or your interviewee have!

**Directions**: Using the list of identity-forming aspects, have your interviewee choose the TWO that they think have been the most influential in their life (or, if you know your interviewee quite well, you might want to choose the identity pieces and ask about those you are most interested in). **Then, ask the questions provided on the worksheet, as well as one of your own creation.**

After recording your interview responses, your task is to type these responses up in a more fluid paper. You should not merely list their quotes, but rather should write a paper in your own voice and analysis, while integrating quotations and paraphrases from your interviewee.

### <u>Interview Questions</u>

(Record your responses here, on additional paper, or via voice recording)
***if you use voice recording, be sure to transcribe the responses onto this sheet after)

**First Aspect of Identity we are discussing:_______________________________________________**

***(be specific about this- write "sex: female" ; "region: grew up in Arkansas" or "socioeconomic status: low"***

1. How has this aspect been important to your identity?
   Response:

2. How does this identity influence how you interact with others in your community?
   Response:

3. What privileges have you experienced because of this identity? Or, do you think power / privileges have been withheld from you? How have you been victim to stereotypes or expectations based on this identity?
*(feel free to explain some of these ideas to your interviewee)*
   Response:

4. Make up a question that you think would be interesting to ask your interviewee. (you can use the same question for both identity aspects). My question is:

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

Response:

**Second Aspect of Identity we are discussing:_______________________________________________**

***(be specific about this- write "sex: female" ; "region: grew up in Arkansas" or "socioeconomic status: low"***

1. How has this aspect been important to your identity?
   Response:

2. How does this identity influence how you interact with others in your community?
   Response:

3. What privileges have you experienced because of this identity? Or, do you think power / privileges have been withheld from you? How have you been victim to stereotypes or expectations based on this identity?
*(feel free to explain some of these ideas to your interviewee)*

Response:

*4. My question is:*

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Response:

## Appendix 2 (Winter 2016)

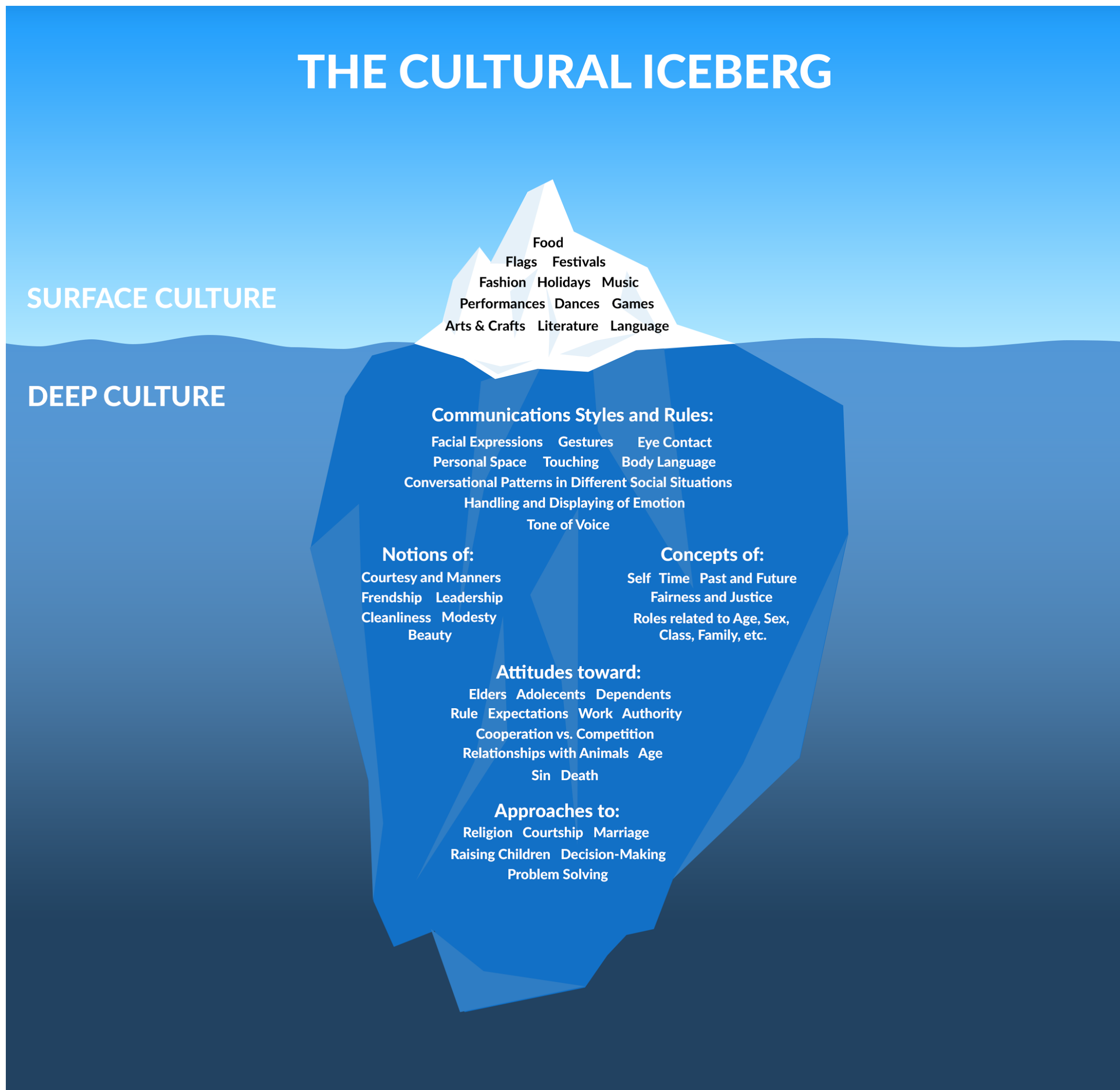


*Figure 11: This is the "cultural iceberg" visual representation of "surface" and "deep culture" (Hall, 1977) that Ben used for his assignment sheet.*

The cultural iceberg is a helpful metaphor to understand which parts of culture are visible and which parts of culture are hidden beneath the surface.

Write an item from the cultural iceberg in each box to compare the boys in The War of the Wall with the "Painter Lady." How are their cultures different? How are they similar?

Similarities Differences

| | |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |

Now let's think about the culture of a place and how we interact with that culture. Use the table below to record your thoughts about the surface culture and the deep culture of our community, the way that you experience it. There is no correct answer, just your own opinion based on your unique experiences. Use the cultural iceberg from the first page to help you.

| Surface Culture | What Our Community is like | How I experience it |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

| Deep Culture | What Our Community is like | How I experience it |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Now in the box below, pick one part of surface culture and one part of deep culture that overlap in one place and draw that place. Try to show very clearly how you experience culture in that place.

| |
|---|

## Appendix 3 (Winter 2016)

FERGUSON, 2014

*Figure 12: This is a slide with a photo (Wilking and Freidersdorf, 2015) that Simone used to facilitate conversation about culture, race, police, and power.*

## Appendix 4 (Fall 2015)

### Culture

Behaviors and Practices: Things people do and say.
Attitudes: How people act on a daily basis: at school, at work, with friends, etc.
Core Values: Learned ideas of what is considered good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, wanted or unwanted, etc.

Forces that Influence Culture:
+Education
+The Media
+Economics
+Family
+Religion
+History

***How can bigger human stories help me understand myself and my place in the world? Why does my story matter? How do stories connect us?***

**How do I access Blogger from home?**
1. Go to www.blogger.com and log in with your school email address
2. Click on the saved draft of your post, edit, and publish.

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# PREPARING TO LEAVE: TEACHERS & TEACHER EDUCATORS APPROACHING WHAT COULD BE

I prepared to become a teacher, deeply committed to seeking equity through classroom work. I then completed my teacher preparation program and deliberately took my first teaching job preparing to leave it. Before even graduating from my preparation program, I discussed at length with my advisor the best timing and approach to go on to graduate school. I was committed to social justice through education. And because I was committed to education in this way, I started by preparing to leave teaching before I was ever ready. I often wondered who and what I left behind and where I could have the most impact in justice-oriented education work?

I knew I didn't want to be one of the "reformers" I heard my father talk about. They were outsiders who knew nothing of the day-to-day experiences of practicing teachers. I also didn't want to be the White, male, teaching savior: an easy trope because of my identities and layered with privileges in nation-state schools that largely base achievement on White middle class norms. Here, some teachers see students of color through deficit-based perspectives: seeing only lack they could address. I felt that in order to change education for the better, I needed to understand it from a teacher's perspective. That was why I was there. Then, I needed the time, focus, experiences, credentials, and credibility I felt I couldn't get as a teacher. So it was early in the fall of my third year that I regularly moved between student admissions essays and my own.

Now, almost completing my PhD in Teacher Education, I have taught and mentored hundreds of early-career teachers from teacher preparation to classrooms. And through my research, I've gotten the opportunity to better understand just what it

meant for myself and early career teachers to engage--just as I am learning to do--in justice-oriented teaching. Our specific approach to this work was what educational and linguistic scholars Django Paris & H. Samy Alim (2017) offer through “culturally sustaining pedagogies” (CSP). CSP aims to transcend the popular but insufficient uptake of “tolerance,” “responsiveness,” and “relevance” for inclusive and equitable classrooms. This teaching is aimed at *sustaining* the cultural and literate practices of youth of color and other youth marginalized by educational institutions (how they, for example, already make meaning through their own Englishes, languages, reading, listening, and viewing outside schools) in the White colonial project of schooling. To better understand what CSP might look like in classrooms, I spent a year with four early career teachers--Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie (all pseudonyms)--committed to practicing it.

I watched them teach. I reflected with them afterwards. We co-designed curriculum as they attempted to balance their commitments to equity with what they were required to do. We met monthly as a group to discuss further what was going on. I was impressed with their commitment, but equally sobered by just what it took for them to maintain it. What emerged through time together was a snapshot of what it meant to be committed to social justice through classrooms in 2017. We were awed by what we could accomplish and what we weren’t prepared for. We wondered, together, whether the educational justice work we hoped to accomplish was possible in classrooms? And in considering multiple ways that we might leave and stay committed to the work, we wondered what and who would remain?

## Winter ‘16: Should We Be Here?

After having spent the fall of 2016 writing about our experiences, it was time for us to get back together. I wanted to hear how they were doing and to hear their feedback on the dissertation. As we settled into tables at our university, I opened with a question about how the next year had been going. Each briefly shared threads of our work that had continued and didn’t, frustrations, and knowing glances across the table as they recounted what we all knew too well of the passion and exhaustion that comes from taking up teaching beyond correcting grammar and reading classics.

Simone, a Black woman, teaching in a charter school serving mostly Black students in a community where she grew up, opened up about where she found herself: “I can’t continue to feel this way. It dampens my love for teaching, why I got into it in the first place. I didn’t get into teaching for students to do well on a test.” “Are you thinking about looking at other [careers]?” I asked. At six months pregnant, Simone was anticipating many new things: “Yeah, I am. It will be hard with the new baby. But I have to see what’s out there.”

Across much of our previous year together, Simone and I had been puzzling alongside one another to find ways that more justice and youth-oriented teaching practices could fit amongst so much test prep at her charter school. She oftentimes had to sneak in the work. She sprinkled critical conversations about Black cultures and identities and the current state of community and police relations where she could.

At one point, she even stopped instruction to talk with her students about colorism, the privileging of lighter skin tones, after an incident between two students. She talked about how damaging colorism has been across the Black community. Simone was able do some things, but oftentimes felt frustrated by how much curriculum

and schedules were already decided for her. She now contemplated something outside teaching.

Stevie, a White woman, teaching in the largely White and rural town where she grew up, contemplated a similar move. Responding to Simone, she, too, disclosed her next steps: “Ultimately, I don’t think I want to stay teaching. I think I want to go to get my Master’s in School Psychology.” She mentioned thoughts about this in previous conversations with me, pointing out how unsustainable she felt teaching would be. Across our year together, she had built curriculum connected to what she was coming to know about students, providing opportunities for them to practice skills often valued in English classrooms: analysis, synthesizing evidence to build arguments, and writing for various audiences. But she didn’t stop there.

She provided experiences for students to choose texts, to further center the identities of youth and individuals of color in her largely White classroom. She asked questions about privilege and power and eventually built toward a culminating project where students made public arguments connected to English teaching standards. Students created protest art and wrote letters to their local paper about dress codes and rape culture, Black Lives Matter, and the adoption rights of gay couples. But I could tell she was getting tired. During many of our observations she would wonder aloud how much longer she could keep this up.

Ben, a White male, was now no longer in a classroom. He had taught across three different charter schools (the first one closed after his first year because of low enrollment; the second one laid him off after misestimating enrollment numbers). He mostly taught Black and Brown students. Despite so much movement and little support,

he attempted to find spaces to center the voices of Black and Brown students amongst the test prep. At one point toward the end of his second year, he even had students begin to trace how their cultural practices were connected to physical structures and geography in the local, and mostly Islamic, community. Ultimately, he decided to resign from his last position after disagreements with administration. He had now been out of the classroom that whole fall.

Ben now reported back from the other side of his decision. He shared the mixed feelings he now had about his work as a web designer: “I’m now happily employed outside of education. But the work is really kind of boring. There’s a lot less stress in this work than in teaching.” He shared the disjuncture between his hopes and the realities of being a teacher: “[In teaching, I had hoped] to build relationships with kids, and to influence them. I wanted to have that space. But, I think the ability to do that was held back by all of the test prep.” He underscored the distance between his hopes and the reality of the job.

The fourth teacher in our group, Rachel, a White female, now teaching in the suburban and largely White high school where she had attended, was gone from our conversation that day. She was increasingly spending her limited time outside of school caring for her mother. In a phone call shortly after the conversation between the four of us that day, I brought her up to speed. In response, she recounted further times she’s had to defend her approaches to administrators, students, and parents, who don’t share her values. She wondered aloud: “What is my place in public education? Is it ready for me to be doing these things?” She recounted how different it was this year without our regular conversations.

Across our time the previous year, she had done amazing and difficult work with students. For example, in this largely White classroom space, she facilitated conversations and classroom assignments about White privilege, intersectional identities, systemic racism, and bias. This year, she focused on the fatigue (at one point, she had even been called into her principal's office after a parent called a news outlet about her White privilege work). Reflective, she said, "There are huge parts of me that want to do something else. But I don't know what else I would do." Compared to the rest of our group, her potential move out of teaching didn't seem as imminent, but her exhaustion and frustration were clear.

That day as the four of us sat and talked, and then as I followed up with Rachel on the phone, we all contemplated leaving teaching. I reminded them of the large numbers of teachers leaving before their first five years. I reminded them all I had left high school teaching at the end of my third year. Their third year was nearing an end.

Across our many conversations, we wondered together where they were going and what could be on the other side of leaving. And even if they didn't physically leave, I often witnessed the ideological and emotional leaving of ideas and commitments. I continued to wonder how I could've better prepared them not to leave. But if they did, they wouldn't be alone.

## Who Stays and Who Goes?

Fewer and fewer people want to teach. According to a report by the *Learning Policy Institute* (2016), between 2009 and 2014, teacher education enrollments dropped by 35% (from 691,000 to 451,000). 2016 marked the lowest number of available teachers in the US over the last ten years. Much more common, now, are states signaling

"teacher shortages" caused by a perfect storm of lower teacher education program enrollments, more students in schools, high and unabated teacher attrition, and districts' attempted return to pre-recession teacher-student ratios. Attrition is especially highest for teachers of color and in our country's most vulnerable communities. Currently, teacher attrition is about twice as high as in countries like Finland and Singapore. These countries are often used as international comparisons when talking about the shortcomings of our system.

Policy-makers and business leaders wring their hands about US students' lower performance on international achievement tests (Kerr, 2016). Much research focuses on how America might come to define and reward "quality teaching." Unfortunately, in concert with these comparisons aren't enough calls for parallel changes to the overall social and educational system and truly (O'Donnell, 2016).

In the US, a school to prison pipeline thrives. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) (2017), Black and Brown youth are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their White peers. They are then pushed into a broken criminal justice system which has seen significant disparities between Black and Brown individuals and their White counterparts when it comes to prosecution, jail time, and wrongful convictions (ibid, 2014). And in some schools, Black and Brown youth can be asked to give up much about who they are in order to be deemed "successful," tested narrowly on their facility with Standard English Grammar and the traditional strictures of five-paragraph essays. These assessments rarely place value on the literacies and languages they already practice. This continues a dark legacy of schools being used to further separate in a settler colonial nation-state.

As is much of American society, American schools are rooted in legacies of oppression: stealing native land and decimating native populations, slavery, boarding schools meant to assimilate indigenous, Black, and Brown people into an American White monoculture, segregation, and Jim Crow. Now with a more seemingly benign facade of school choice and vouchers, these "solutions" do little to address the roots of school funding systems largely operating out of property tax bases and institutionalized racism. Those with the means to leave under resourced schools will do so, siphoning off already limited resources. These terrible legacies are still with us.

## Spring '16: A Coming Age of Trump

Toward the end of Spring '2016, we sat in a diner booth in Ben's community. As we talked, the topic of the Trump campaign and potential presidency emerged. Each teacher shared how much more difficult their work had gotten throughout the campaign, as the political climate became more fraught.

Simone recounted a recent conversation where a student had summed up Trump ads as "apocalyptic." Ben had been trying to engage in similar conversations about the campaign, highlighting all-to-real fears and questions he tried to answer from Muslim students. Stevie interjected with further stories of driving to school: "...it's terrifying, because if you drive down the road from my school, there are all these Trump signs." Rachel experienced something similar: "I saw one the other day and then there were five." And what seemed to surprise Stevie the most was that they "came out of nowhere" and that she was starting to overhear some student chatter about how Trump was the only candidate telling the "truth."

Simone had recently shown her class a clip of a Chicago protest that had shut down a Trump rally. She recounted how students asked, if Trump wins, "..is this what America becomes? Is this going to be an everyday thing?" Simone paused for a moment, looking across the four of us: "And that's scary, because it could." What one of Simone's students articulated as "apocalyptic," echoed in many ways Ben's conversations to allay the very real fears of Muslim students. Rachel and Stevie were coming to terms with what they were now coming to see in their communities. Simone's final thought that day about what "could" be was sobering. We all struggled with our preparation for what we hoped could be in our classrooms. There, we competed with multiple visions of what could be in American schools.

**Winter '16: Approaching Boundaries and Crossings**

On another a cold day in the Winter of 2016, Simone drove us through her neighborhood. She traced the contours of sidewalks and buildings she shared with students from her own childhood, pointing out the very stark "divides" and "crossings" between the more and less affluent--often along racial lines--only blocks apart: "The divide reflects my trajectory of life and the struggle my students are facing. They live this too. On the other side of the mall is one of the most dangerous parts of the city, and my students cross all of this. I would like to take you guys, it's a huge rectangle we'll cross. I do it mindlessly. When I commute and visit my family, I'm numb to it. But I can't imagine, if you're not from here. If you're coming from either side it's a shock." As we rode, I wondered if those who were making the decisions for Simone's students had crossed these divides?

Later, after settling around a table at Starbucks, the conversation shifted to state testing. Stevie shared about a recent experience where she was told to ask students to highlight elements of argument writing. They hadn't worked on argument writing yet. "And most everyone got 0%," she shared. She was clearly frustrated at this approach: "And they just do that to show growth. So pointless. And the students were so confused. And I had to tell them just to try their best." I remembered similar teaching experiences, told at the last minute I had to give some assessment I had never seen. I put on the best face I could.

Ben shared a similar experience. Students were tested on gerund verbs. "Who cares!" Stevie responded in disgust. Ben went on, "Yeah, they use it fine. They just may not know the term for it." We shared a collective skepticism of inherently valuing Standard English practices. What about what students already practiced through other Englishes like African American Language (AAL) or Spanglish? Here students made living language their own, making valuable meaning across their communities.

Rachel then moved our conversation to an area we had all talked about before. We then wondered together how long they and other teachers can sustain teaching in this environment: "I feel like that's a big reason why many young teachers just stop. Most of us don't think about those things or going into teaching for them." Ben interjected, "My dean and principal are in my classroom twice a week. It's really just policed. I need to be able to justify why I'm doing [justice-oriented teaching] instead of something that's preparing them for a test."

And even though they complained, Rachel and Stevie, both teaching in largely White communities, didn't have anywhere near the same surveillance and restrictions.

As both Ben and Simone shared about regular test prep, Stevie shared her freedom and flexibility: “We don’t have to do that yet. My superintendent openly hates tests. And he pretty much says don’t worry about it,” a luxury of a district not having to prove itself using benchmarks so disconnected from their communities. “And I don’t have to do [State Testing] prep either,” Rachel added.

“Lucky,” Simone responded frustratingly. Speaking across the many divides between her district, school, and students, and Simone’s, Rachel asked further, “Do they make you do this? Or can you create your own [assessments]?” Simone, resigned, underscored what had been clear across my time with her and Ben: “We have to teach what we’re given.” Teaching was stripped of its complexity, of its humanity, and was directed primarily toward tests.

## Approaching the Complexities of Teaching

Many seem to be experts in education and would-be reformer these days. This could be a byproduct of what sociologist Dan Lortie (2002) calls their “apprenticeship of observation”: an overconfidence of competence when it comes to understanding the complexities of classrooms. This “apprenticeship” stems from the considerable time we’ve all spent as students, but is poor substitute for experience and further nuance provided from the teacher’s perspective. It is, as a past mentor of mine put it, like claiming you are an exceptional cook because you often eat at nice restaurants. Teaching is much more complex. And, unfortunately, this complexity is lost in a sea of standards and high stakes standardization--planned by policymakers distant from the students they make decisions for.

Effective teaching and learning is based in more than just knowing and transferring content to students. It not only combines understandings and facility with one's discipline, say English or Math, but also with what it means to actually teach others not as familiar with these disciplines. Teaching brings together what past Carnegie President and educational researcher Lee Shulman (1986, 1987) dubs *content knowledge* (what, for example, teachers know about the discipline of English), *pedagogical knowledge* (what teachers, for example, know about teaching and learning), and *pedagogical content knowledge* (what teachers, for example, know about what it means to bring content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge together to teach others less familiar with their discipline). Teaching is challenging to do well.

One small example of this may have come from your own experiences teaching co-workers and children. In this process, you might find you keep using words or concepts you, taking for granted, need to explain. In trying to explain, you might then find words you are using needing even further explaining (since they rest on foundational understandings unfamiliar to a more novice audience). This is a teacher's everyday existence. It's a complex dance. Not everyone can do it (including some practicing teachers). However, the best ones, the really talented, thoughtful, and hardworking practitioners, make it look easy.

The preparation for high quality teaching doesn't happen in front of students. In fact, much of this preparation doesn't even happen during the school day. Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie would oftentimes work late into the night and on weekends further perfecting this art and craft. And because classrooms are tasked with so many different visions, purposes, and at-times competing local and federal, public and private

stakeholders, teaching, Mary Kennedy reminds us, “strives toward ideals that are inherently contradictory, and that [happen] in real time where the merits of alternative courses of action must be weighed in the moment” (Kennedy, 2006, p. 206). Much met across their classrooms everyday. And preparing for that is difficult.

Teacher preparation researcher Sharon Feiman Nemser in *From Preparation to Practice: Designing a Continuum To Strengthen and Sustain Teaching* (2001), points out that learning to teach happens from teacher preparation programs out into practice and across teaching careers. Each step in this continuum means new areas of focus as teachers come to better know students, disciplines, schools, and communities. This whole process is made even more difficult--and necessarily so--as teacher education and teachers have attempted to address social inequities.

## Approaching the Complexities of Teaching Toward Justice

With a legacy of oppression, segregation, and inequity across communities and in and through schools as backdrop, some teacher preparation programs (mine being one of them) center “social justice” and equity as a main focus. These programs highlight and center these issues and focus their teacher training on helping teachers in their programs do the same with students. Inequities are highlighted in how teaching practices privilege certain students and their literacies from home, devaluing what many Black and Brown students practice.

In my teaching, for example, I’ve attempted to center conversations about how and who has gotten to define “Literacy.” I’ve engaged early-career teachers in the history of how literacy has been defined in America, how definitions of what counts as literate practice is highly mediated and contextualized by time, geography, race, and

power. And I've attempted to prepare teachers to approach curriculum flexibly and necessarily built in connection to what students already read, write, listen to, and watch outside of classroom spaces.

A recently popular example of this approach came when Brian Mooney, a New Jersey English teacher, experienced viral fame after an unexpected collaboration with rapper Kendrick Lamar (Yenigun, 2015). Kendrick saw via social media that Mooney had centered his lyrics in curriculum. He ended up joining Mooney for classroom discussion, a freestyle cypher, and even put on a school-wide performance. News outlets such as NPR helped spread the story, further popularizing how this teacher made Hip-hop culture part of attempting to reach youth.

Mooney (2016) recently provided an important critique of a *Saturday Night Live* sketch where *Hamilton* creator Lin-Manuel Miranda played the most extreme caricature of a teacher trying to "reach" students by introducing them to "greatest rapper of all time: Shakespeare." As Mooney pointed out, while highlighting some of the most egregious, superficial, and damaging work done in the name of Hip-hop and popular culture in schools, it gave a narrow and further stereotypical view of urban classrooms, Black educators and students, and might have left audiences laughing, but missing the point.

Other scholars such as Dr. Marc Lamont Hill in his book *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip-Hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identities* (2009) have pointed out the delicate work necessary whenever youth cultures are centered in classrooms spaces, navigating what it means to be "real" in doing so based on connections to students' identities and cultural practices. Doing it wrong is actually pretty easy. Mooney stands a positive example of this work, as he doesn't pursue it uncritically, surfacing his

own intersecting identity as a White male emcee and regularly reminding those excited about his work that it's rooted in Gloria Ladson Billings "culturally relevant" and student-centered teaching approaches (much of the roots of CSP) (1995). But this work, whether culturally relevant or culturally sustaining, is challenging to do well.

## Tough Staying, Tough Leaving

For Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie to engage with youth cultures in classroom spaces, deftly integrating them with what they are tasked to do by the Federal government, states, and districts, and to do so in ways most responsive and sustaining to students cultural practices and what they are coming to know about them across a year, is tough. It takes pushing vigorously against previous approaches that have viewed youth--and especially youth of color--through deficit-based lenses, figuring them, their communities, and what they practice outside of classrooms as lacking. This is what I have attempted to resist through my work with these teachers and CSP.

Recently, we watched as "The Trump Effect," heightening fear amongst students and teachers and an uptick in hateful acts, has become reality (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). Two executive orders have been struck down as discriminatory and unconstitutional. Betsy DeVos, a highly controversial figure, who has long backed policies of charters and choice that have further fueled segregation and injustice, was confirmed as Education Secretary (Mathis & Wellner, 2016; Wong, 2016). Further, a bill has even been introduced to abolish The Department of Education (Kamenetz, 2017). And while some feel this bill is largely symbolic, it still marks a considerable shift in commitment to our most disadvantaged students and communities. As imperfect as our public schooling system has been, it represents at least an aspirational commitment to

supporting all students. And with this group of early career teachers, I now continue to wonder what is more painful, leaving our commitments and remaining, or remaining committed and leaving?

We gathered in this work because of what we believe schools can be, seeking justice-oriented teaching together. That is what represented the core of our collective preparation experiences: many starting before we had even met one another. Our work marked much resistance and struggle from institutions meant to sustain the White colonial project of schooling, but also possibility and promise in sustaining a more just American education. And across our experiences, I've witnessed many instances of leaving. But I wonder if our current moment marks something we had hoped could further be left behind: our society collectively leaving even the aspirational promises of our public schools for all students? I hope we don't go there.

## Leaving, Staying, and Imagining Forward

And if we leave, who and what remains? If we, teachers committed to justice in education, ultimately decide to leave schools because of our larger justice-oriented work, how does resistance to the colonial project of schooling continue? And if teacher preparation programs are committed to realizing justice through schools, how could they better prepare early career teachers to not only leave their preparation but to then stay--not only committed to justice--but in sustained commitment to it through their work in schools? Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie represent a commitment to further sustaining--not erasing--youth of color and other youth marginalized by traditional educational institutions. If they, and others like them are not in our classrooms, then the status quo remains. Those not committed to this work remain. And schools continue

further in the erasure of communities of color and other communities not aligned with the White colonial project.

If we could stay in our sustaining work and are further sustained in doing so, then schools further become institutions for justice and love. In his recent editorial opening to *English Journal*, David Kirkland, Executive Director of the Metro Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, and Associate Professor of English and Urban Education at NYU, reminds that teaching for justice “is always and only about teaching (to) love” (2017, p. 18)  This reminder ends a piece where he compellingly advocates for further centering “Black expressivities, the many textual forms that express the substances of Black life,” across classrooms. What if classrooms were loving, were sustaining, of the brilliant and beautiful practices of all students and were fiercely set on dismantling the White colonial project of schooling? Then schools could be sites for all students, for all communities, and oriented toward better and more just, more loving ends. And teachers committed to this work would be welcomed and sustained, meeting complementary movements and not resistances. Students across identities just might move dynamically, out of a critical pluralism not built of hegemony, out of love for communities of color and other communities marginalized by institutions of schooling, and toward a collective commitment to realizing better with and for all. This is what could be. This is where I hope we are going.

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# MOVEMENTS THERE AND HERE: A CONCLUSION

"It is here that ELA means teaching for justice, which is always and only about teaching (to) love" (Kirkland, 2017, p. 17)

I am deeply indebted to the students, teachers, and scholars whose experiences, ideas, grace, trust, and love make this study and have forever changed--and continue to change--me. And with them often in mind, I wonder how best to contribute in justice-oriented work. As a tall, White, cis-gendered, heterosexual male, my identities, body, and voice are institutionally centered in the White imperial project of schooling. As someone who naturally turns inward, regularly more quiet and reflective, my inward resistances to being centered align much with the contours of hoped-for contributions through this justice-oriented work I continue learning how to do. So, how do I continue learning to disrupt through justice-oriented work without further centering myself? Overall, I try to speak and act carefully in the best ways I know how, continually learning and knowing that I have much, much more to learn about my identities through this work and across my life. Seeking to see past blindnesses through my current experiences, I will never be done. In the academy and in classrooms, where teachers and scholars are rewarded at times for how they center themselves and their voices, I have often tried to still resist as best I know how. These lenses on myself have regularly informed my approaches as a teacher, regularly attempting to resist my centering, toward further supporting those of students as I further learn how to love through my work.

As an English teacher and English education scholar who wants to do all he can to resist the centering of Dominant American English (DAE) practices, I move carefully and respectfully. As I do so, I am constantly asking: Am I leveraging my privileges to further the work? Am I listening as much as I can? Am I resisting my own White

fragilities and pull to perform criticalities in just more damaging ways? Am I interrupting the easy flow of ego and privilege continuing to center me and my identities even through the guise of justice-oriented work? These are questions I will continue asking, carefully, further informing actions and movements, across my career and life. And I will continually be learning how to ask and answer them over and over alongside and across justice-oriented work with teachers, students, and communities. I'm now at an (emergent) here, this moment, ending the dissertation: something I've long imagined since leaving my secondary classroom. I am also now at new vantage points on what my multiple theres--pasts, other locations, things left behind--and 'heres'--a present and some further imagined futures--might continue to be.

What I have found has been both expected and not. There is much that can and can't be done through universities and research. Overall, though, through my work, I want to make sure that people, stories, and ideas can continue to move beyond where we started--a little bit clearer on just what it will take to further realize the equity work we're continually learning how to do inside and outside classrooms, and what it will continue to take for teacher learning institutions to support the work of teachers moving out of their programs with these powerful, justice-oriented ideas and commitments. In working alongside Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie, I offer an initial framework ("Practice-ing A Flow) for CSP and other justice-oriented teaching-in-practice that might inform future researchers and practitioners, a coupled mentoring framework and mentoring moves to further support CSP and other justice-oriented teaching-in-practice, and a narrative I hope speaks into our current moments in American education, "teacher shortages," and "The Age of Trump." Despite highlighting different elements of this

study and its guiding questions, and of taking on different genres and directed toward different audiences, what all these articles share is constant commitment to what it has meant for all of us to attempt learning how to practice justice-oriented educational work in and through classroom practice and across the multiple, intersecting identities and complexities emerging across our versions of American classrooms.

## Key Questions Remaining

In pausing this work, I'm left with key questions and connected implications for research, policy, and practice. I pose them as questions to hopefully invite future responses among and across teacher education researchers, teacher educators, and teachers:

### How might researchers, teacher educators, and teachers continue to work with each other to better understand how to sustain commitments to CSP and other justice-oriented teaching practices across communities?

The research about learning to teach with CSP is building. And, just like the decades of work done to better understand youths' literate practices outside of classrooms, if to truly understand what it takes to approach justice-oriented teaching in the dynamic ways CSP asks, researchers, teacher educators, and teachers should collectively continue to pursue work allowing them to better understand it across identities, classrooms, and communities. As I found, and discussed in depth in my first article, what was allowed in Ben and Simone's classrooms was very different than what was allowed in Stevie and Rachel's classrooms. The very classrooms, identities, and communities that CSP is attempting to further center, those of the Black and Brown students Simone and Ben worked with, were the most restricted in the freedoms they had to do that work.

While all teachers in this study attempted to navigate resistances to their justice-oriented work, Stevie and Rachel, largely serving White communities, had considerably more freedom when it came to curriculum design and their own professional judgements. Ben and Simone did not. Was this specifically because Ben and Simone worked in charter schools? Was this because Ben and Simone primarily worked with Black and Brown students? In what ways was it a combination of both? Is this similarly experienced in traditional public schools or private schools primarily serving Black and Brown students? By potentially, for example, foregrounding intersectional lenses and/or critical race theory in future work, what could we come to further learn about the dynamic pedagogical practices necessary to sustain CSP across classrooms? And, in what ways could teacher preparation programs, teacher educators, teacher mentors, and other teachers committed to this work provide further support in moving CSP and other justice-oriented approaches to teaching even further?

By beginning to look across identities as we gathered in similar commitments, we were able to further understand how implicated we were in each others' lives, classrooms, and communities. What was allowed in certain ways in one community was not allowed in another. The Whiteness and privilege Rachel and Stevie challenged deeply impacted Ben and Simone's students. All experienced resistances to centering Black and Brown identities and challenging Whiteness and privileges that continues to remain central in American schooling. This collective understanding left all of us wondering how we could've better taken up the resistances and struggles that teachers face in taking up this work earlier? In doing so, might we have been better able to

cultivate the activist, advocate, and ally practices necessary to sustain CSP and other justice-oriented teaching across classrooms.

### How might teacher educators and teacher preparation programs integrate *Practice-ing A Flow* toward sustaining CSP and other justice-oriented teaching across classrooms?

This question bears specific focus. As I found through the work with Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie, they approached students through asset-based lenses and designed curriculum in ways that that supported students in “remixing ”their valuable linguistic and literate practices--oftentimes attempting to center those of students of color--alongside dominant classroom practices. However, they described (and I witnessed) much of their struggle to move, *flowing*, beyond the kinds of resistances they faced. What would it have meant if they approached their work with CSP in preparation using *A Flow* framework? How could our program have further helped them position themselves as activists, advocates, and allies having the opportunity to meet real resistances from real stakeholders in teaching and learning work (principals, colleagues, students, and community members) as they were going through the program? What further specific practices and strategies could we have come to know?

A key implication emerged in identifying the contours of *A Flow* in our work. As so much of what we were learning how to do was about movement (of justice-oriented commitments from teacher preparation out across practice, as well as contributing to larger justice-oriented movements in and beyond classrooms), the resistances that stopped us, that we collectively struggled with, became that much more important than we had anticipated. If future teachers are to move from preparation into and across classrooms, and to remain committed to justice-oriented teaching practices, then more

attention needs given to the nature of the resistances they do and will face across identities and communities, at what points and in what ways these resistances might come up, and how they might respond to these resistances and continue to move through that response. Approaching CSP and other justice-oriented classroom work in this way will allow for further support of these justice-oriented teaching practices and hopefully the cultivation of the most promising activist, advocacy, and ally practices to support them. This would also hopefully result in further confidence for early-career teachers moving through their program and outward into and beyond their induction years.

By not shying away from the very real resistances--rooted in the White imperial project of nation-state schooling--that teachers do and will face  teacher education can better communicate the gravity and imminence of this work and engender the movements hoped for now and into the future. Early-career teachers will emerge from programs more prepared to continue asking and answering how to sustain commitments to justice-oriented classroom work. So, instead of finding themselves across moments where they are having to decide just to what degree they will have to leave their commitments and even classrooms, they move confidently out and beyond their classrooms with a collective strength to best sustain themselves, students, and colleagues. This could potentially result in further networks of justice-oriented teachers and those who work with teachers collectively engaging alongside them and gradually shifting--and eliminating--resistances they currently face. That would allow all of us to further identify the practices and strategies necessary, deepening how the work is practiced, realizing its highest aspirations, and empowering the teachers, students, and

communities engaging across it. But this won't happen by just relying on a handful of teachers and teacher education researchers. Teacher preparation programs must also find ways to forge relationships with district and field placement partners to sustain early-career teachers committed to justice-oriented work.

**How might teacher preparation programs forge the necessary relationships with district and field placement partners through which to support early-career teachers and further center justice-oriented work?**

Regularly in the background of this study was a question of whether and how long Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie would've continued pursuing this work absent our research? At points, they offered up that they probably wouldn't have been. And while representative, in ways, of our program, they are also a small number of the large group of students prepared (even just in our program) in these justice-oriented approaches to teaching. If our program had standing mentoring support relationships (esp. mentor teachers committed to justice-oriented teaching) with districts across our state, it would potentially be easier to answer this question and to further sustain the work. Making community connections is certainly a necessary start. This work will not be sustained if it only relies on teacher educators, researchers, a small handful of teachers currently committed, and potential community partners. We need to build even bigger networks of critical and sustaining support.

In an ideal situation, teacher education programs are facilitating and deepening relationships between teacher educators, researchers, and K-12 field partners through which these more veteran professionals across spaces can further pave the way for the practices that early-career teachers are learning to practice. This way, these more veteran practitioners can resist alongside these early-career teachers and hopefully

lessen what they will and might face in being committed to teaching and learning in these ways. This potentially frees up all involved to focus further on realizing CSP and other justice-oriented teaching practices. Those committed can then deepen the work across professional networks, seeing further advances across research, policy, and practice.

What stands to potentially result from these relationships is an opening across institutions to be that much more sustaining of teachers and students committed to justice. Teacher preparation programs and schools can then further provide a practical vision of the very realities each faces in attempting to support many different students--both in teacher preparation and across schools--in realizing the best they hope for across their lives. Professional and collegial partnerships then stand to further inform what is and will be necessary to mentor justice-oriented teachers in and beyond their induction years.

**How might teacher preparation programs and districts further learn to provide the mentoring support necessary for justice-oriented early-career teachers (and teacher educators) in and beyond their induction years?**

This question also bears specific focus. Much research highlights the dearth of necessary mentoring support for teachers moving from preparation into induction and beyond (even absent any focus on justice-oriented teaching). More needs done to make sure that resources are provided to support teacher mentors and early-career teachers (including early career teacher educators) across their teacher learning. But even more will need done if this teacher learning is to include teacher learning for justice-oriented teaching. As has come up in my and other's work, justice-oriented teaching necessitates activism, advocacy, allyship, and, in directly addressing institutional power

structures, will no doubt mean resistance. This cannot be faced by early-career teachers alone and will mean additional learning progressions and support connected to *A Flow*, as well as further teacher learning connected to deeper understanding of one's own, students,' and communities' intersecting cultural and literate identities and practices.

I have also keenly felt across this work the absence of mentoring for both the teacher participants and myself. Yes, we were able to do much supporting each other in learning to practice CSP. And it was not as if we had roadmaps for the movements we were trying to make. We were attuned to certain things based on common commitments and values shared through our collective experiences. However, we did much of this--alone--with each other and with the justice-oriented voices from educational theory and research. So, just as Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie were often without regular mentoring support that aligned with their approaches to teaching, so was I across my experiences as a developing teacher educator taking up justice-oriented teacher education work. I brought what I could from previous mentoring experience to support them. However, I often wondered how differently we might have moved if I had more mentoring support as an early career teacher educator committed to justice-oriented work? The literature and commitments of my program often espouse the importance of mentoring for early-career teachers. Why is this absent at points for those of us who are early career teacher educators?

I hope my research adds some additional awareness to what might be needed to do this both in terms of teaching and mentoring practice. But, it is the responsibility of teacher education programs to play an ongoing role in the activism, advocacy, and

allyship necessary to support their early-career teachers and the mentors supporting those teachers. It is irresponsible, for example, to commit teachers to justice-oriented teaching approaches without continuing to provide the support necessary to further realize them. Support could take the form of mentoring training and of research that is specifically designed to work alongside and support teachers and teacher mentors committed to CSP and other justice-oriented work. Support could also mean direct and regular dialogue with administrators and policy-makers about the approaches that are cultivated through teacher preparation, the embedded assumptions and commitments undergirding them, why those exist, and overall, why all of this justice-oriented work matters. This will not only further support the development of CSP and justice-oriented teaching, but will also help districts and communities to better understand the nuance and magnitude of teaching and learning and engender more compassionate, more nuanced support and response to the challenges we're addressing across classrooms and communities. And to further build on these potential movements emerging across classrooms, districts, and communities, researchers, teachers, and teacher educators need to be included and include themselves in larger national conversations about "reforms," "teacher shortages," "social justice," and "teaching quality."

**How might researchers, teachers, and teacher educators be included and include themselves in larger national conversations about "reforms," "teacher shortages," "social justice," and "teaching quality"?**

My choice to write this alternative format dissertation was rooted in a larger commitment to further moving ideas from educational research and teacher preparation out across practice and larger national dialogues about the American educational system. My third article is especially focused on this. As there are further instances of our public,

government, and educational system turning away from equity and even from the multiple “publics” it is supposed to aspirationally serve, how can educational researchers, teachers, and teacher educators, better speak into--and back to--larger conversations about the direction our system is and could be going? And this happens both ways. Those who deeply know schools, classrooms, and communities, and understand the complexities of teaching toward justice, must seek out as many spaces as possible to speak further. Sometimes these will be spaces they are invited into. Sometimes these are spaces they assert themselves into. I’m particularly interested in how ideas from education and teacher education research and the academy can be purposed and packaged to reach audiences rarely reached before. For those of us in teacher education, this means further building public scholarly identities and of ideas reaching multiple publics.

I have often wondered of what impact will the ideas we focus on in teaching, teacher education, and teacher education research have? This thinking about ultimate impact was also much a driver for me as a practicing secondary classroom teacher. It is ultimately what drove me to pursue the work that has resulted in this dissertation. These questions of impact have continued to gain further immediacy as I’ve seen how the early career teachers in my classes and in this study do, do not, or are just not able to take up the ideas that are much the focus of teacher preparation in the academy. I don’t think this is an oversimplified theory/practice divide emerging out of defensive self preservation. Instead, I hope that what I’ve felt and experienced alongside these teachers is more about what will be needed in order to realize the highest aspirations of what we might hope for American education. But it will take a regular centering of

questions of impact across our work and into areas and contexts not regularly thought of for building and sharing knowledge. That's what I've attempted to begin learning how to do through this dissertation.

Through this dissertation I attempted to model what I hope the movement of compelling ideas and people might look like out of educational research, into practice, into publication, and into a wider dialogues. Regardless of the genre and form of this work, it has always been rooted in the experiences and practices of teachers. And, even if a practicing teacher or individual outside of the academy may not pick up a copy of *The Journal of Teacher Education*, my hope is that those who do might be compelled to focus their work further on justice-oriented teaching in practice, raising questions that further drive our collective work alongside teachers and out into the communities where they work. In the same vein, my hope is that someone who may read my third article might be compelled to think in new ways about the daily experiences of teachers through the stories of Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie. So, when these readers find themselves in conversations about the state of the American education system and think about the daily work of teachers, they do not oversimplify and damage, but instead are compelled to be activists, advocates and allies. Overall, I hope all who read this work are compelled to move in some manner, to another vantage point on teaching toward justice, and may be part of future movements from new vantage points on American education.

In doing this dissertation study, it was clear early-on that the work was always about movements: physical, ideological, epistemological, and professional. What has always been, at the root, about how early-career teachers move with commitments to

CSP and other justice-oriented teaching, quickly became more and more about how I attempted to move with them, how I continued to be moved to do so, and how I might move the ideas from our work out across a variety of audiences and genres. Overall, it became more and more about how we all might move a variety of publics to join in justice-oriented work across classrooms and communities. By going there, with them, I'm left here, with some further vision on myself and our work, and at the edges of what I hope could potentially be a further here (be)coming.

## A Further Here (Be)coming

Kirkland's (2017) recent editorial opening in the March *English Journal* "Beyond the Dream: Critical Perspectives on Black Textual Expressivities...Between the World and Me" ends with the beautiful words that open as the epigraph to this conclusion. After further shaking audiences to the "textual oppression" wrought by English Language Arts and through English classrooms, and further wakes them to "Black textual expressivities--the many textual forms that express the substances of Black life" and their power to (re)make current and future visions (a there and here) for the English Language Arts. He then ends with a truth, included in the epigraph to this conclusion above, I've long felt but couldn't communicate with such simple beauty: that the classrooms, schools, and world I've hoped to further practice into being with teachers has always been about learning to further love through our work. In a world made of so much hurt, of so much separation, and of a schooling system continuing to act out hateful legacies of epistemological and physical violence toward Black and Brown students and communities, learning to love--as we are implicated in each other's lives--is one of the core pieces of continuing to sustain justice-oriented work. For Ben, Rachel,

Simone, Stevie, and myself, there are many echoes in our learning commitment and movements with(in) CSP toward justice in practice, and ultimately, moving further toward learning how to love across our work (whether that continues to be in traditional classrooms or not). And in looking back to what brought me to my learning commitments in this work, I'm coming to better understand more about how I got here. It has always been a process of (re)imagining a here beyond what is through classrooms since I was young.

My father taught in public schools for forty five years. From an early age, I lived with what it meant for a teacher to continue to learn how to love, in and through, his practice. His discipline was music, and I witnessed the daily workings of a man who was seemingly always trying to grow alongside students, connecting across identities through musical texts and expression, and working far beyond the bounds of a traditional work day and of the traditional purposing of public school classrooms. Now, I can't say we approach everything we do in classrooms in the same manner, or that he specifically took up justice-oriented teaching in the ways I have in my past or current work. But I can say that much of the first modeling of teaching to--and through--love came from him. It is a shared vision of classroom work that I took with me into my first classrooms and that continues to inform my practices and regular seeking of further attempts at becoming more loving in and through teaching. It's that seeking which has lead me here to pursue a PhD and to the spaces this dissertation provided for my continual learning how to further love in and toward more justice-oriented teaching.

Now with two year old son of my own, I often wonder how he will view my work and what it has meant to pursue this degree through it. It has, mirroring moments with

my father across my own childhood, meant giving more (perhaps more than I should) outside the home and away from him. I'm missing, already, moments. I'm often thinking and doing regularly this work, constantly attempting to do it better. As it was then with my father and is now, our work is still based in a moment meaning much still needs done to make this world better, more just, more loving. As it was then with my father and is now, it would seem teachers who want to practice world changing, loving, work, it means doing it far beyond the confines of classrooms and bell schedules. That has been what it seemed to mean for my father and what it has continued to mean for me to imagine--and move closer to enacting--a better there and further here through teaching work. I can only hope that my son, whether he chooses to be a teacher or not, is impacted in the ways that I have been to continue learning to pursue a vocation to seek more just futures. I continually imagine my son in a here I rarely I could imagine.

By moving across this study with Ben, Rachel, Simone, and Stevie to their classrooms, to their communities, I'm left at a here--both a present and imagined future--becoming. It allows me to imagine further theres and to ready for further movements alongside others through which to imagine and (re)make heres--in practice--rarely dreamed. Now, much of my here, my current moment, is marked by the temporal ending of a program and a credentialing long imagined, both in its ceremony and also what it might--and I needed it to--represent at the time. In moving out of high school teaching and to this program, toward this credential, and then alongside these teachers, I was able to get to a vantage point on myself and work that wouldn't have been possible had I remained.

I've had the immense privilege of working with and alongside scholars, early-career teachers, and colleagues to further learn to imagine a clearer here and there, hoping to continue moving alongside one another in justice-oriented work. That is much of what will mark the future success of this work--a movement--reaching far beyond teacher preparation and out across classrooms and communities. It will mean a continual and collective (re)imagining and justice-oriented loving here and there, there and here. It will be continual and collective. And it will mean building and building alongside one another and continuing toward more loving, more just movements long after this work ends.

# REFERENCES

## REFERENCES

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