Locating Institutional Change at the Grassroots: Communities of Inquiry and Collaborative Self-Study

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Abstract: Drawing on theories and insights informing practitioner inquiry, self-study research methodology, and culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies, the articles gathered in this special issue of the *Journal for Research and Practice in College Teaching* offer readers a mix of narrative styles, varied genres, and alternate approaches for examining the meaning and potential impacts of our instructional practices as teacher educators. Framing our efforts to bring about change as occasioned by our collective commitment to decenter teacher education with the principles of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies, this article recounts the various iterations of our journey to becoming a community of inquiry and introduces the five self-studies that follow.

Opportunities for university faculty to talk collectively about our teaching practices are typically infrequent, superficial, or worse, nonexistent. For educators invested in the theories, standpoints, and values informing *asset-based pedagogies*—like culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) that "seek to dismantle deficit approaches" (Paris, 2021, p. 365)—this lack of opportunity creates yet another institutional barrier for enacting our social justice, inclusion, and equity commitments. This special issue of the *Journal for Research and Practice in College Teaching* showcases how a small group of faculty, working together in a grassroots community of inquiry since 2017, is re-envisioning collaborative learning and employing self-study research methodology to address our agency as teachers in a School of Education.

We situate our work within the established traditions of practitioner inquiry (Anderson et al., 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Coughlan, 2014; Samaras & Freese, 2006) to emphasize the ways in which inquiry communities can serve as both a "means toward larger goals and as ends in themselves"; that is, how these groups function as the "contexts within which teachers and other practitioners identify the issues they see as important and as one of the major vehicles that support their representations of their ideas" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 54). Underscoring the grassroots quality of teacher-initiated communities of inquiry and citing Joel Westheimer's (1999) analysis of the consequences of these groups for teachers' professional work, Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle observe further that practitioner-led inquiry can become "a site for the merger of the personal and the professional," where "the intrinsic value of the community in its own right is acknowledged" (p. 55).

Because we are especially interested in enacting pedagogical change that reflects our social justice, inclusion, and equity commitments, we also view our research as allied with emerging teacher-scholar-activist scholarship (Andelora, 2005; Kahn & Lee, 2019; Sullivan, 2015; Toth et al., 2019) to foreground the pivotal role faculty can play in creating institutional and social change. This iteration of the *teacher-scholar-activism* construct arises out of long-standing debates about the professional identity of two-year college English faculty (Toth et al., 2019) who challenge the "top-down, neoliberal approaches to [higher education] reform that ignore instructors' disciplinary expertise and can ultimately exclude rather than support structurally disadvantaged students" (p. 2). With both sets of scholars, then, our inquiry community contends that reimagining institutional change as a bottom-up, or grassroots endeavor, empowers faculty to better advocate for our profession—teacher education—and our students despite the challenges we face.

Drawing on theories and insights informing practitioner inquiry, self-study research methodology, and culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies, the articles gathered here offer readers a mix of narrative styles, varied genres, and alternate approaches for examining the meaning and potential impacts of our instructional practices as teacher educators. Framing our efforts to bring about change as occasioned by our collective commitment to decenter teacher education with the principles of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies, this introduction recounts the various iterations of our journey to becoming a community of inquiry. The five self-studies that follow highlight the importance of teacher educators asking authentic questions of practice to prompt intentional study of their teaching and transform the work that happens in classrooms.

The "Hard Re-set" as a Framework for Change

In her 2021 article, "I'm here for the hard reset: Post pandemic pedagogy to preserve our culture," Gloria Ladson-Billings uses the analogy of a hard re-set—the erasure of all data from an electronic device in order to restore it to its original factory condition—to propose a fundamental change in education that acknowledges the COVID-19 pandemic as both a "rupture" (citing Roy, 2020, p. 10) between our nation's past and its future and an opportunity to reimagine teaching "using a more robust and culturally-centered pedagogy" (p. 68). Ladson-Billings writes:

> Although many educators and policy makers insist that we have to 'get back to normal,' I want to suggest that 'going back' is the wrong thing for children and youth who were unsuccessful and oppressed in our schools before the pandemic. Normal is where the problems reside. (p. 68)

Recounting the ways in which schools have functioned as a source of educational disparities, as opposed to serving as the solution, Ladson-Billings argues that a hard re-set in education, post-pandemic, includes a re-commitment to the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy. Connecting

what happens in schools to the conditions of students' lived experiences in U.S. society today, she writes:

> If we are serious about promoting a hard re-set, we must re-deploy the elements of culturally relevant pedagogy—student learning, cultural competence, and socio-political consciousness—to better reflect students' lives and cultures and we must re-think the purposes of education in a society that is straining from the problems of anti-Black racism, police brutality, mass incarceration, and economic inequality. The point of the hard re-set is to reconsider what kind of human beings/ citizens we are seeking to produce. (p. 72)

Acknowledging that the hard re-set she envisions will require hard work on the part of teachers everywhere, Ladson-Billings focuses on the two central challenges entailed by a commitment to enact this kind of change: first, to "engage and interrogate [our] own worldviews" and second to "develop the facility to move from the center to the margins" (p. 77).

As a community of teacher educators, our inquiry aims at deepening our individual and collective understandings and enactments of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies in our teaching of undergraduate and graduate students. By necessity, then, our inquiry relies on our willingness and our ability to take up the challenges Ladson-Billings lays down—interrogating our worldviews and becoming more adept at decentering. Educators have long understood that CRP draws on the cultural knowledges, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of diverse learners to make instruction more appropriate and effective for them (Gay, 2002, 2010). Similarly, researchers have long confirmed the benefits of CRP and CSP for student learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009, 2014, 2021; Paris, 2011, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017), and have demonstrated, too, that when teachers have been the beneficiaries of culturally relevant teacher education courses, they are less likely to embrace cultural deficit views and models (Ginsberg, 2009; Irvine, 2003; Jiménez & Rose, 2010). In an era when the urgency to expand and deepen our capacities to reach all students is rightly pressing, the articles included in this special issue fit within the broad framework suggested by Ladson-Billings' notion of a hard re-set in education, guided in part by a set of questions:

- How might we reimagine teacher education decentered with the principles of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies?
- How can we engage our students in the relational work of teaching?
- What do enactments of a CRP/CSP-informed approach to this relational work actually look like in our classrooms?

An Origin Story
or
The Story of Our Arrival

Six fulltime faculty members comprise our community of inquiry. Each of us holds a tenure-track appointment in the School of Education at the University of Cincinnati, and together we claim a range of K-12 and university teaching experiences. Four members of our community identify as women and two identify as men; five identify as White and one identifies as Black. All of us claim English as our first language. Although we share several common research interests related to our work as university faculty—culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies, teaching for equity and social justice, the self-study of teacher education practices—we teach in a variety of disciplines including English education, literacy studies, writing studies, special education, and action research. And while our inquiry has not been lockstep over the years, our community has always been rooted in our shared desire to effect change across the School of Education by bringing about a more purposeful and action-driven pursuit of asset-based pedagogies, with particular emphasis on the benefits of CRP and CSP. In an institutional context that has historically and consistently rewarded siloed areas of expertise, we recognized early that our inquiry would instead require collaborative engagement and critical reflection. That singular recognition, it would be fair to say, has been instrumental to our work.

In her (2012) book, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Sara Ahmed posits that "every research project has a story" and that, in turn, the story itself may be best understood as "an arrival" (p. 2), that is, as an action—the act of reaching a place or coming to a position or state of mind (see *Merriam Webster*). An arrival, of course, implies there has been a journey, and a journey, by extension, implies a person's readiness to travel, a disposition to move, to find out what lies ahead. For Ahmed, coming to terms with how the discourse and practice of diversity works—or fails to work—in institutions of higher education literally meant "following diversity around" the various contexts and contours of university life (p. 1). Asking open questions—"What does diversity do? What are we doing when we use the language of diversity?"—all the while proceeding "with a sense of uncertainty," Ahmed articulates what all practicing researchers come to know: "The more I have followed diversity around," she writes, "the more diversity has captured my interest" (p. 1).

Like Ahmed, our community of inquiry has been "following around" the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy for the better part of five years, and, like Ahmed, the more we've learned about the discourse and practice of CRP/CSP, the more personally, professionally, and politically invested we have become. Interestingly, what began as a failed attempt to engage the School of Education in a systematic analysis of its course syllabi to identify the presence of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) themes (see Aceves & Orosco, 2014) turned out to be just what we needed to reimagine our inquiry and start following CRP/CSP around in earnest. And while this is no hero story, learning how to abandon a failed research trajectory for a new path that promises to work better remains an early lesson that has served our inquiry community well.

In fairness, the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform's (CEEDAR) Center's tool—or what Terese C. Aceves and Michael J. Orosco (2014) refer to as an "innovation configuration (IC) matrix" (p. 6)—is a well-researched, thoughtful instrument. Drawing on empirical studies to identify CRT themes, effective practices, and instructional approaches (p. 8), the IC matrix can be used to evaluate course syllabi and can thus "guide teacher preparation professionals in the development of appropriate culturally responsive teaching (CRT) content" (p. 6). Yet, despite its credentials, the idea of using a pre-designed rating scale to evaluate whether our courses were attending to the needs and leveraging the talents of culturally and linguistically diverse students was met with a less than enthusiastic response from the majority of the School of Education's faculty. Many simply didn't buy into the premise that much could be learned from syllabi analyses, some didn't necessarily see themselves or their courses connected to CRP/CSP, and a few regarded the idea itself with a measure of suspicion, wondering what other undisclosed uses might be made of the results.

The resistance we received from our colleagues convinced us to reconceive our approach. If we were going to understand how culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies as a discourse and practice works—or fails to work—in our courses, such insight was going to come from examining our individual teaching experiences in the classroom as well as our shared teaching culture as it is experienced across the School of Education. We abandoned the IC matrix approach altogether, issued an open call for participants via email and in person to build consensus for an inquiry community on this topic, and then simply started meeting regularly—reading together, asking questions together, and articulating our stuck points together. In short, we began defining our own understandings of CRP/CSP within the contexts and contours of our undergraduate and graduate courses instead of relying on definitions overlaid on our experiences from the outside.

As with any grassroots, faculty-led endeavor, the number of participants has ebbed and flowed over time, with the initial group—Steve, Mark, and Connie—growing to include as many as 11 faculty before settling into the current group of six who are co-contributors to and co-curators of this special issue—Susan, Miriam, Anne, Steve, Mark, and Connie. Each successive iteration of our inquiry community, importantly and indelibly marked by every faculty colleague who joined the group no matter how long they journeyed with us, has worked to reorient us differently to the project and process of following CRP/CSP around the School of Education.

On Methods and Goals: Practitioner Inquiry and Authentic Questions of Practice

Against the backdrop of the accountability movement at the end of the 20th century, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) identify three core concepts that were concomitantly fueling the teacher research movement and, in turn, practitioner communities of inquiry: "teaching as a deliberative (not technical) profession, knowledge generation for practice from practice, and the value of local questions and uncertainties in grappling successfully with issues of teaching and learning at all levels" (p. 21). Taken together, these three postulates create an environment where teachers can not only gain insight on their practice but also articulate that knowledge so to improve their

practice. For teacher educators, whose work within the university remains under-theorized and under-researched (see Berry, 2004), engaging in the systematic study of our teaching in order to improve our practice resonates with the Arizona Group's (1996) long-standing argument that "educational reform would be better served if teacher educators were more deeply involved in studying, reflecting on, and questioning their own work as teachers of teachers and if academic institutions provided environments more able to support such work" (pp. 154-5). One approach particularly well-suited to these goals and aligned with the core concepts theorized by Cochran-Smith and Lytle is self-study research, or "a form of inquiry in which we inquire into our self as a teacher educator to improve our way of being a teacher educator" (Feldman et al., 2004, p. 973).

As a methodology, Eline Vanassche and Geert Kelchtermans (2016) describe self-study as an approach taken up by teachers seeking to "intentionally and systematically investigate their practices in order to improve them, based on a deepened understanding of these practices, as well as the contexts in which these practices evolve" (p. 1). Calling attention to the methodology's most prominent characteristics, Vicki LaBoskey (2004) portrays self-study as "self-initiated and focused," "improvement-aimed … and interactive" (p. 33). Cynthia Lassonde et al. (2009) stress self-study's impact, noting its benefits for both our theoretical understanding of teaching and our practice. Additionally, Allan Feldman et al. (2004) highlight the connections between the methodological features of self-study and an existentialist perspective, suggesting that improving our practice does not necessarily mean "an improvement toward a set end or even toward some hidden potential"; instead and citing Greene (1988, p. 3), they write that improvement means "gaining 'the capacity to surpass the given and look at things as if they could be otherwise'" (p. 973). Feldman et al. go on to explain:

> This happens because when we engage in self-study, we begin to feel the disquietude, the 'incompleteness of our vocation' (Greene, 1989), our 'living contradictions' (Whitehead, 1989), or 'the incompleteness, contradictions, dissonances, and dilemmas that we have in our way of being teachers' (Feldman, 2002). (p. 973)

In other words, self-study enables our ability to improve our practice because it increases our understanding of our selves—not just as teachers in the classroom but also as human beings in the world.

Despite the use of the word "self" in its moniker, self-study in practice is noticeably collaborative in nature. True to LaBoskey's (2004) characterization of the methodology as improvement-aimed and interactive, researchers engaged in self-study quickly learn that efforts to systematically problematize, reframe, and transform our practice call for and depend upon an interpretive community, or a group of colleagues who are often called *critical friends* (Costa & Kallick, 1993). John Loughran (2007) reasserts this stance when he argues that:

> the need to actively pursue understandings from alternative perspectives, or to reframe situations (Schön, 1983), is important in a self-study report

> to demonstrate that different perspectives on teaching and learning situations have been sought and considered and to … minimize possibilities for self-justification or rationalization of existing practices and behaviors. (p. 16)

Loughran goes on to posit that the goal of self-study lies not just in its ability to improve our practice as individual teachers but may ultimately help the field better articulate “a pedagogy of teacher education” (p. 12). D. Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2004) put an even finer point on this position, writing that “self-study is important not for what it shows about the self but because of its potential to reveal knowledge of the educational landscape” (p. 575).

Increasing our understanding of the educational landscape writ large explains, in part, the equity work that has animated our community of inquiry and its focus on decentering teacher education with the principles of CRP/CSP. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) observe, practitioner inquiry often:

> work[s] from an equity agenda … intended to improve the education of those who have been marginalized by the educational system. … The larger project is about generating deeper understandings of how students learn—from the perspectives of those who do the work. The larger project is about enhancing educators’ sense of social responsibility and social action in the service of a democratic society. (p. 58)

If, as a profession, we are committed to the “hard re-set” Ladson-Billings (2021) suggests, self-study’s ability to help teachers ask authentic questions of practice is a critical step toward achieving that goal. This is not to discount the “messy process,” as Amanda Berry (2004) describes it, that is often part and parcel of self-study research. “For many teacher educators,” Berry writes, “the difficulties associated with researching personal practice lie not so much in recognizing the complexities inherent in their work (these they readily see) but in finding ways of representing that complexity to others” (p. 1312). Despite its messiness, then, what’s clear is the importance of self-study for posing authentic questions that emerge out of our daily practice with students—especially those questions that invite us to rethink our assumptions about teaching and learning—and the necessity of making this research, in all its complexity, public. “The practitioner research movement,” Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) assert, “continues to thrive in part because local communities are making public and accessible the distinctive processes and findings of their work” (p. 23). This special issue of the *Journal for Research and Practice in College Teaching* is our contribution to that larger and ongoing effort.

Three Iterations: Pedagogical Dilemmas, Collaborative Self-Study, and Antiracist Pedagogies

Successful university faculty already engage in the reflective study of their teaching practices via formal institutionalized processes like composing annual performance reviews, revising course syllabi, and reviewing evaluations of their teaching offered each semester by their students. Far

too often, however, this kind of reflective study is done in isolation and in accordance with the institution's schedule. Finding ways to reflect on and study our teaching practices more intentionally and in community with faculty colleagues were major impetuses for the formation of our inquiry group. In addition to a shared desire for professional learning and growth, we wanted authentic dialogue, discussion, and debate about what actually happens in our classrooms, especially in relation to our work as teacher educators invested in asset-based pedagogies like CRP/CSP.

Mats Hordvik et al. (2021) describe the collaborative self-study of teacher education practices as "a space and structure to share and debate teacher educators' practices, which promotes dialogue, reflection, interrogation, and interpretation of experiences" (Section 2.1, para. 3). Saili S. Kulkarni et al. (2019) explain further the various structural arrangements collaborative self-study can take, along with the essential role "critical collective inquiry" plays in the process (p. 4). Drawing attention to how collective inquiry "enhances self-reflection through dialog (LaBoskey, 2004)", Kulkarni et al. write:

> This can happen through critical friendships (Bullock & Sator, 2018) and communities of practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Additionally, teacher educators can utilize informal meetings, formal trainings, and discussions as a structure for collaborative self-study (Gallagher, Griffin, Parker, Kitchen, & Figg, 2011). (p. 4)

The benefits of collaborative self-study have also been widely reported. For example, Belinda Y. Louie et al.'s (2003) review of self-study literature found that collaboration provides "social support" to faculty that can "increase the meaningfulness of the work to the researchers" (p. 155) and promote "a culture of reflectiveness (Schoenfeld, 1999) that results in higher-level discourse and critique" (p. 156).

To enact collaborative self-study in our community of inquiry during Years 1 and 2, we worked to identify dilemmas (Argyris, 1993; Windschitl, 2002) from our recent classroom teaching experiences and then employed a critical friends (Costa & Kallick, 1993) protocol to examine our individual teaching practices. In their well-cited article, "Through the lens of a critical friend," Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick define critical friendship this way:

> A critical friend, as the name suggests, is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work. (p. 50)

At the heart of any critical friend protocol, then, lies trust; the kind of trust that serves as the foundation for providing the social support and fostering the culture of reflectiveness that Louie et al. (2003) regard as hallmark benefits of collaborative self-study.

In his examination of constructivist teaching practices, Mark Windschitl (2002) theorizes four dilemma categories—conceptual, pedagogical, cultural, and political—noting that "these dilemmas, which take the form of conceptual entities for researchers, often exist as concerns or implicit questions posed by teachers who attempt constructivist instruction" (p. 132). The types of dilemmas we surfaced and examined in our community of inquiry included what Windschitl identifies as pedagogical—dilemmas pertaining to curricular design and classroom activities—and cultural—dilemmas connected to classroom culture and prevailing assumptions about how classrooms should or ought to work (pp. 132-133). According to Windschitl's (2002, p. 133) taxonomy, pedagogical dilemmas typically include teacher questions like:

- Do I base my teaching on students' existing ideas rather than on learning objectives?
- What does it mean for me to become a facilitator of learning? What skills and strategies are necessary?
- How do I manage a classroom where students are talking to one another rather than to me?
- Should I place limits on students' construction of their own ideas?
- What types of assessment will capture the learning I want to foster?

Cultural dilemmas, however, take up a different set of teacher questions, for example (Windschitl, 2002, p. 133):

- How can we contradict traditional, efficient classroom routines and generate new agreements with students about what is valued and rewarded?
- How do my own past images of what is proper and possible in a classroom prevent me from seeing the potential for a different kind of learning environment?
- How can I accommodate the worldviews of students from diverse backgrounds while at the same time transforming my own classroom culture?
- Can I trust students to accept responsibility for their own learning?

As mentioned earlier, membership in our inquiry community has ebbed and flowed over the years, with totals reaching 11 faculty members in Years 1 and 2. With such robust membership, our critical friends' discussions included a wide variety of pedagogical and cultural dilemmas which, in turn, resulted in the production of voluminous data, e.g., audio/video recordings and transcriptions from nine sessions, copious peer feedback also recorded in the transcriptions, and individual journaling and note-taking. In recognition of the amount of data being produced—and considering our commitment to keep trust at the center of our

community—we employed a structured ethical reflection process (Brydon-Miller, 2009; Brydon-Miller, Rector-Aranda, & Stevens, 2015) near the end of Year 2 to explore issues related to vulnerability, confidentiality, and ownership of personal stories and socially-constructed data.

Given our abiding interest to promote a more purposeful and action-driven pursuit of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies across the School of Education, and in light of our shared understanding that impactful learning is relational, Years 3 and 4 ushered a turn in our inquiry community's focus toward the design of self-studies. Broadly, these studies aimed to respond to a shared research question: How do learning relationships, including teacher-student and student-student relationships, instantiate culturally sustaining pedagogies across various courses, programs, and theoretical perspectives? With this shift in focus and the launch of our self-studies came a decrease in the group's overall membership, settling into the current group of six who are co-editing this special issue. While each self-study was conducted independently, we employed a critical friends protocol to deepen our individual analyses and help each other plan action steps.

In their exploration of the multidimensional processes by which faculty members become teacher educators, Hordvik et al.'s (2021) claims about how collaborative self-study "produced evolving and meaningful practices, learning, and relationships that resulted in [their] becoming collaborative, committed, and innovative teacher educators" (abstract) offer inspiration. It is perhaps Hordvik et al.'s (2021) recognition of their work as "evolving"—unfinished, in progress, ongoing—that resonates most completely with our experiences. The self-studies we conducted in Years 3 and 4, along with the many conversations we have held around this research, led us to write individual origin stories guided by two questions intended to help us mine our past histories and look to our collective future, e.g., what draws us to this work and what keeps us in this group? Taken together, these two questions encourage us to commit even more deeply to following CRP/CSP around the School of Education and to start sharing what we've learned with the wider public.

This past summer our focus turned once again, this time to the study of antiracist pedagogies. In this third iteration of our inquiry community, we worked with and, importantly, were led by a group of doctoral students in the School of Education to create lessons that could confront the problems Ladson-Billings (2021) identifies as taking a toll on US society and, by extension, the US educational system—namely, "anti-Black racism, policy brutality, mass incarceration, and economic inequality" (p. 72). We sought to champion a curriculum that is asset-based, equitable, and includes a focus on students' social-emotional needs. In their collaborative self-study on culturally responsive pedagogy in higher education, Han et al. (2014) note how "little has been reported about teacher educators who enact CRP in higher education institutions" and how their study findings "begin to fill a void in the literature with an expanded articulation of a CRP framework that can be applied in higher education institutions, beyond the P-12 setting" (p. 308). Our practitioner inquiry stories, introduced below, aim to do the same.

Introducing the Self-Studies

This brief introduction to the five self-studies collected in this special issue begins by recalling Feldman et al.'s (2004) useful advice. "It is important to remember," they write, "that self-study is not a study of the self in isolation, but rather a study of one's self in relation to other people" (p. 971). The first two practitioner inquiry stories, "Relational awareness and culturally relevant/sustaining pedagogies—praxis and possibility: A story in four acts", by Miriam Raider-Roth, and "Creating relational space to support explorations of culturally relevant pedagogy with prospective teachers", by Susan Watts-Taffe, illustrate Feldman et al.'s standpoint and claim masterfully. Focusing on core practices of relational awareness, a key dimension of building strong teacher-student relationships and enacting culturally relevant teaching, Miriam's self-study employed journaling and art-making to chronicle her implementation of relational-cultural pedagogical practices with 15 diverse graduate students. These core practices include challenging, supporting, and voicing, as well as slow description, dyadic text analysis, and nonviolent communication. Key learning emerging from Miriam's inquiry points to the deep impact course readings can have on human interactions during classroom discussions and the notion that teaching explicit nonviolent communication skills (e.g., attuned listening, empowered speaking) can be helpful for discussions of race, culture, and difference.

Susan's self-study also centered on building relational awareness in classrooms, an especially critical skill in a racialized world that leaves so many people feeling unsafe or relationally disconnected from conversations about race. Drawing from her work with undergraduate students preparing to become Intervention Specialists and the data she collected over three consecutive Fall semesters, Susan's self-study highlights two pedagogical goals she set for her students and herself: (1) to feel seen and known, and (2) to be able to sit in relationship with a person or idea that is challenging without needing to judge it, fix it, or dispel it. Characterizing moments of relational presence and authentic connections as types of space that can be created in classrooms, Susan's inquiry reminds readers that exploring ways to enact culturally responsive pedagogy turns on overcoming the disempowerment and isolation that so often accompanies relational disconnection.

Robert V. Bullough, Jr. and Stefinee Pinnegar (2001) once remarked that "the aim of self-study research is to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than to confirm and settle" (p. 20). In other words, as a form of practitioner inquiry self-study is noticeably generative, able to create knowledge, as Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) asserted, "from practice for practice" (p. 21). The next two stories—Annie Bauer's "Start where we are" and Mark Sulzer's "Tesseract as becoming: A rhizomatic self-study about engaging future English language arts teachers in culturally relevant pedagogy"— skillfully demonstrate how self-study creates an environment where authentic questions of practice emerge and new possibilities for teacher education come into view. Annie's self-study explored the impact of increasing the explicitness with which she talks with first-year teacher preparation students about unintentional biases related to diversity. Drawing from her vast experiences with early career college students planning to become elementary school

teachers, Annie's study aimed to better understand whether increased explicitness—and the cognitive dissonance it can create—might encourage these students to tap into alternate narratives about teaching in high-needs urban schools. Using quantitative analysis and content analysis to examine and interpret student data collected from surveys and course evaluations, findings from Anne's inquiry suggest subtle changes in students' dispositions and their understandings of key concepts like equity, inclusion, culture, and race by the semester's end.

Mark's self-study was also exploratory in his efforts to find new ways to engage future English language arts teachers in culturally relevant pedagogy. Drawing on the Deleuzian notion of immanence to destabilize categories and conditions of meaning, Mark's inquiry was distinctly experimental in its discovery and discussion of themes indispensable to the political, critical, and creative work of becoming. Highlighting the non-hierarchical and interconnected linkages between memory and movement, dimensionality and positionality, and knowing and being, his self-study brings into focus the rhizomatic relations overlaying our work as teacher educators and necessary for moving our disciplinary practices forward.

Reflecting on the power of memory and writing to reshape past experience, Ahmed (2012) suggests that "the act of writing" itself served as "a reorientation, affecting not simply what I was writing about but what I was thinking and feeling" (p. 2). "Allowing myself to remember," she goes on to explain, "was a political reorientation" (p. 2). The final piece in this special issue, "My Self Study" by Stephen Kroeger, resonates with Ahmed's focus on writing and remembering as reorienting actions. Deftly using graphic narrative as a mode of expression, Steve describes aspects of his practice that he understands as fundamental to his ongoing conversion into being an antiracist practitioner, including the origins of his thinking about teaching, self-imposed barriers to talking about his practice, and the connections he sees between his practice and culturally sustaining pedagogies. As his self-study shows, drawing provided Steve with a lens and a process through which he could more completely confront and reveal his positionality within the complex system of education. As a mode of inquiry, drawing reoriented Steve to his experiences as a teacher and a critical friend in our community, enabling him to map concepts, represent learning, and create new linkages to examine his own practice.

Conclusion

At the end of *On being included*, Ahmed (2012) offers an alternate reading of the well-known Freirean definition of praxis that captures the spirit with which our community of inquiry approaches its work. She writes:

> Paulo Freire defines praxis as 'reflection and action upon the world *in order to* transform it' ([1970] 2000: 51; emphasis added). I want to offer a different way of thinking about the relationship between knowledge and transformation. Rather than suggesting that knowledge leads (or should lead) to transformation,

> I offer a reversal that in my view preserves the point or aim of the argument: transformation, as a form of practical labor, leads to knowledge. (p. 173)

As the collection of articles in this special issue establish, self-study research opens a critical space for transforming the work that happens in classrooms. Through questioning, reflection, dialogue with trusted colleagues, and a shared willingness to reimagine the status quo, transforming our practice is already leading to new understandings about how to decenter teacher education with the principles of CRP/CSP and, in turn, providing opportunities to become better advocates for our students and our profession, going forward.

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Relational Awareness and Culturally Relevant/Sustaining Pedagogies—Praxis and Possibility: A Story in Four Acts[1]

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Abstract: This self-study examines how I enacted culturally relevant/sustaining pedagogies (CRP/CSP) in a graduate course. Specifically, I was seeking to understand what core practices of relational awareness were supportive of CRP/CSP. Using a first-person/self-study and arts-based action research approach, I describe my learning that developed hand in hand with vital tensions and paradoxes.

Act I -The Swirl

This story begins on my front porch in a delightfully temperate August morning. I sit with the 2017 syllabus from my graduate course, "The Relational Context of Teaching and Learning." The nine-page document is printed and strewn on the six-foot long pine table. I am asking myself: What would it mean to enact culturally relevant/sustaining pedagogies (CRP/CSP) in this course? What core practices of relational awareness are supportive of CRP/CSP? What does it mean to really break open this course that I have been teaching for almost 20 years? I felt the tension in my body. I was beset by fear—fear "that I would not do this well. And not good enough—not equipped enough for this…The self-judgment is severe. The fear is real." (Journal, 8/10/19). I painted the first painting of this study.

[1] The 4-act structure was inspired by NPR's "This American Life." Deep gratitude to the students and colleagues who read and offered generous and critical feedback.

Painting 1: Fear

In reflection I wrote: “I painted it vertically, but when I flipped it [horizontally] it was a raging sea. That’s really how I felt. And the color I felt was blue.” (8/10/19). Note: I am not the kind of person who easily says, “the color I felt was blue.”

> *Personal Interlude: As I tell this story, I interrogate my practice as a white teacher, as a professor of education, a ciswoman, a Jewish person, daughter of a German-Jewish refugee and a Holocaust survivor, parent of trans, queer and straight children. Also, you should know, that while I love the arts and I have crafted all my life with quilts, jewelry, and yarn, I do not consider myself an artist. All of these identities come into play as I tell this story.*

As I dug into the syllabus over the next few days, I had some clarity about my task. There were too many white voices in the reading list. While the foundational relational theories of the course were developed by a predominantly white group of scholars (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Miller & Stiver, 1997), the scholarship in the field had become much more diverse. And while I had updated the course in 2017, the scholarly voices in the syllabus were not diverse enough. Over the next few weeks, I continued to read a stack of new books, chapters, and articles. It was as if I was meeting new friends, knowing that I would need to let go of some of my old ones, some that I had relied on, like close confidents, since my graduate school days. I also had to face the fact that I needed to get to know voices that have been around for generations that I did not know well. The ground I was standing on felt shaky — I asked myself “can I teach sources that I have not studied for years?”

Ten days later, I am swirling. I painted:

Painting 2: Swirl

My white question mark swims in the brown, tan, black, ochre, and ivory swirls. I yearned for more solid ground, knowing the churning was essential.

> *Theoretical interlude: This study is rooted at an intersection between Relational Cultural Theories (RCT) (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Schwartz, 2019; Walker, 2020; Way, Ali, Gilligan, & Noguera, 2018) and Culturally Relevant/Sustaining Pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2000; Paris & Alim, 2017). The essence of RCT is the idea that the goal of human development is participating in and deepening growth-enhancing relationships. In contrast to the prevailing psychological theories of the twentieth century which argue that autonomy and independence indicated maturity, RCT was a radical theory, with feminist origins. RCT scholar Maureen Walker (2020) also argues that chronic disconnection — in relationships with self or others — can be caused by culture, "which, in addition to shaping our narratives about self and others, determined systems of access and opportunity" (p. 27).*
>
> *This study is also situated in the groundbreaking work of Ladson-Billings (1995, 2014, 2021), which launched the concept and practice of culturally relevant pedagogy and its three central propositions —* "academic achievement/student learning, cultural competence, and socio-political /critical consciousness" (2021, p. 71). I am also informed by the evolution and extension of this theory, which centers on sustaining culture as argued by Django Paris (2012) *"…culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 95). In this self-study, and in the Relational Context of Teaching*

and Learning course, I understand that awareness of the relational dynamics in the unfolding life of a course is essential to assure that the learning environment is one that invites the voicing of differing perspectives, dissent and disagreement (Schwartz, 2019). Aceves & Orosco (2014) have helped me understand that developing, maintaining, and nurturing positive teacher-student relationships is a core dimension of CRP/CSP.

August 29, 2019. Students gather in one of our college's less appealing classrooms—chairs with attached mini desk surfaces that are hard to get into and make it impossible to spread out notebooks and books at the same time. With smudged white walls, there is no character to this room, but at least there are windows! The class is big for a seminar, 21 people. It is also the most diverse class I've had at this university. There are five Black women, one international student from China, and the rest appear white. There is one man. From the first exercise of the course—a discussion of the values and actions that would shape how we would work together issues of race were on the table. I found myself scrutinizing every question I posed to the group and every response I offered.

The next morning, I painted this picture which I titled, "The swirl is real."
The micro self-reflection was so uncomfortable. "Is this self-study?" I wrote that night. "If so, I don't like it!!!"

Painting 3: The Swirl is Real

There is no solid ground in this painting. I flail in the swirl of color.

About This Self-Study

As Connie Kendall Theado wrote in the opening essay of this special issue, our Cincinnati Critical Friends (CCF) study group decided that each of us would attempt a self-study during the 2019-2020 academic year. I chose to study this course because it had been "calling" me to change. If I were to take seriously the cultural dimension in RCT, then enacting CRP/CSP practices were essential. The question gnawing at me was how to help graduate students build cultural competence and critical consciousness, and what role did relational awareness play in developing these crucial capacities?

> *Theoretical Interlude: You might be asking "why relational awareness?" How does relational awareness fit into this picture? Ladson-Billings and Paris & Alim do not spell out relational awareness in their iterations of CRP/CSP. As a researcher who has spent the past two decades dedicated to studying the relational context of teaching and learning, I understand relational awareness as a core capacity for both teachers and students in the construction of healthy relational learning communities (Raider-Roth, 2017). Jordan (2004) defines relational awareness as:*
>
> > *the development of clarity about the movement of relationship; this importantly includes an awareness of our patterns and* ***ways of connecting and disconnecting and transforming the flow from the direction of disconnection to connection.*** *It includes personal awareness, awareness of the other, awareness of the impact of oneself on the other, the effect of other on oneself, and the quality of energy and flow in the relationship itself. (p 53-54, emphasis added)*
>
> *I have come to understand that building relational awareness is rooted in learning the practices of building connection, detecting disconnection, and facilitating repair (moving the flow from disconnection to connection). One of the findings of this self-study, as I will describe below, is that learning these core practices are essential to engaging in the rich and sometimes difficult conversations about culture, race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity (and others) and the isms that often arise.*

As an action-researcher and teacher, I have long wanted to study my own practice with a gaze centered on my decision-making, artifacts of teaching, and pedagogical dilemmas. It was our CCF group and teaching a course on practitioner action research in 2019 that galvanized my energy to finally dive in. LaBoskey (2007) guided me in offering key dimensions of self-study, including being "improvement-aimed," changing and reframing my thinking and practice, incorporating complementary methods, and presenting the work to colleagues and the field for critical feedback (pp. 859-60). This article is an essential piece of this last aspect of self-study.

Methodological Interlude: Dear Reader, you may have noticed by now that the structure of this article includes four acts, a variety of interludes, and later you will encounter five "learnings." While the four act format might suggest a linearity to my learning — that there was a structure and a chronological order to the semester — the interludes are an invitation to join me in the messiness that self-study invited. My understandings — theoretical, methodological, pedagogical and personal — came in fits and starts, over time, and unpredictably.

Self-study Processes

Journaling. From the outset, I chose journaling as a process as I know myself to be a person who processes the world in words. As a writer, and a long-time fan of and participant in psychotherapy, I knew that recording my experiences and writing about them would both be a forum for record-keeping as well as reflecting on the experiences in my class. I committed to journal immediately after class or in the following day since class occurred in the late afternoon/early evening.

Painting. My doctoral students inspired me to paint. In particular, Mary Dulworth Gibson, a veteran teacher in Cincinnati Public Schools, an artist, and a warm, intense, doctoral student with a delightful sense of humor, chose to do a self-study as part of the 2019 practitioner action research course that I taught. She reflected on her teaching for 30 days, and then painted a small canvas (2"x3") each night (Dulworth Gibson, 2019). At the end-of-the-course presentation of work, I was stunned by her exhibit, and moved by the emotion I experienced in viewing her collection of work. I was inspired to try to engage in a form of reflection that was less wordy, that tapped into my heart, soul, and brain in a different way. I knew that this work was a full body experience; it would call up a plethora of emotion, and I wanted to capture it all. While I committed to painting before or after I journaled each week, in sum I created 12 5"x7" paintings/drawings/collages over the 15 weeks of the semester. While there were secondary sources of data for this study, including careful record keeping of the relational practices I tried out and student feedback, this article focuses on the two data sources above.

Act II — The Text as Partner

Bringing in foundational texts in relational theory, as well as new texts written by scholars of color, was core to the redesign of the course. As a teacher, building relationships with new texts and their writers required that I find my own positionality with these texts. Such was the work of Act II. The students also had to cultivate their own relationships with the texts, and the multi-vocal nature of the syllabus elicited strong responses.

During the third week of class, we read a chapter by Janie Ward (2108) entitled "Staying Woke: Raising Black Girls to Resist Disconnection," a powerful piece about Black girls, their resistance and resilience, focusing especially on their resistance to cultural forces of disconnection. This chapter invited some of the most constructive discussions of race that I have

experienced as a teacher. During the discussion, a white student commented, “This piece was not written for me. It was written for a Black audience.” I winced at this comment and the pain I imagined that it inflicted on the students of color. I imagined that students of color often feel this way about white authors that they encounter throughout their schooling.

When I look back at my responses to that moment, I wish for a “do-over.” I stepped in too quickly to smooth things over, to offer a theoretical overview for why reading a diverse set of literature offers critical points of view that are indeed written for everyone. In my journal after class, I listed the things I felt compelled to say:

> I felt the need to openly disagree to not have the Black students carry that. To talk about my own privilege. To talk about really hearing what the experience of Black women, women of color, people of color [are]. What it means to be an ally (9/14/19).

I wished for better pedagogy at that moment—to be able to respond in a way that would deepen the conversation, not put a patch on it.

Painting/Collage 4: To Become and STAY WOKE

That week, I constructed this collage from the text of the chapter, foregrounding the text at the center of my reflection.

Painting/Collage 5: Face to Face/ פנים אל פנים

The following week I focused on the cross-cultural, cross-racial dialogue. How could I, as the facilitator, the teacher of the course, support authentic, honest dialogue that would not further disconnection, but build growth-enhancing relationships—the kinds of relationships that would deepen and further student learning? Echoing Jordan's (2004) definition of relational awareness, I was yearning to keep the flow of the course moving in the direction of connection.

Theoretical Interlude: A theory that is core to my understandings teaching-learning relationship is David Hawkins' triarchic model "I, thou and It" (Hawkins, 2002). This model is often referred to as the instructional triangle (Ball & Forzani, 2007) and which I have taken to call "the relational triangle" to highlight the dynamics between the three main partners in the learning relationships—teacher, learner and subject matter/content. Adding to the triangle is the very important circle of context, which shapes and is shaped by the dynamics of the triangle.

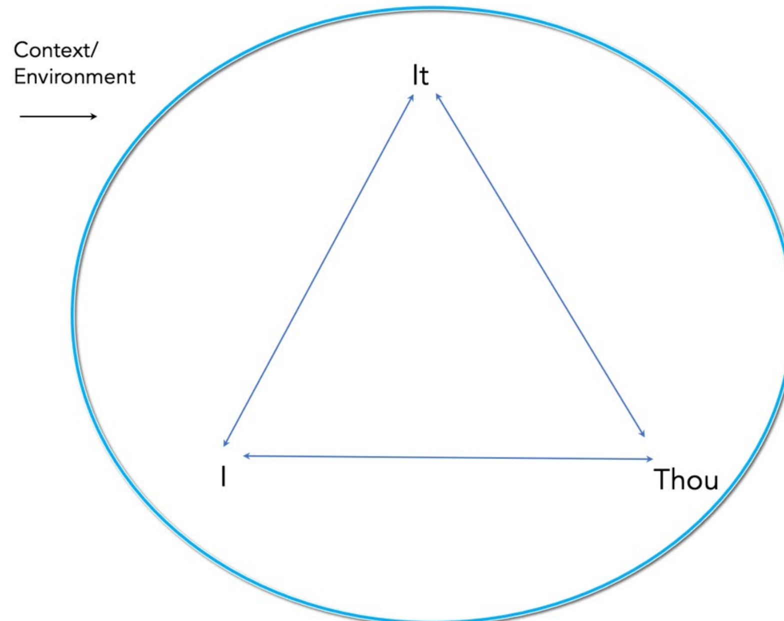


Figure 1: The instructional/relational triangle

I thought I had done an admirable job of letting go of readings from the old white cannon. But I did not let go of enough. For years, I had dedicated a week of the course to "Goodness of Fit" theory (Thomas & Chess, 1977), because it seemed to highlight the ways that relational dynamics between parents & children (and other literature based on Goodness of Fit extend the idea to teacher-student relationships, e.g., Keogh, 1986) shape children's capacity to thrive. The following journal excerpt recounts the class discussion of this theory:

> At some point in the class discussion, [a student] said that in her field [of] counseling, they study Bronfenbrenner's ecological system's theory. And as we had a full group discussion, and we were talking about the individual's interaction with the environment, we started talking about the different "circles" of environment — family, school, neighborhood, social-economic-political cultures. And how "fit" may mean something different in those different circles. And when you take pressures of patriarchy, racism, homophobia, "fit" starts to sound downright oppressive…
>
> By introducing a more diverse set of readings to study and having a more diverse class, it so shapes what needs to be studied and moved to the side the theories that are not culturally relevant/sustaining. This was a big aha for me. As I write this, it doesn't seem so revolutionary—but for me it was a big realization. (9/28/19)

As the student and I described Bronfenbrenner's theory, I drew on the board a figure that looked like Figure 3 below, which integrated the idea of circles of systems with the idea that contexts/environments shape the dynamics of teaching learning relationships.

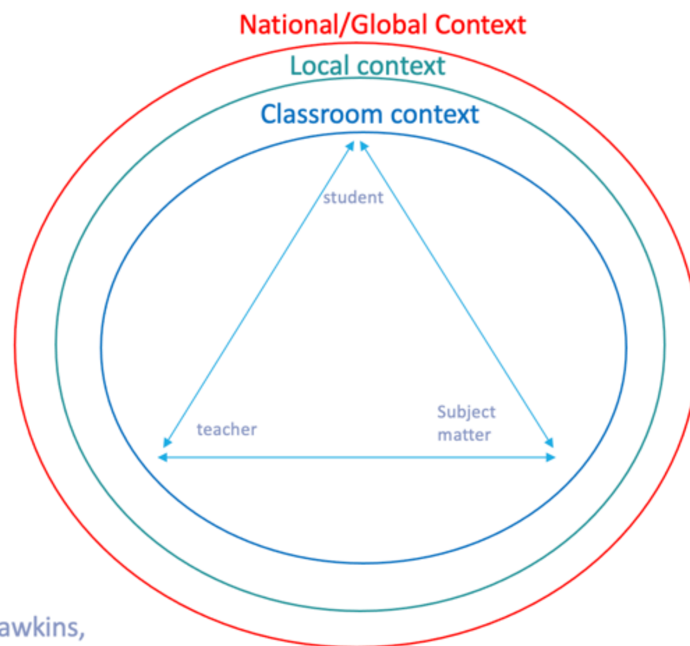


Figure 2. The relational triangle with circles of context.

As I revised the course for fall 2021, I removed Goodness of Fit from the syllabus, and focused on Bronfenbrenner instead.

Painting/College 6: Circles of Culture

In playing with collage in this piece, I sought to foreground circles with a red triangular bead in the center of the smallest circle, while at the same time illustrating that Goodness of Fit did not fit anymore. The pieces no longer connected.

Act III: Lightning

While some texts, like Ward's (2018), facilitated connections to the text and to the class community, others like Thomas and Chess (1977) raised up the ways that theories can be limiting or even oppressive, and some texts had the capacity to be lightning rods. Such was the case of Patricia Hill Collin's landmark essay (1999) "Mammies, Matriarchs and Other Controlling Images." I had selected this article to be read hand-in-hand with a chapter from Harriet Schwartz's (2019) book *Connected Teaching* that focused on the RCT concept of relational images—that the images of prior relationships can carry over into current ones. I had hoped that studying Collins' notion of controlling images—the idea that cultural images of oppressed peoples can seep into our thinking without our consciousness—together with relational images offered the students the chance to understand how an individual's own relational history and the images that are ubiquitous in the environment, culture, media can shape the baggage that teachers and students may bring into the classroom. But you know what they say about best laid plans.

> *Personal Interlude: I can think of so many things I could have done differently during this class. Before this class. When I prepared students for the reading. I struggle deeply when I think about the events that transpired in the class. About the harm that people experienced. In my journal that night I wrote "…this is what I feared. That I would not be able to handle this kind of conversation. That I was not trained for this yet. That I am inadequate." 10/17/19*

So what happened? At least two excruciating moments of disconnection, but I know there were many more. One white woman asked the Black women as a group how they felt about reading the article. My body tensed. What's the best teaching move right then? As facilitator and teacher, I could have said something to remove pressure and obligation to respond. I might have asked the student what needs were driving her question/request. Those were not my moves. I was silent. Later, a white woman shared, "You know, not only Black women are stereotyped. I have been stereotyped, too." And a very painful class ensued. Tears were shed, an uncomfortable laugh, long pauses. A Black student left the class, later to return, speaking from her heart about the pain she experienced in class. A Black student shared that the comments were an example of why white women are most dangerous to Black women.

> *Methodological Interlude: A crucial part of my ethical commitment was to share a draft of this piece with students whose words were represented here, and I did my best to locate them, two years after the course took place. Sharing my work with them was also an effort towards trustworthiness, as explained by Hamilton, Hutchinson, & Pinnegar (2020):*

> *…we suggest that the primary research relationship to which we must be trustworthy in S-STTEP [self-study in teaching and teacher education practice] research is not the researcher and the academy but rather the researcher to the world in which their life and practice is embedded and the researcher and those practitioners, students, and communities for whom we write the research. (pp. 308-309)*

In listening to the students' feedback, I understood that Act III is spare, more of a sketch than a fully rendered drawing. Perhaps I am still processing it, perhaps I am seeking to protect the privacy of the pain in the moment, for everyone involved. I can only write what I observed and experienced. There is another essay to be written about what happened that night—coauthored, co-voiced by the students in the room.

I ended the class, returning to core tenets of RCT—connection, disconnection, and repair. While I had not yet read Walker's 2020 book (it was published just after the semester ended), I now realize I enacted one of her "nine rules for remaking the meaning of race" (p. 115); namely, "when an interaction reaches an impasse, say one true thing" (p. 122). I shared with the class that I felt disconnections had occurred for many of us—with self, others, and the text; that I was aware that I did not know that was happening for each of them. I promised that we would work on repair; that I needed time to process the class and come up with a plan. As Walker (2020) suggests "[s]aying one true thing creates spaces where more truths can emerge" (p. 124). I asked them all to write down a reflection with the prompt "what is alive for you right now."

Painting/collage 7: Lightning

The next morning, I painted and collaged this piece. The flashpoints of the evening felt so much like lightening—sudden, brilliant, frightening. The vastness of the night sky, which can lead me to feel awe, insignificant, and alone, was the image that came to mind.

Act IV: Repair, Dancing Triangles, Circles and Light

To say that I was left swirling would be an understatement. After class, I immediately sat down in my university office and wrote as much of what I could remember that transpired. The recurring question that evening and the ensuing days was, "What could I have done differently?" I reached out to colleagues in the CCF community to help me unpack what had happened, to figure out how I might have responded or facilitated the discussion in a different way, and to plan next steps for the coming week's class. My need to repair the enormous rupture was acute.

> *Learning #1: This kind of tough introspection into one's pedagogy should not be a solitary sport. We need to be accompanied by fellow travelers who can support and challenge our observations, interpretations, and questions.*

Repair

I also reached out to a close colleague and friend, Kathy Simon (kathysimonphd.com), with whom I have studied the principles and practices of nonviolent communication (NVC) for the past decade. As an expert in communication and deep understanding of educational contexts and pedagogies, she is an important thought partner in my life. Kathy sees a richness in hard conversations. She sees an opportunity to build new understandings and stronger connections by wading through the choppy waters of conflict. In short, she believes conflict is potentially positive and transformative, and skills of repair are vital.

In retelling the story to Kathy, she helped me focus on the needs/values that I heard the students expressing. I could hear the student's needs for connection, authenticity, and learning in asking the Black women in the class how they received this Collins' article. I could hear the other student's need to be seen for the suffering in her life. In this reframing of the events in the classroom, from racist or insensitive comments to ones in which human needs were being expressed, an opportunity for connection emerged rather than being shut down. I understood in this conversation that a core practice for developing relational awareness was a particular form of listening, one that Kathy calls "attuned listening." This kind of listening requires tuning one's ears to the needs/values that the person speaking might be expressing; to make every effort not to "rush to judgment" (Carini, 2001, p. 163) but rather try to make sure one understands the

content of their narrative. In the higher education classroom—and I would argue in all classrooms—this must be a shared responsibility among all members of the class, not just the teacher/facilitator. As I've learned in my own life, and as a student of NVC, this kind of listening takes sustained practice, much like learning to play an instrument or speak a new language.

Learning #2: Attuned listening is a core practice of relational awareness. To teach relational awareness, it is important to teach skills of attuned listening and practice them throughout the course.

By telling the story of the "lightning" class to my CCF partners and Kathy, I was listened to in this way and seen for my desire to convene a class where hard conversations can occur, where diverse voices can be heard, and where respect for divergent points of view is authentic. And my colleagues urged me to continue the work.

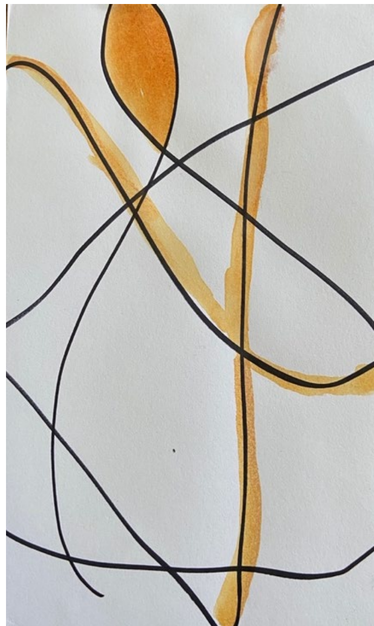
With Kathy's help, I crafted a lesson for the following week where we could practice attuned listening and begin to repair some of the ruptures. Not everyone in the class found this satisfying. Some wanted to return to the points of conflict, to unravel the knot that we had confronted, to see if we could find more common ground. Perhaps it was my fear, cowardice, or desire to "get the class back on track," but I felt strongly that the students needed more skills in order to dive back into these rocky waters.

The following week, I taught skills of empowered speaking—the skill of speaking one's full truth without accusation or demeaning of another person. Practices of empowered speaking are grounded in observations, rather than judgments, and are rooted in a person's positive values, such as compassion, inclusion, communication. Empowered speaking invites collaboration as well as articulation of one's own vulnerability (Simon, 2019). These skills are also part of the NVC approach to communication.

Learning #3: Empowered speaking is a core practice of relational awareness. To teach relational awareness, it is important to teach skills of empowered speaking and practice them throughout the course. Attuned listening and empowered speaking are the foundation of relational repair.

Personal Interlude: Fall 2021. In teaching this course again, redesigned based on what I learned from doing this self-study, I introduced attuned listening and empowered speaking in the first weeks of class. And I learned that some of the Black members of the class found the NVC practices limiting, or worse yet, constraining. Not aligned with the ways they wanted to speak or be heard. Not direct enough. At the time of writing this article, I ask myself, are these practices not aligned with the principles of CRP/CSP? I am still wrestling with this question.

In the least generous view of these weeks, I could say I was flying by the seat of my pants. I was off script from the syllabus, and I was building each class session based on the previous one, to be as responsive as possible and build a context where repair could take place. In meeting with Sarah Hellman, a community artist, arts-based action researcher, friend, colleague, and former student, she set out a newspaper covered table at a nearby café. A glass jar, half full of water and well-loved paint brushes sat on the table. A pan of watercolors lay before me. Sarah handed me a piece of paper, gave me a black sharpie marker, told me to close my eyes and draw a flowing line, not lifting my hand until I felt finished. When I opened my eyes, she offered me the paint as well as magic markers, and asked me what I saw in my squiggles. I instantly saw a dancer and brushed ochre colored paint on the lines. She asked me how I interpreted this dancer and I responded, “Improvisation. She’s improvising.” At that moment, I realized I could reframe my self-critique. Rather than seeing my actions as flying by the seat of my pants, I could view them as pedagogical improvisations.



Drawing/Painting 8: The Dance

> *Lesson #4: Ruptures in the classroom, as in any relationship, are inevitable and unpredictable. The acts of repair require an improvisational stance. Attuned listening and empowered speaking are iterative processes, that require/invite responsiveness in the moment as well as reflection to plan next steps.*

Dancing Triangles:

November 7, 2019: A Zoom class. Due to my travel for a conference, we held this class session via Zoom. Upon reflection, I drew and then wrote:

Drawing 9: Dancing Triangles

> When I look at this drawing, thinking about all the students in their spaces—[one student] lying in bed, the kitty behind [another student's] body, [two students] in a room [at the university], this grid came to [my] mind, with each student as their own triangle, with their own connections, disconnections [&] repairs. And then there's me—I need my own triangle! And trying to stay alert to all the triangles in the room. No wonder teaching is so exhausting! (emphasis in original.) 11/7/19

While Zoom classes became ubiquitous during the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019 I only conducted Zoom classes when I was ill or traveling for a conference. There was something about this shift in environment, when each person was situated in a square, that that led me to envision each person as their own unique relational triangle, seeing their individual contexts that exert force and shape the nature of the relationships within. When gathering in the four walls of the classroom, I am often drawn to our shared contexts—the room, the building, the university, our city, etc. With each of us in our own environs, I became especially alert to the numbers of triangles and circles that join together to form a classroom learning community.

Learning 5: Relational awareness as a teacher means paying attention to the collective relational triangle, as well as the individual ones as well. The cognitive, emotional, and relational demands of this kind of awareness is intense. Relational awareness is a form of presence.

Painting 10: Dancing Circles

This painting had been brewing in my mind for a number of days. Over time, I imagined circles with purple hues. These circles are different from painting from week three. It didn't feel like a black hole or sixteen circles dancing separately. These circles are pairs or trios, holding hands, creating movement together. The course was coming to an end. There had been many connections, disconnections, and repairs. Different forms of community emerged, final papers were being written, the language of relationship, relational contexts, and Relational-Cultural Theories had become more second nature. Discussion of culture and race continued, perhaps a little more carefully, a bit subdued.

Light

When students arrived for the last class, long tables were set up outside the room and they placed fruit salad, brownies, chips, pinwheel sandwiches, and sparkling water on the tables as they arrived. A last-class potluck is a tradition where we celebrate together all the accomplishments of the semester. When the students walked into the room, they found jars of colored pencils and markers placed on the tables throughout the room accompanied by small stacks of 5x7 index cards. The students in the class knew that I had been experimenting with artwork as part of this self-study, and I wanted to invite them into the process for the last class, to offer them an opportunity to reflect in a different medium, using different parts of their minds. Sarah Hellman had shared an exercise with me that she suggested might support the students' visual and artistic exploration. This exercise invited students to create a "Relationship Character" by first reflecting on three relationships in their work or personal life that were on their mind after completing the course. I asked them to engage all five senses. If relationship were a color, what color would it be? What does relationship smell, taste, sound, look feel like? After reflecting on these questions, I asked them to draw a relationship character, symbol, or metaphor.

The drawings were stunning in the representation of story and learning. Class time ran way beyond our ending hour as each person told the story of their image and received appreciative comments from the others. I felt a sense of the collective, the learning community that had evolved, with all the points of rupture and repair. I, too, drew my image:

Drawing 11: Light

One student commented that orange and yellow are the color of relationships. For me, the blooming flower signified a sense of openness, growth, pausing after the intense energy of opening.

Epilogue

In the Nonviolent Communication suite of practices, as interpreted and taught by Kathy Simon, "mindful inner world" accompanies attuned listening and empowered speaking. Together with colleague Itzel Hayward, they describe this internal presence as follows: "We seek to interrogate what is **habitual** for us and choose whether we can find a path that feels **alive**, that speaks to this unique **moment**, and is **most aligned with our deepest values."** (Hayward & Simon, 2021, emphasis and color in original). I regret not teaching this practice in the fall of 2019. It is perhaps, the grounding that we all needed to be able to be present to one another while the relational dynamics swirled when engaging with issues of race.

I return to the image of "swirl" that began this story and my physiological experience of so much of the course. When I attend to my fear of talking about race—a fear that indeed feels like a deeply engrained habit—I feel that swirl in my body. I am guided by Maureen Walker's (2020) words:

> Racialized anxiety may be a physiological reminder that we don't need to enact inherited fear or hostility. Breathing into tightened muscles facilitates relaxation and gives us room to decide how we want to act. (p. 118)

In Itzel Hayward, Kathy Simon, and Maureen Walker's words, I hear a clear message of attending to my breath, what is alive in my heart *and* my mind. Like all mindfulness practices, the mindfulness that is required to enact culturally relevant/sustaining pedagogies in a higher education classroom is a consistent and difficult practice. Just when I thought I had a handle on what was happening, new discussions emerged, new relational images surfaced, old controlling images penetrated the discussion, and ruptures occurred. The presence of mind and body, the necessary improvisation and strong community articulated values were all necessary dimensions for facilitating repair.

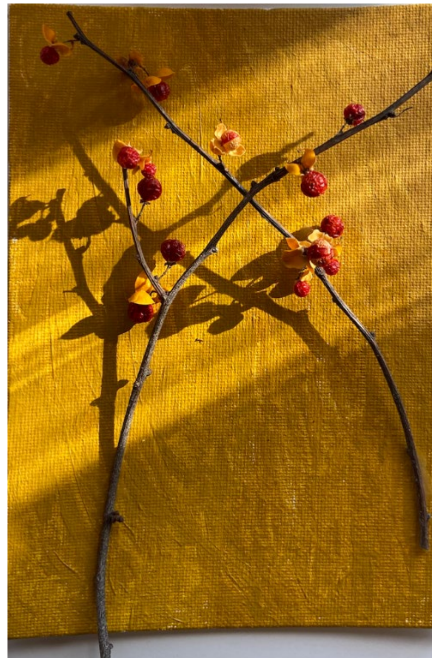
> Final theoretical interlude: As I write this, I am reminded of the idea of "cultural humility" that our CCF recently studied in a shared reading (Cochrane et al., 2017) which centers on three tenets: "commitment to lifelong learning and critical self-reflection, especially around social identities"; "the need to recognize and disrupt power imbalances"; and "institutional accountability" (p. 3-4). The internal work of cultural humility is insufficient—acting to create real change towards equity is essential. Cochran et al. liken cultural humility to "critical humility" which is defined as:

> …the practice of remaining open to the face that our knowledge is partial and evolving while at the same time being committed to speaking up and taking action in the world based on our current knowledge however imperfect…In other words, we strive toward being a 'good white person' while trying not to fall into the trap of thinking we actually have become that person. (European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, 2012 p.2) (p. 5)

I am drawn to this definition because it asks us to remain mindful of our own limited capacity to see another person's experience. Our obligation is to remain open to the widening our capacity to see, while remembering that we will never see fully. Chabra (2017), building on Hook et al (2013) adds to the theorizing of cultural humility by highlighting:

> the interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person], *especially those aspects that trigger in us a sense of unearned privilege about ourselves and an implicit prejudice about the other*. (emphasis in the original, p. 44)

By underscoring the interpersonal dimension of cultural humility, this second definition reinforces a stance of openness to the other while at the same time attending to our own sense of privilege and prejudice.



Painting/collage 12: Light and shadows

As a study of my own practice, I am left swirling, with some learnings and with many more questions. The work feels unfinished. Hamilton, Hutchinson, and Pinnegar (2020) offer that an "ontology of becoming" is an essential facet of self-study, which "disrupts traditional notions of knowing, trustworthiness, and quality as static understandings of reality to embrace constant moving, shifting, and *becoming*" (emphasis in the original, p. 309). In writing this piece, I pause temporarily to reflect on what I learned, how I am evolving, or becoming, but without a sense of completion. The work has brought me insight and more fear, light, and shadows. I strive to teach relational awareness as a dimension of CRP/CSP and know that I will never quite master this pedagogy. Holding that paradox is the essence of this work.

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Creating Relational Space to Support Explorations of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy with Prospective Teachers

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Abstract: This article describes a Black woman faculty member's self-study of her teaching practices with undergraduate preservice teachers at a predominantly White institution. Drawing on data gathered over a period of three years, and utilizing strategies of practitioner inquiry and narrative inquiry, this study focused on the author's attempts to build relational capacity to support culturally relevant pedagogy within her class. The article describes the author's approaches to self-study and highlights three instructional moments that shed light on how she supported herself and her students in (1) feeling seen and known and (2) sitting in relationship with challenging ideas without needing to judge, fix, or dispel them. These moments, referred to as types of space, emphasize mindfulness, time, curiosity, and empathy as openings for deeper engagement with culturally relevant teaching.

Dear Reader,

Before I tell you about my self-study, I need you to know something about my life experiences as a Black woman in America. Claudia Rankine (2014) captured it poignantly in "Citizen: An American Lyric":

> Certain moments send adrenaline to the heart, dry out the tongue, and clog the lungs. Like thunder they drown you in sound, no, like lightening they strike you across the larynx. (p. 7)

Rankine's description of this moment in the life of a young Black girl resonates deeply with me. So many memories of having the wind knocked out of me—by a racial slur, a threatening stare, the nightly news. This has also happened in my classroom, such as in the split second after a student makes a blanket generalization based on a racial stereotype or the split second when a student says, "Just because I'm white, doesn't mean I'm privileged." As a Black woman standing in front of 24 young, White faces I have often felt discomfort in these moments—these split seconds when I have been silent; these split seconds when opportunities came, and went---a door swung wide, or opened just a crack, was closed.

What are the moments that strike us mute? Render us paralyzed?
And how can I, along with my students, walk forward when the traumas
of our racialized world show up in the classroom?

These questions are at the core of the self-study reported in this article.
-Susan

Origins and Purpose of My Inquiry

As described in the article introducing this special issue (Theado, 2022), our Cincinnati Critical Friends group has thought together about we can enact culturally relevant pedagogies in our courses (Ladson-Billings, 1996; 2021). Through shared readings and engagement with each other's pedagogical dilemmas, we found ourselves circling back to the critical role of learning relationships in this work. For me, this meant probing the silence that too often shrouded my teaching and constricted my students' opportunities to learn. Black women at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) have reported that silence often feels (and, in fact, is) safer than the alternative, since hostility toward Black women faculty at PWIs is a documented phenomenon (Sanders, 2022). Beyond this specific experience of silence, there is another, collective experience of silence represented in the knee-jerk response so many Americans have to issues of race and culture.

Even with the understanding that race is not a matter of biology, but instead "a political construct that comes out of histories of domination and exploitation" (Walker, 2020, p. 48), we may not fully understand the personal and collective tolls that come of living in a racialized society. Psychologists have described this toll as trauma (Menakem, 2017; Ward, 2020). According to Ward (2020):

> . . .our minds have been conditioned to see race as real. This racialized awareness permeates us like a disease . . . cementing our minds to a system of social worth and value by skin pigmentation. It animates our thinking, speech, and behavior . . .[and] our attitudes, emotional states, habitual dispositions, and social organization. (p. 3-4)

Since each of our individual experiences—both historical and current—occurs within (and is shaped by) this larger context, our racialized experiences impact our relational experiences. According to Walker (2020), this relational dynamic "is a dynamic constituted by institutional and ideological practices that function to rank order human worth" (p. 12-13), and therefore relational distortions are inevitable. She writes, "Because we live in a culture shaped by a legacy of race-based stratification, disconnection often seems the most expedient course as we navigate through our everyday lives" (p. 101). Or, put another way, "The sine qua non of a racially stratified society is chronic disconnection" (Walker, 2020, p. 28).

Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) centers connected relationships as the primary mechanism of human development and views disconnection—from oneself and from others—as a primary source of human suffering (Jordan, 2004). However, Jordan (2004) argues, "Self-empathy and empathy for others can help transform these disconnections and lead to a compassionate attitude in the struggle to stay connected. Essential to the transformation of disconnection is an openness to being moved by the other person. . .[and] an openness to being seen by the other person" (p. 55-56). Relational-cultural theory assumes that conflict in

relationship is natural, inevitable, and provides tremendous opportunities for growth. Walker (2004) states, "What we learn from RCT is that healing and reconnection are active possibilities when we make ourselves available to the experience of challenge and the complexities of conflict, as well as the opportunities for resilience and expanded empathy that multicultural connections can bring" (p. 101).

When I began this self-study, it was clear to me that there are many barriers to building the kinds of relational competence necessary to enact culturally relevant pedagogy. My own personal history (and presumably my students' as well) includes many instances of relational disconnection, especially around race. When I reflected on my teaching from this perspective, I realized there were conversations about race and social justice I simply did not engage in with my students, because I didn't feel safe. I wondered, also, about what my students didn't say. This led me to focus my inquiry on cultivating authentic connections and relational presence within my class. The questions guiding my inquiry were:

1. In what ways do I support myself and my students in feeling seen and known?
2. In what ways do I support myself and my students in being able to sit in relationship with a person or idea that challenges us, without needing to judge it, fix it, or dispel it?

I pursued these questions in hopes of freeing myself, and my students, from interactional patterns that left too many critical topics untouched, and too many doorways to growth and change closed.

The Course, the Students, and Me:
The Focus of the Course and Its Relationship to Critical Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)

This self-study focuses on my teaching in a course entitled *Foundations and Assessment of Reading and Writing for Intervention Specialists,* which is required for students seeking a bachelor's degree in Special Education and state licensure as an Intervention Specialist for grades K-12. As stated in the course syllabus,

> This course is designed to assist teacher candidates in developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to become successful facilitators of literacy learning for students with disabilities (K-12) and other students experiencing difficulty with reading and writing. Through course readings, class activities, and required course assignments, teacher candidates will gain an understanding of literacy assessments and instructional methods as well as gain practical experience in administering assessments and providing literacy instruction within the context of students' individual differences.

As this is one of their first literacy courses, students often report feeling overwhelmed with the content and specialized language, especially during the first half of the term. However, what they need to know for purposes of state licensure will not necessarily prepare them to teach in culturally relevant ways.

As defined by Ladson-Billings (1995; 2021) CRP includes three elements: *academic achievement* [i.e., all students learn and grow, including and especially those from groups with historically low academic outcomes]; *cultural competence* [i.e., students' cultural and linguistic heritages are integral to classroom learning experiences and are taken up by teachers as assets rather than deficits], and *socio-political/critical consciousness* [i.e., teaching supports inquiry and critique around established cultural norms including the ways in which literacy and language are culturally, politically, and racially situated (Baker-Bell, 2020; Delpit, 2002)]. Embracing CRP in its fullness challenges literacy teachers to actively consider what, why, and how they encourage K-12 students to read and write, what counts as demonstrations of competency, what requires us to re-think commonly held notions of what students already know and can do when they enter the K-12 classroom, and who will achieve high levels of literacy.

Structure and Delivery Format

In recent years, there have been changes in the delivery format for the course, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 1 provides an overview of course delivery during the self-study.

Table 1

Overview of Course Delivery Format

Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
On Campus Full Class Meetings	Virtual Small Group Meetings (6 – 7 students via Teams)	On Campus Small Group Meetings (11 or 14 students)
80 minutes, 2 times per week	40 minutes, 1 time per week	80 minutes, 1 time per week
No online instruction	Asynchronous online instruction between class meetings	Asynchronous online instruction between class meetings

Each semester, the class met in-person—either on campus or virtually; beginning In Fall 2020, in-person meetings were balanced with asynchronous online content delivery. In Fall, 2019, in-class meetings included a combination of mini-lectures, video clips illustrating specific techniques for instruction and assessment, small group applications/practice of specific approaches, and small group and whole class discussions. When I reconfigured the class in Fall 2020, I shifted all mini-lectures and video examples to the online, asynchronous dimension of the class, and used the in-class meetings for discussion only. During that Fall term, my first priority

was student well-being and connection to community, as we all were navigating the new territory and related stress of working in isolation. Our discussions were aimed at establishing and reinforcing peer-connections, discussing questions about the content presented online, and guided practice of specific approaches to instruction or assessment.
I retained this general format in Fall 2021, even though we resumed on-campus class meetings, though I divided the class into two groups instead of four and met with each group for 80 minutes instead of 40 minutes.

Asynchronous online instruction served as preparation for in-class meetings (whether they were virtual or on-campus). Each week, students completed a Weekly Response which captured their understandings of key content in the online instructional materials. These responses were submitted by noon the day before their in-class meetings, which allowed me time to view trends and tailor our in-class meetings to address common questions, or to use student ideas as a take-off point for conversation.

Student Demographics

Across the last three terms, the number of males enrolled were 3, 4, and 3, respectively, and except for 2 Asian students in Fall 2020 and 1 Black/African American student in Fall 2021, all students were White. These demographics reflect the demographics within our teacher education program and the teaching profession more broadly (Irwin et al., 2021). Most students were in their junior year, though each Fall there were anywhere from 1 to 3 students who were returning to school after having pursued other careers or interests. Most students self-reported that their own K-12 education occurred in predominantly White, middle-class, suburban schools.

Instructor Positionality

I began my career as a Special Education teacher in the late 1980's, in Buffalo, NY. I then became a Reading Specialist, working with students across the K-12 spectrum in clinical and school-based settings. My career in higher education began at the University of Minnesota, where I was tenured before moving into faculty positions at the University of New Hampshire, and then at the University of Cincinnati, where I've been since 2009. I teach and advise students in undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs of study.

I grew up in Buffalo, NY, where I attended racially diverse public schools. However, I had only two teachers of color during my K-12 education, one professor of color during my undergraduate years, and two professors of color across my master's and doctoral coursework combined. When I was hired at the University of Minnesota, I was the first person of color ever hired in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and, within the Critical Friends group, I am currently the only person of color.

My racialized experiences are many and varied. For example, as the only Black student in class, I have experienced being singled out to answer questions in ways that my peers were not and in work settings, employers have asked me to engage in work around diversity, equity, and

inclusion without asking, or holding accountable, my White colleagues to do the same. I have been called the n-word (as a child, a teen, and as an adult), I've also been told, "I didn't know you were Black," upon meeting someone I had only talked with on the phone, and I've been asked by complete strangers to explain my race/ethnicity (e.g., "What are you?").

When I was very young, my family moved to a first-ring, predominantly white suburb of Buffalo, New York, the city in which my father was born and raised. Its homes were newly constructed, with large backyards, and my father was happy to have the financial means to move us there. Within a few weeks of moving in, my parents began to receive threatening anonymous phone calls from individuals who told them to, "Get out," that we didn't belong there. Written threats soon followed. One day a small package arrived. Inside was a pig's ear.
I learned at an early age to do better than those around me in order to be considered equal to those around me, and also to be wary in a White world.

Self-Study Methods

My approach was guided by several who have written about practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Marshall, 2016) and self-study methodologies (Milner, 2007; Samaras & Freese, 2006). Data gathering extended beyond the specific terms during which the course was taught. In particular, because my ultimate aim was to more fully explain and enact culturally relevant pedagogy, it was impossible (and not at all desirable) for me to compartmentalize my inquiry. Further, since my inquiry is continuous, this article reflects a point in time—current as of this writing—in my ongoing journey.

Data Sources

I gathered a variety of data sources both during my teaching terms (e.g., lesson plans and artifacts) and outside of my teaching terms (e.g., Critical Friends meeting notes and memos). In this section, I provide a brief description of these data sources.

Lesson Plans, Artifacts, Notes, and Memos

Lesson plans were written in advance of each lesson using a self-designed template, which captured learning objectives, materials, specific class activities, and formative assessment opportunities related to learning objectives. Lesson artifacts were the materials constructed, either in advance or during the lesson itself, to facilitate learning. These artifacts included the PowerPoints and handouts shared during class and photos of the white board containing our class construction of ideas around particular topics. These artifacts, along with quick notes I made on my hard copy of each lesson plan, serve as a record of both planned and unplanned instruction. My notes captured what was said and done during lessons, which was not captured within the lesson plan. Each week, I spent about 20 minutes capturing researcher memos in a small journal. These memos included thoughts, ideas, feelings, and reflections sparked by my review of the week's lesson plans and instructional notes. Some memos took the form of short phrases or bullet points, and others took the form of complete sentences or paragraphs.

Critical Friends Meeting Notes and Memos

I made notes and memos during our monthly Critical Friends meetings, and I generally spent 15 to 30 minutes between meetings reviewing these notes and jotting down any additional ideas that came to me. Notes included ideas discussed in the meetings, specific comments made by group members that I wanted to remember, and mutually agreed upon plans for upcoming meetings. Memos included connections I saw between the content and/or process of our group meetings and my self-study, as well as questions that came to mind.

Self-Study Journal

I used a separate journal to write longer narratives about my teaching, and about myself in relation to my teaching. This journal included notes, quotes, and reflections from myriad sources including professional development experiences outside of the Critical Friends group (e.g., readings, workshops), teaching conversations I had with other colleagues, including Black faculty at UC and at other institutions, as well as pieces of creative writing drawn from a personal journal.

My creative writing included personal essays and poetry, much of which was prompted by the police brutality, hate crimes, and acts of domestic terrorism in 2020 and 2021. These creative pieces spoke intimately to the cumulative impact of racism on me, including its emotional impact. Several of my memos also referenced the *feelings* evoked from specific instructional interactions. The longer I engaged in this self-study, the more closely I paid attention to how I felt in various situations—physically, mentally, and emotionally. Narratives played a key role as both a source of data and a way of understanding my data, or as both a method of analysis and an additional object of analysis (Milner, 2007).

Coming to Understand My Data

The process of understanding my data reflected principles of narrative inquiry and interpretive analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). My quick, weekly researcher memos contributed to ongoing analysis, and became an additional source of data; thus, data analysis and data gathering worked in an integrated fashion, rather than as separate and distinct processes (Maxwell, 2013). I think of this ongoing analysis as a type of "micro-analysis," which worked in tandem with three distinct periods of "macro-analysis." During periods of macro-analysis, I spent several weeks reading through all the data gathered to date, looking for themes related to my guiding questions. I considered as themes the ideas that were apparent across more than one source of data, such as a journal entry that seemed to align with my actual classroom practice, as reflected in the instructional artifacts or field notes.

This process of cross-checking data sources was important in discerning how my feelings and experiences outside of teaching (e.g., historical and current life experiences) were interacting

with my actions within the classroom. This process helped me to see that in some cases my feelings did not reflect my practice. For example, I might have expressed regret over feelings of silence in my journal, only to find that my notes revealed having attended to the very thing I thought I had been silent about. I suspect my feelings in such cases were more tightly tied to past actions/inactions, and perhaps ongoing fears, but not actually tied to my current practice. Conversely, there were also instances where I expressed knowledge or feelings related to a topic of conversation in class—counter-narrative to the prevailing student narrative—and my instructional notes revealed that I had not said or done anything reflecting this knowledge or these feelings.

During periods of macro-analysis, I wrote longer analytic memos and I shared ideas from these memos in conversations with my Critical Friends. Their questions and comments, as well as connections they wondered about between my ideas and some of our readings, supported me in considering multiple interpretations of my data. Further, the practice of speaking about my own observations, feelings, and ideas supported my inquiry. Marshall (2016) notes that much like writing, speaking allows researchers to make sense of their data in new ways. I also paid attention to what my body told me about my ideas when I made them public, even within a community I trusted. Often, how I felt in my body (e.g., a knot in my stomach, increased heart rate, clenched muscles) was an indicator to investigate a particular idea more fully.

What I'm Learning through This Self-Study

I'll now turn to share 3 instructional moments that taught me something about the ways in which I (1) supported myself and my students in feeling seen and known and (2) supported myself and my students in being able to sit in relationship with a person or idea that challenged us, without needing to judge it, fix it, or dispel it. I refer to these moments as types of space, or openings, in which to feel seen and known, and be able to sit in relationship with people and ideas.

Mindfulness as Space: Two Minutes for the Mind and Checking-In

Each class began with Two Minutes for the Mind set to YouTube quiet music and video of a nature scene, with lights dim and students quiet. [1] This was a time to transition into class and be intentional with our presence. Afterward, we moved to our check-in. One word or phrase to describe how a person was feeling, always with the option to pass. Overwhelmed, anxious, stressed, behind, confused, tired were commonly shared sentiments, even before COVID. Students often expanded on their single word or phrase, extending their response to say, for example, "This is how I feel, and I feel this way because ____." or "I can't explain how I feel, because _____." But students rarely passed; they almost always said something. Additionally, I

[1] Students had the option to close their eyes or keep them open and could sit still or move quietly in their chairs. Some students let me know that keeping their bodies still made it difficult for them to quiet their minds. I am also aware that closing the eyes in a public space can trigger fear and anxiety in some individuals.

shared a word or phrase for how I was feeling, varying whether I shared at the beginning, the end, or somewhere in the middle of the larger group sharing. From two minutes and a check in, we learned how to sit together without speaking, and then we learned to sit together with each other's words, without judging, fixing, or dispelling.

I began this practice in conjunction with a faculty study group on mindfulness in Fall 2019 offered by the University's Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. Prior to that, I had always attempted a connection with the class by asking, for example, "How's everybody doing?" Invariably, a few students would respond, and those responses then shaped my relational engagement with the entire group. So, if I heard "overwhelmed," or "tired" from the few who responded, my response circled those ideas. What this did not do was allow for (1) hearing each person's individual voice and (2) considering a range of responses. Further, when we engaged in Two Minutes for the Mind before connecting with each other, we came to our interactions with each other differently. Two Minutes slowed things down and re-centered us so that we were better able to hold different feelings and experiences.

For my part, instead of making one response to the group based on the dominant responses, I began to differentiate my quick comments. For example: "Jason, I'm sorry to hear your laptop crashed. I can appreciate how stressful that is," or "Some of you have expressed feeling engaged today. What do you think is making you feel particularly engaged today?" I also learned to simply listen and receive, so my comment might simply be, "Thanks everyone for sharing how you're feeling today. I appreciate having a sense of how we're all doing."

Time as Space: Hold That Thought

Our topic was vocabulary instruction. Students worked in small groups with chart paper to share their understandings of the readings and then we worked together on a larger graphic organizer. One group asked "What about inner city kids? How can we raise them up to their peers in the suburbs with vocabulary?" The embedded deficit narrative didn't seem to connect to the synthesis we were building, which included heritage cultures and languages; nor did it seem to connect to a previous discussion in which I problematized sound bites like "Most children from low SES backgrounds. . . "children from language-deprived backgrounds" and "the vocabulary gap." So, what did this question mean? What did it have to say? And how to respond?

In that moment, these questions swirled in my head, and I felt myself getting nervous. I was upset that in spite of my efforts to the contrary, students defaulted to a deficit mindset, and I was holding the tension of knowing that even our textbook included deficit language requiring a "critical consciousness" (Ladson-Billings, 2021) that the textbook authors, leaders in my field, had not demonstrated. "Hold that Thought," I said as I wrote the question on the whiteboard. "This is an important question, in light of everything we're learning." (Lesson Notes & Whiteboard Photo, Fall 2019)

Twice, as we continued class, I pointed to specific portions of our graphic organizer and asked students to consider how we might think about the question using perspectives within the organizer. I also held the question myself, along with a short list of others, throughout the semester, as a reminder to circle back and encourage us to continue thinking about it, as new course content unfolded. Holding a thought over time helped us to stave off reactionary, conditioned ways of thinking, and to consider alternatives to the pervasive narratives we encounter on a regular basis. In addition to interrupting pervasive narratives about the haves and the have-nots with respect to linguistic resources, this practice interrupted the narrative of silence that too often invaded my teaching. Recurring themes in my instructional reflections centered on dissatisfaction in response when I felt my response to an unexpected teachable moment was inadequate, regretful, inaccurate, unclear, or missing (i.e., I was silent). Conceptually, Hold that Thought reflects relational communication as ongoing, with opportunities to go back and clarify, repair, and add voice where needed, both for me and for my students.

Of course, I didn't always step into this notion of Time as Space. There were still missed opportunities related to my lack of clarity, or my lack of courage, in the moment. But I stepped into these spaces more frequently over time. In Fall 2021, these "Hold that Thought" experiences began to shape my instructional planning, so I more often set the stage for them in advance. For example, when we established class norms for "talking together, learning together, and being together," during the first two weeks of class, I said:

> It would help me if we could agree to be willing to change our minds. We have a lot to learn in this class, and as we learn more our knowledge will change. I know it helps me when I'm able to have a conversation about what I think I know, with the understanding that this may change. Just because I say it out loud doesn't mean it's correct or it's the final thought, I'll have about it. I think this will be especially important when we talk about issues of race and culture, as they relate to literacy, because we each come with our own set of experiences, and we have so much to learn from each other. (Lesson Notes & Whiteboard Photo, 2021)

In some ways, I've shifted from thinking of the course in terms of a schedule of topics and assignments to thinking of it as a semester-long conversation.

Curiosity and Empathy as Space: George Floyd, White Privilege, and a Padlet

These questions were posed by students and posted on a Padlet[2] (Fall 2020) I created for students to anonymously share questions they were pondering about culture, race, language, and literacy, and their role as future teachers. In the instructions to students, I wrote: **"**As we read, think, question, explore, reflect, make mistakes, learn, and grow, let's be compassionate with each other and with ourselves, let's assume good will, and let's be willing to make relational repairs when needed." (Directions for Padlet Posts, Fall 2020)

- Besides choosing authors and texts with different backgrounds and cultures, how best can we create conversations about race and culture?
- How do you handle parents who feel you should not be talking about race or other cultures? How do you handle situations where you are the minority as the teacher and your students say that you will never understand what it is like to be _____?
- Where do you draw the line between accepting different forms of English in the classroom and teaching students the English they will need to pass standardized tests?

We used this Padlet as a conversation starter and we kept it going kind of like kindling for a fire, returning to it with new posts and playing with themes we were seeing. One of the entries read "White people are looked at as privileged, but not all are. Some have gone through things worse than other races. As a teacher, how do you teach that just because you're white doesn't mean you didn't have it hard? Or just because your ancestors had it hard means that you must hold that hurt or hatred also?" A student I'll call Rebecca commented with something like:

> When I see this question about white privilege, I think about the fact that white privilege isn't about one individual's experiences, but more about a whole group of people in history. And how white people, as a group have privileges that other people don't.

The conversation continued as we considered other questions. A few minutes later, Rebecca said, "I just want to say something else about the comment on white privilege, because whoever said that, I hope I didn't come across like that question was wrong or that this person's circumstances weren't hard." Later, a student commented that seeing the George Floyd video was a wake-up call. He hadn't realized how much he didn't know. (Lesson Notes, Fall 2020)

That particular class was interesting. When it was over, according to the clock, it didn't feel like it was over for several of the students. I invited those who wanted to stay and talk further to do so. Six students stayed, and we sat together in our shared virtual space. I asked whether there were additional thoughts or questions, and there were very few. I shared some of my own thoughts and once again asked for theirs. Again, very little was said. I wasn't quite sure how to

[2] Padlet™ is a digital canvas/bulletin board allowing multiple users to post text, photos, video, and other media in a shared space.

continue the conversation, or what the students wanted in that time. But we stayed there for a good length of time, occupying space together.

More recently, I've prompted students to consider anticipated dilemmas they will face and pose related questions in their Weekly Responses. Reading students' questions and concerns before class meetings allows me time to consider how we might enter conversation during upcoming classes. Referencing the ideas they bring up helps keep the conversation relevant to their concerns and helps us to discuss with one another rather than lecture one another. The goal is to stay with it and this practice of staying is one of relational resilience, which is important both to culturally relevant teaching in my own classroom and the capacity for the culturally relevant teaching my students will enact in their classrooms.

Reflections

As teachers, we invoke, evoke, and activate narratives in our classrooms. Milner (2007) argues that teachers, themselves, are the curriculum and posits, "if teachers are the curriculum, then what they teach, how they live, what they model, what they say, and what they focus on all have the potential to shape students' learning" (p. 587). This view of curriculum centers teachers and their practices, in real-time classroom spaces, as surely as it centers the syllabus, and pre-planned course content. Culturally relevant pedagogy requires us to teach with academic rigor, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. My goal is to enact CRP and equip my future teachers to do so as well; as Sulzer (2022) explains in his article within this volume I, "...imagine my college-level students who will one day teach, interact with, and imagine their middle and secondary ELA students" (p. 70).

In her essay, "Developing a Liberatory Consciousness," Barbara Love (2010) reminds us that a barrier to enacting more equitable, inclusive practices, and building more equitable, inclusive institutional systems, is the fact that we are products of our socialization into inequitable, stratified systems. Both for those who benefit from oppression and those who have been oppressed, we are often pulled into familiar patterns of thinking, speaking, and behaving that simply perpetuate existing systems. For people in historically marginalized groups, this "internalized oppression" (Tatum, 2010) can be a barrier to finding voice and taking action. In my case, those moments that "send adrenaline to the heart, dry out the tongue, and clog the lungs" (Rankine, 2014, p. 7) too often kept me quiet. As a response to my experiences as a Black woman in a White world, silence was safety.

Twenty-six years ago, Ladson-Billings (1996) wrote about her experiences with silence, as a Black professor teaching predominantly White undergraduates in a course focused on multicultural education. She considered students' silence and the impact of these silences on communication and learning within the class. Ladson-Billings found that her students' silences could mean several things, not the least of which was resistance; it could be used "as a weapon or a way to defy and deny the legitimacy of the teacher and/or the knowledge." (p. 82). I've had

experiences like this as well, where silence was coupled with gestures such as folded arms across the chest, aversion of eye contact, or steely stares at the mention of cultural and linguistic diversity. These experiences contributed to my own resistance to engaging conversations that felt unsafe or within which I felt unworthy. Importantly, Ladson-Billings also noted how students who did speak were sometimes silenced by their peers, leading her to realize that certain conversations are risky for students as well as the teacher.

According to Love (2010), there are four components to developing a liberatory consciousness: awareness, analysis, action, and accountability/ally-ship. *Awareness* involves "developing the capacity to notice, to give our attention to our daily lives, our language, our behaviors, and even our thoughts" (p. 602). My self-study was a journey of noticing. Using principles of mindfulness, I became attuned to my feelings as a pathway to change. Several scholars have discussed the ways in which the impact of generational racism lives within our bodies as well as our minds (Magee, 2019; Menakem, 2017). I discovered that how I felt in my body was more than something to ignore, get over, or be ashamed of; instead, it was a site of important exploration.

Throughout my self-study, and even in the process of writing this article, I have experienced moments of extreme vulnerability. It has been painful to actively engage with the impact of my racialized experiences on my practice, and it has been courageous to walk a path of change that is uncertain. How do students feel about the class, when I challenge their comfort? Will this negatively impact my course evaluations? Do students see me as the stereotypical "angry Black woman"? Or, do they tailor a response to placate me in the moment, without integrating our content into their understandings of effective practice as future teachers? These questions co-existed with questions like, "Why is this so hard? Why do I feel so vulnerable? Shouldn't I be stronger than this?"

During Critical Friends meetings, I very often preceded what I said with, "I'm not sure I really think this yet. . ." or "I reserve the right to change my mind about this, but. . ." These comments further reflected my feelings of profound vulnerability, within my stance of inquiry. Engaging with my Cincinnati Critical Friends community aligned well not only with the process of conducting a self-study but with the particular emphasis of my self-study. One of the things I realized is that it's difficult *to enact* feeling seen, heard, and valued without *tapping into experiences* of feeling seen, heard, and valued.

During Cincinnati Critical Friends meetings, we engaged intentional practices of seeing, hearing, and valuing each other. These practices very much supported the practices I sought to engage in my teaching. The group was a uniquely safe space for idea-sharing and risk-taking, with colleagues who shared the aim of disrupting status quo teaching practices. One could argue that the group itself, merely through its existence, disrupts the status quo. In the acclaimed book, *Teaching to Transgress,* hooks (1994) states "To engage in dialogue is one of the simplest ways we can begin as teachers, scholars, and critical thinkers to cross boundaries, the barriers that

may or may not be erected by race, gender, class, professional standing, and a host of other differences" (hooks, p. 130).

With respect to my practice, I found that specific types of space supported myself and my students in feeling seen and known, and to sit in relationship with challenging ideas. Walker (2020) describes "disruptive empathy" as a process of sitting with the complexities and the discomfort of "the toxic realities of our racialized histories" (p. 72) and suggests our capacity to do this is critical to shifting narratives of disconnection to those of connection. Courageous conversations reflect mindful authenticity; in these conversations "the speaker conveys confidence in the relationship as a space that can hold conflict; a space where people can explore their narratives of difference, identity, and possibility" (Walker, 2020, p. 87).

Together, my students and I cultivated practices around mindfulness, time, curiosity, and empathy that opened relational space in support of culturally relevant pedagogy. This relational space was able to hold deep, courageous conversations about race and social justice while also holding the people who made themselves vulnerable to these conversations. Further, the self-study process allowed me to connect more fully with, and to center, my own truth as a Black woman educator and scholar. I now occupy the spaces of my classroom with greater authenticity. While I have always had the support and encouragement of other Black faculty, I now also have my Cincinnati Critical Friends group as allies and partners. There is tremendous capacity in knowing I am not alone.

In Spring 2021, I wrote the following on the pages of my personal journal.

Hope Like Honey

I want to be with people
Dripping hope like honey
Leaving it in our wakes
Imprinting it on everyone we touch
Sweet sticky hope

I want to be with people
Opening space like a canyon
Round wide space
Expectant, full of possibility
A place to breathe

I want to be with people
Rising optimistic
From the COVID fallows
And the ashes of George Floyd
Expecting more, knowing more, being more

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Start Where We Are

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Abstract: This self-study describes the impact of shifting the focus of my pedagogy with first-year undergraduate teacher education students. Through increasing explicitness and describing my intent, I aimed to make students aware of the narratives that are alternatives to their earlier experiences. Placement in an inner-city elementary school provided the opportunity to experience first-hand the educational lives of their students. The impact of this opportunity on me, my undergraduates, and my pedagogy are discussed.

Keywords:

The purpose of this paper is to tell the story of my efforts to explicitly challenge students with an alternative narrative related to teaching young inner-urban children. As we continue to learn together, we are all expanding in the experiences of children of color. In this paper, I explore how I increased explicitness about the intent of the course. Through content analysis of thick descriptions and quantitative analysis of data from course evaluations and surveys, I looked at the impact of increased explicitness. Preliminary findings show subtle changes in language and attitudes in terms of equity and interactions with children.

> "I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform. I believe that all reforms which rest simply upon the enactment of law, or the threatening of certain penalties, or upon changes in mechanical or outward arrangements, are transitory and futile." (Dewey, 1897)

A long time ago Dewey described the role of change in education. As an undergraduate, I read his creed, and it described what I wanted to do. I need to be upfront and say that this is a story of trying to find my stride in an essential class. This class could (maybe) set students on a path of questioning their own biases or beliefs, have no effect, or make them more intolerant.

Ladson Billings echoes Dewey, calling for teachers and students "to thoroughly examine how they develop their sense of cultural knowing and what they deem to be social and cultural truths about themselves and others" (2000, p. 257). Though the content of this course emphasizes equity and culturally relevant practices, content is not enough. No matter how good the curriculum content is, the curriculum cannot teach itself. …teachers will have to exemplify the aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy" (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 76). Students in teacher education, however, may not have experienced educational opportunities and experiences with others who do not look like them, making self-examination a challenge. As the teacher, I must do my best to model self-examination and culturally responsive pedagogy. Pushing the students' self-evaluation may result in a range of responses from passive resistance to fervent acceptance.

Gorski (2009) contends cognitive dissonance can be an effective tool in beginning student change in understanding social justice. He suggests that cognitive dissonance may be the "moment of truth" (p. 54) at which students are grappling with added information that contradicts old understandings. This, I believe, is the sense of "grappling." We are all brought up in settings, not within our control, and begin class with a system of beliefs about race, racism, and privilege. Our students, as young adults, have rarely had these beliefs challenged, and when their beliefs are challenged, the instructor rarely indicates that this is purposeful and part of the intent of the class. Being a student in a class in which the teacher explicitly expresses content to challenge them with an alternative narrative encourages cognitive dissonance as a means of developing new understandings.

Setting the Stage

One place in which alternative narratives can be presented is through early coursework. The introduction to exceptionalities class is a requirement of all four initial teacher licensure programs. Students in the school of education take this course in their first year. Students in communication disorders, art education, and music education take the course as juniors or seniors and are advised into different sections. In the section for the school of education students, there were 35 to 60 students each semester. In addition, the education students are provided information on topics related to the eligibility and intervention with students with disabilities, culturally sustaining pedagogy, high leverage practices, and the intersectionality of race or ethnicity and disability. Before the pandemic, students spent two 90-minute sessions a week working with second and third graders at a high needs inner-city school, in which almost all students were African American.

One constant of the students has been that, for the most part, they were white females, except for two funded efforts (one in the early '90s for career changers and the second in the early 2000s to assist paraprofessionals with bachelors' degrees obtain special education licensure). Our candidates take this course in the year following high school. They have also, at times, been told to be "colorblind", that everyone is equal, or race does not matter, or that laws are in place to protect students of color.

The partner school for this study serves preschool through 6th-grade students in three struggling neighborhoods. The school was named after a social activist responsible for organizing the effort to keep the school in the neighborhood. The school is a hub for community services, coordinating health, safety, and social services as well as education. Mental health services for children are provided on-site. Most of the students served by the school reside in the city's large residential communities managed by the county

housing authority. Four hundred sixty-eight housing units are in the cluster that shares a name with the neighborhood. Fifty-three percent of the units include children, and though cohabitation is high, 7.8 percent include married adults. All students receive free breakfast and free lunch, and through a community-based program, dinner. For the weekends "care bags" include items such as peanut butter, mac and cheese, crackers, and granola bars. Rather than balanced meals, these bags are provided to stave off hunger rather than present meals. A church provides hot meals on specific Sundays of the month.

Stage 1 – Recognizing the problem with my efforts

During fall 2017, thanks to our learning community, I began to realize that I was taking an ineffective tack with my students. I presented materials, engaged them in discussion, and had them write reflections. I struggled with understanding their culture (one quite different than the one in which I grew up) and what I saw as their superficial efforts. As a program, we are committed to valuing a driven agenda related to what is, at times, a hidden curriculum. Freire (2020) would problematize my stance by asking "Whose agenda?" I realized I was telling them how I wanted them to think, providing propaganda to support my claims. I was doing what I was preaching as a teacher: take your students where they are and bring them along step by step. I needed to tell them what I was doing and what I wanted to happen. Or, as we teachers say, start by identifying the goal for the students. I changed my expectations to have them consider diverse ways of thinking. And I explicitly told them my process.

Describing my intent put words to my stance. Jaffe (2009, p. 2333) states that stance is "taking a position with respect to the form or content of the utterance of the interlocutor". Poggi, D'Errico, and Leone (2012) describe pedagogical stance as that taken by the teacher to fulfill his/her/their goals as a teacher and the goals linked to his/her/their professional role. Labosky (1980) also describes the need of candidates to interact with providing experiences to students so that they can question their own values and assumptions.

Loughran (2007) described self-study in a way that provides the context for my efforts. He contends that self-study is embedded in the desire to better align the teacher's intent with teaching actions. As I reviewed the evidence from my students, I recognized the need to be more explicit with my intents. If I am going to align my actions with my intent, I need to explicitly describe my intent.

Beginning Spring 2020, I emailed each student a statement of my intent prior to the first day of class:

> "One of the most important aspects of my professional development is working with a group of faculty members. We are studying our teaching. My self-study research question is still emerging, but I know it will be about challenging you all with an alternative

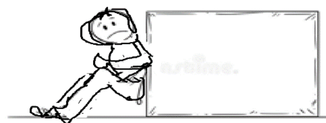
narrative about education, teaching, equity, and recognizing the value of every single child in your classroom.

What is this alternative narrative "stuff"? Lawler (2002, p. 242) describes a narrative as an interpretative device through which people present themselves, both to themselves and to others." Schmid (2016) says it more simply: a series of stories that come from the heart and go to the hearts. The alternative narrative for this class is that each of us must continually examine our own beliefs and confront our unintentional biases related to diversity. We are working to be not just "unracist" or "unlearning racism" – we will be working on being anti-racist. We are looking toward culturally sustaining pedagogy, as Django Paris says, that "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 93). Nope, not multicultural. Equity. No taco nights. No Black History Month. No women's history month. Everyone has a right to equity and to be who he/she/they are. Every day.

Wow. But we are all in this together. As Alex Schmid says, "The say-do gap must be closed, otherwise credibility and trust will evaporate." You hold me accountable for what I say and do, and I'll hold you accountable. Thank you for starting on this challenging work."

Mid-semester I sent out a survey to assess the reaction to the intent. I made responding to this survey worth two points to encourage responding, and all thirty-seven students did. All thirty-seven students claimed to have read it (they received points for responding). Of these, 35% selected that the class "made me think more about culture and race", and 27% selected "made me think about my biases and about culture and race". I sometimes pull out my virtual soap box and deliver what I refer to as diatribes, and 9O% indicate that these orations made them think – 8% indicated that they had not noticed any diatribes, which may be positive or negative.

This assessment of my explicitness provided me with impetus to extend the alternative narratives. I remained concerned that I was coercing students to agree, at least superficially, with what I was saying. This acquiescence was apparent in assessments conducted program-wide for accreditation; the students took the teacher-pleasing route of celebrating diversity while continuing to struggle with the course content. I was not sure whether they were telling me what I wanted to hear or if they had been socialized to not mention these issues.



Stage 2 – Presenting challenges

Candidates read my intent statement, and a little over a third indicated that the intent and class made them think more about culture and race. None of the students identified what I referred to as my "diatribes." I was hoping they would recognize that I was strident about the teacher's role in social change. All indicated that these contentions made them think, but sadly there were students that didn't notice my fervor. I needed to continue to design ways to present challenges and clarify both my stance and intent.

In Spring 2019, I required the thirty-seven students to write and analyze four "thick descriptions" of their experiences in the tutoring field experience. Denzin (1989) describes a thick description as going beyond facts and appearance. Throughout the school-based work, the university students wrote thick descriptions, beginning with their first visit to the neighborhood and weekly through the field experience. Each week, students were provided prompts, such as "describe your first view of the school as the bus pulled into the parking lot". These descriptions resulted in detail, feelings, and the context of people interacting with each other. At the end of the semester, students were given prompts to write a response that required them to analyze their thick descriptions across the semester, four of the students responded in ways that did not address the prompts (e.g., could the class be at a different time, I don't like riding on busses, I'm glad we didn't have a textbook). Of the others, the major themes, example responses, and number of responses are included in Table 1.

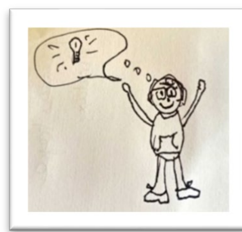
Table 1

Student Weekly Reflection Responses

Theme	Example	Frequency
Positive impact	This experience impacted me in a very positive way.	16
Learn or practice	It helped me use tools and acquire skills for the job I want in the future at a much younger age than I expected.	2
Changed outlook of Teaching in Inner City	Helping teach these students had a strong impact on my outlook of teaching in the inner city.	4
Diversity as a new experience	Growing up, I was not in an environment with any diversity. At this school, there was loads of it, and I truly enjoyed getting to meet and bond with these students.	7
Amount of Impact	I didn't think that I was going to impact them as much as they impacted me, but, over time, it was obvious that we were all being greatly impacted by this experience.	3
Discipline	There were times where I had to be stern and strict with the students when they were being disruptive and would not get anything done. At first, I didn't know how to approach it, but by the end I could change my tone with them, and they would respect me for it.	14
Connecting	I was able to talk about non-school topics with them, but I would also always be able to get them back on topic.	20
Depending on the day	My classroom had a lot of behavioral issues, so somedays they could be sweet and on task and other days it's like they were a completely different person.	6

Confirm wish to be a teacher	[name of school] definitely confirmed my dream of wanting to become a teacher.	11
Teaching Skills	It taught me ways to teach students that learn better visually and hands on, like using Velcro boards or tracing worksheets. Just being able to observe ways that the teachers in that classroom interacted and taught the students showed me what to do and not to do with my future students.	21
Change major	This experience has led me to wonder if teaching really is for me. I'm really thinking about switching majors and going into [another college], but I will then be an entire year behind if I do so. I met with a specialist and found out that the major into [another college] that I want to go into only lets students transfer in the fall.	2
Fun	I think that helped us to have a very fun relationship.	2

After all the talk about race, social justice, and institutionalize racism, no one discussed that they were any different than the students they were teaching. The words race and culture appeared in no descriptions, though it is obvious if you walk the halls of the school. Though the students recognized poverty, these students didn't recognize race and culture. Throughout the class I made comments about the "Black children's funds of knowledge and cultural differences (kinship ties, for example) the students did not refer to race. My colleague (Yvette Pennington) a Black professor and I planned an activity to further assess this issue. We asked the students, "what do you see when you see Annie" and "What do you see when you see Dr. P." None of the students mentioned that one of us is white and the other is Black.



Stage 3 – A new endeavor

Though we were moving toward my goal with recognition of changes in how they felt about teaching in the inner city, I recognized that there seemed to be discomfort in talking about race and racism. With no students talking about race and culture, I had to find another way to assess what they were thinking.

Hoping for another way for students to discuss the impact of the class, at the end of the final, I asked students to describe their three takeaways. These were required responses that included points for completion. The students weren't graded on the content.

The results of the "takeaway data" were more encouraging. A summary of these data is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Student Final Reflections

Theme	Examples	Frequency
Dispositions, traits of good teachers	• The importance of showing up • Patience • Every student learns differently • Not a friend, a teacher 2 • Respect for people with disabilities • Teaching is relationships • Everyone needs PD (Professional Development) • Flexibility, keeping cool	25
Teaching strategies	• Getting and keeping attention is hard • Making the students enjoy the learning • Speak clearly • Responded best when instruction was clear • Rules and routines are necessary • It's okay to make mistakes • UDL (Universal Design for Learning), Adaptations	31
Racial and Cultural issues	• Never thought about microaggressions • The developmental context matters • Trauma informed teaching • TED Talks • The significance of culturally sustaining teaching • Special Education Law and RTI and overidentification • Teaching in the inner city is different	30

Either the changes made to this course (additional TED talks, genial.ly presentations for content, increased informal conversations about the content of the course, or the pandemic, increased candidate's attention to the cultural/racial issues of the class. Yet this class was unique. It was a full semester during the remote classes period. The tutoring was via google.meet and was not always as smooth as it could be. The summer class was also an outlier; I had several audiology students, international students, and (extraordinarily) several undergraduate engineering students. My plans for the fall semester needed to start afresh. I needed to recognize that these students are still learners, and rapid change will not occur.

Stage 4 – Becoming a techie

To keep my Ohio teaching license, I had to take six credits of classes every five years. Enter Sarah Schroeder and her Professional Certificate MS Word and Genial.ly Educator classes, which helped me incorporate these applications into the class. All our students in teacher education have some form of device, so rather than letting these devices sit there, I planned much greater interaction that I hope will increase active learning. As teacher educators, at times we preach action yet lecture. These activities were gleaned from sources committed to equity, including the Center for Antiracist Education (https://antiracistfuture.org), the Equity and Literacy Institute (www.equityliteracy.org), and The Knotted Line (www. Commonsense.org). "Break into groups and discuss," in my experience, has resulted in groans. Talking over a PowerPoint often precipitated texting and social media.

Online tools support presenting material in ways that prompt student attention. Rather than a slide show about Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), a key aspect of special education, a walk through the Ohio form with interactive points associated with a worksheet encourages students to examine aspects of the IEP (Individualized Education Programs) in a way that requires active engagement. Reviewing an interactive game (Jeopardy) increases attention, and – gasp! – excitement in the classroom. Through engaging these tools, I wanted to provide students with examples of multiple ways of expression, representation, and engagement.

With the end goal nudging student toward examining their biases and belief systems rather than "unlearning racism" and employing alternative ways to present alternative narratives, I began Fall 2021 renewed and hopeful.

Intentional, explicit, and patient

This self-study will continue as long as I teach this class. As I continue this journal, I plan to continue to explore these themes:

- To paraphrase Milner (2020), I plan to increase the walk to match the talk. My emphasis will move away from "fixing" or "unlearning" my students' biases and beliefs. I will continue to shift to "starting where they are but not staying there." Presenting alternative narratives should be just that, presenting alternatives for their consideration.
- I plan to evaluate the impact of using various technological tools to increase students' active engagement. Pear deck, a program requiring responses within a PowerPoint, will encourage students to respond to the content during class; interactive infographics will encourage independent learning. Digital exit slips will keep me aware of students' thinking.
- I will be explicit about my goals for the students in the class. This is another "walk the talk," making sure I tell the students my goals for them and how I will go about addressing them. I will again send out my stance to "warn" the students but will also require what I am calling a "prologue" to help them start with the tenor of the class.

- I plan to be "Hanging on to my hat because it's going to be a bumpy ride." For years Yvette Pennington has been telling me to let the students develop. I am striving to be patient, not my strong point, to encourage growth rather than sea change.
- Steve Kroeger is always ready to remind me about Paulo Freire. With his prodding I have reflected on my class and will continue to ask the question, "Is this as much propaganda as the great, white, middle-class America spreads?"

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Tesseract as Becoming: A Rhizomatic Self-Study about Engaging Future English Language Arts Teachers in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

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Abstract: Animated in poststructuralist thought, this rhizomatic self-study is an entanglement with the political, critical, and creative work of becoming. The writing is an act of experimentation[1]. The purpose is to pursue insights about engaging future English language arts teachers in culturally relevant pedagogy. This inquiry is situated in a predominately White institution, written by a White teacher educator, and guided by data from five years of collaboration with the Cincinnati Critical Friends group. Themes include positionality, dilemmas, memory, movement, Whiteness, dimensionality, and youth imaginaries. Driven by the post qualitative impulse toward immanence, this study reaches toward unexplored territories through the image of the tesseract, a four-dimensional shape impossible to see in our world.

[1] A Note to the Reader in Times New Roman: This rhizomatic self-study required experimentation—from the first sentence to the last and back again. The goal was to use the writing process, not as a way to move to a finished product, but as a way to move with ideas that are inherently unfinishable. In the following pages, I have attempted to honor culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) as a political project of imagination and action. That required experimentation in finding new habits of mind for myself and for dislodging things I thought I knew; and because thinking and writing are inextricably linked, that meant going outside of what some may consider "conventional" for academic writing. You'll see that I used the concepts of "space" and "time" in literal and literary ways; I used symbols like → ← = in place of words; I used asterisks on pronouns until around the fourth page or so; and more. This experimentation often goes on without explanation in the main body of the text. And many of the rhythms of academic writing—concise definitions, clear takeaways, enumerated findings—are sometimes accented differently, sometimes played on unfamiliar surfaces, and sometimes replaced with silence. I decided to write to you in Times New Roman to provide some context for this experimental writing style and also to hold myself to what Wilson (2008) refers to as a standard of relational accountability to the reader. My hope is that you see this message as a welcome invitation, and I hope we meet at the place of imagination and action on the following pages, which switch to Calibri. A switch in font is a switch in mindset → a way for us* to enter into a becoming = emphasis on the *-ing…*

…so therefore, there is no beginning or ending, just intensities of the middle…an ellipsis, for a start, is a rule-breaking intensity for academic writing → intensities as border zone phenomena revealing of compartments, segmentarity, rules. We* are writing with the DeleuzoGuattarian impulse of the rhizome: meaning-making-making-meaning in the wilds of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, and rupture (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 7-9). Rhizomes = intensities of transformation, creation, movement, speed, escape = an ontological orientation toward immanence. Inspired by Due's (2007) description, immanence is not about lived experience, but experience as it unfolds into new territories. Rhizomatic-experience. Beyond-experience. Becoming-experience.

I* am a White teacher educator working in a predominately White institution. In this context, I* work with students who are pursuing initial licensure to become middle and high school English language arts (ELA) teachers in culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse classrooms. I* collaborate with faculty colleagues in the political project of anti-racism, equity, and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This writing is a rhizomatic self-study (Barak et al., 2020) that describes—and continues—these efforts: "A rhizomatic self-study constitutes an invitation to a generative and challenging journey into undiscovered territories. It offers different angles of observation and new ways to understand situations" (Barak et al., 2020, p. 642). The goal is orientated to the *–ing*: invit*ing*, generat*ing*, find*ing*, journey*ing,* becom*ing*.

In other words, in this approach (this not-methodology),…

We* are engaging what Hein (2019) calls "fully immanent qualitative inquiry" through "immanent writing" (p. 84). Immanent inquiry/writing is an enterprise "involv[ing] creation, the establishment of a line of flight—writing against any stabilizing sense of identity and against other categories and boundaries that are dictated by modernist writing" (Hein, 2019, p. 87). For example, I* am not a stable narrator reporting on a rhizomatic self-study (Barak et al., 2020) describing my* attempts as a White teacher educator to engage future ELA teachers in culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) in the hopes that you* will arrive at what other styles of inquiry call "findings." Yes, this captures something about the layering of my* positionality + topic + process, but no, this is not a report. It is not an account of a lived experience located at a particular moment.

Animated in poststructuralist thought (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), this self-study is a post qualitative entanglement with the political, critical, and creative work of becoming. Post qualitative inquiry is immanent—is itself a becoming. Explained by St. Pierre (2019), this means that "[it] does not exist prior to its arrival; it must be created, invented anew each time" (p. 9). Therefore, this project has been written and re-written, mapped out and crumpled up, territorialized and deterritorialized—always on the move because it's not anchored to a moment, a class session, a semester, a year, or even a collection of years. Representing my* experience, or anyone else's, is not the force directing the writing. Writing as experimenting: a practice of the inquiry: writing as *seeking.* According to St. Pierre (2021), post qualitative inquiry reorganizes inquiry around "the new"—as having a goal separate from representation:

> The robust critique of representation in poststructuralism is crucial in post qualitative inquiry because so much effort in preexisting social science research methodologies focuses on how to represent the real, authentic lived experiences of human beings. Representation is not the goal of post qualitative inquiry. Its goal is, instead, experimentation and the creation of the new. (p. 6)

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notion of the rhizome captures this sense of experimentation and creation of the new: "The rhizome is an antigenealogy. It is short-term memory, or antimemory. The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots" (p. 21). A rhizome is a root that grows in all directions → wild energy cutting across borderlines. Rhizomatic visualizations[2] strike a resonant mindset, which, as Honan and Sellers (2006) observe, is a necessity: "[O]ne cannot think rhizomatically without writing rhizomatically" (p. 8). Rhizomes do not sit still, at least not for long. For that reason, this self-study is very manuscript-resistant. It exists here, taking the form of static words on a page, but it doesn't want to. This self-study is much more comfortable in states of activity: recording memos after a class session; discussing dilemmas with colleagues in meetings, over email, and in the hallway; troubleshooting, reflecting, and pausing in moments of technological, communicational, or personal failure; riding the energies of the moments in class sessions that seem to go well; finding wisdom in scholarship, songs, novels, poems, and artwork when they don't.

This manuscript-resistant issue we're* experiencing resonates with Samaras and Freese's (2006) characterization of self-study as situated inquiry driving change that is "personal, immediate, and compelling" (p. 40), a never-ending process that is just as multifaceted as it is paradoxical, complicating boundaries of individual/collective, personal/interpersonal, and public/private through its "organic nature" (p. 53) of pursuing knowledge. Pursuing in contrast to finding: as a White scholar working with culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), I do not want to find anything. White scholars have found too much that was not worth finding (see Tuck & Yang, 2014). Instead, I want to take up *an ideal of pursuit* through post qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2019), immanent writing (Hein, 2019), and rhizomatic self-study (Barak et al., 2020). I want to refine, change, evolve what I'm doing in my courses for future ELA teachers with the assumption that what I'm doing is not enough, not immanent enough.

[2] A rhizomatic visualization: Visualize culturally relevant pedagogy as a map. Visualize yourself* as a map. Visualize your* courses as a map. Put them all on top of each other and shine a bright flashlight through them. Layers of maps. Territories on top of territories. Through the bright light, observe the overlays, the connections between topographical features of culturally relevant pedagogy, the self, and course design; seek out the underground corridors, waterways, forested areas, towns, roads, skies, all the places to live and explore → *live and explore* contrasted with the manufacturing of "singular definitions," "isolated rubrics," or what Freire (1970) called "anti-dialogic" pedagogy. Imagine positionality / race / language / learning / culture / teaching / criticality / as maps in motion. Live and explore the maps, their interrelations and transformations.

If there is a principle to this rhizomatic self-study, it might be this: move through dimensions, beyond dimensions; do better. Possibilities for action are inhibited by the dimensions in which I* inhabit. And refinement or change or evolution might not even be useful metaphors. Take a different metaphor, a different image, starting point: assume the presence of another dimension. That is the post structuralist impulse (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Hein, 2019; St. Pierre, 2021) of the current inquiry. This is what we* are up to.

Dimensions Everywhere

Placing asterisks by I, you*, and we* is meant to acknowledge the interpersonal webbing of textual meaning making. The asterisks nod to what Rosenblatt (1978; 2018) called the transactional theory of reading and writing. The transactional theory complicates the strict separation of the “I” writing these words as distinct from the “you” reading them. “I” authored the words, but so did “you,” in a sense, and they only became meaningful when “you” did. In a curious way, the emergence of meaning from texts is necessarily a “we” endeavor. Unstable. Beautiful. Sublime. Working across the dimensions of space and time.

A passage from Ruth Ozeki’s (2013) novel *A Tale for the Time Being* furthers the idea. A diary, written by a teenager in Japan named Nao and hidden away in a Hello Kitty lunchbox, is lost to the ocean during a tsunami but washes ashore in Washington state. A middle age English-speaking couple sets out to translate the Nao’s diary entries, which are written in Japanese:

> My name is Nao, and I am a time being […] A time being is someone who lives in time, and that means you, and me, and everyone one of us who is, or was, or ever will be. As for me, right now I am sitting in a French maid café in Akiba Electricity Town, listening to a sad chanson that is playing sometime in your past, which is also my present, writing this and wondering about you, somewhere in my future. (pp. 3-4)

Time and space proliferate in this passage: the time dimension of written language that, when read, inherently blends pasts, presents, and futures of the writer and reader. At the time of the writing, Nao is a teenager, but at the time of the reading, she is not; and the middle-aged couple was not quite so middle age at the time of the writing, but at the time of the reading, they imagine a past Nao, a teenager Nao, and also remember themselves in the past when the tsunami hit Japan on March 11, 2011. And beyond the time dimension are complex interplays of space: Nao wrote the words in a type of space – a French maid café – embedded in another space – Akiba Electricity Town – listening to music, which are vibrations of air in space – writing a diary in Japanese in Japan – a language space and country space – that then traverses an ocean – a space of great depth – and washes up in Washington state to an English-speaking couple – another country space and language space, and the doubling of Nao’s thoughts: Nao’s words on the page traversing all this way to the couple who reads them, one headspace moving into two

headspaces. Up/down, forward/backward, left/right, past/present/future, personal space, interpersonal space, national space, social space → a proliferation of times and spaces.

Likewise, this rhizomatic self-study moves across multiple times and spaces. None of the words in this article were produced in a vacuum by the mind of one person at one time but are instead emergent from dialogue, interactions, reactions, and ideas braided together across five years of collaborating with the Cincinnati Critical Friends, a grassroots community of inquiry committed to culturally relevant pedagogy. The writing represents a distribution of (my)selves and many interactions with colleagues across time and space, a mix of territories and blurring of boundaries that Barak et al. (2020) call "an edge environment" (p. 642).

The interplay of space and time across self/colleagues is inextricable from the inquiry. In this respect, the term "self-study" is something of a misnomer, as the interplay of collaboration and critical friendship are integral, even as the weights assigned to "collaboration," "critical friendship," "self," and "study" vary across time and space, a noted phenomenon for scholars who do the practice (Bullock, 2020; Samaras & Freese, 2006). For this rhizomatic self-study, collaboration involved extended discussions through in-person meetings in conference rooms or at coffee shops with the Cincinnati Critical Friends group; visits to each other's classrooms; and since March of 2020, meetings and presentations via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and WebEx. These meetings have occurred about once a month, more when we need to prepare for a presentation, or we have a pressing issue. Critical friendship has taken the form of presenting teaching dilemmas to each other with a critical friends protocol involving one member of the group sharing a dilemma, various shifts in speaking and listening roles as the group works through the dilemma, and a timekeeper. Consistent with Bullock's (2020) description of self-study as *stingere*, an athlete's sense of flow in responding to "an interplay between constraint and invitation" (p. 247), the Cincinnati Critical Friends group provided a space for creative flow: pressures of invitation and constraint, movement and exploration, in working toward action, change, and the deepening of teaching practices with culturally relevant pedagogy.

Writing as Movement → Pursuit

Marshall (2016), drawing on Turner-Vesselago (2013) and Goldberg (1991), encourages unlearning academic writing, particularly the tendency of academic writing to "overly privilege propositional knowing" (p. 73). Writing methods must be suited to the inquiry; therefore, if the style of inquiry is post qualitative (St. Pierre, 2019; 2021) and the writing is immanent (Hein, 2019), then writing sessions themselves must be occasions of invention—of movement, of pursuit. Below is a playful characterization of what writing-as-invention looked like in this self-study. Overall, this rhizomatic self-study (Barak et al., 2020) might be characterized as a chaotic←→systematic way of deriving insight from experience and sharing such insight in a public venue in the form of immanent writing, where "chaotic←→systematic" denotes the inside-out spatio-temporal nature of this approach—AKA this approach is not just *over there* where it should be, as a data distillation process to shape what other styles of inquiry call findings/discussion/implications, but *all around*, from the first sentence of this writing to the last.

This rhizomatic self-study would not become a manuscript until I used the writing process as a resource to invent everything, including the writing process itself. I applied the following list of 12 steps, therefore, not only to the sections that follow but all of the preceding sections as well, even to the 12 steps themselves:

1. Remind yourself—in the mirror, on the way to work, while typing—of the purpose of post qualitative inquiry: that representation and propositional knowing has its time and place, and that time and place is not in this writing.
2. Study poststructuralism. For example, read Deleuze and Guattari (1987) into a voice recorder. Listen to the recordings at various points of the day, while walking or driving, to encourage rhizomatic resonances with various surroundings. Read poststructuralism as philosophy + poetry to open possibilities for creative leaping.
3. Perform rhizomatic visualizations. Live and explore these visualizations. Resist impulses of propositional knowing. Avoid knowing anything.
4. Roll dice.
5. Write for the number of Pomodoros (25-minute writing sessions) indicated by the dice. Use a word, phrase, or concept found in memos from class sessions, dialogue with colleagues, and critical friends sessions as a prompt. Write from a state of openness, spaciousness, and weightlessness. Write rhizomatically. Writing as meditation, meditation as writing: the two activities should merge. If the writing does not feel meditative, stop. Try again later.
6. Also stop if you know too well how a particular sentence will end. When beginning a sentence, do not anticipate where it's going or what form it may take grammatically – or even if it will be a sentence. Perhaps it will be a phrase, or a word, or maybe even a bird or a flower, planet, or vibration.
7. Ignore all traditional boundaries—all forms of text, linguistic and otherwise, should be considered simultaneously: scholarship, novels, novellas, short stories, aphorisms, songs, poems, art, emails, collegial conversation, personal biography, impressions, senses in the body, silences, and so on.
8. Repeat steps 4 through 7 over the course of many weeks. Do not extend past "many weeks." You have deadlines. The point is to write something to share, not to keep writing forever and ever.
9. Attempt to organize the writings from previous steps into a manuscript. Begin drafting. When a particular draft goes beyond the word count requirement or gets too convoluted to share with others, thank it. Put it away. Begin again.
10. Violate any of the steps above when necessary.
11. Make new steps when necessary.
12. Maintain suspicion of what's necessary and what's not.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy + Dimensionality

One practice of this rhizomatic self-study involved an ongoing expansion of my understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) through reading and study. As described by Ladson-Billings (1995), CRP involves three propositions: “(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (p. 160). Expanding my understanding has involved attending to dimensionality: the times and spaces of each proposition. For example, drawing on Haberman (1991), Ladson-Billings (2011) describes how academic success is often sacrificed for students of color by teachers, predominately White, making “a deal” for peace:

> This deal is particularly apparent among Black male students and involves teachers and students negotiating the following deal: ‘You don’t require any work from me and I won’t disrupt your class.’ We see that this particular deal has been struck every time we walk into classrooms and see Black male students sitting in the back with their heads down on their desks. They do not do any work or contribute to the intellectual activity of the classroom but they are keeping their end of the bargain. The teachers appreciate their ‘integrity’ and keep their end of the bargain by failing to include them in the learning environment or demanding any academic work from them. (pp. 12-13)

Throughout this description, the academic success is spatialized in the classroom – the deal often operates in the in-between racial space of White teachers and Black male students – Black males relegated to a marginal space in the back of the classroom, head down to the floor space – all this in contrast to the space of intellectual activity, the space of the learning environment – space delineates types of activity, learning, access to academic success – not to mention gender spaces in play – spaces of discipline and power – and “deal” evokes the time-is-money metaphor that organizes so much space and time in the U.S., a capitalism space – and in this description, Ladson-Billings is writing in 2011, drawing on Haberman from 1991, and the description that still holds force at the time of this writing, 2022. Time and space dimensions proliferate in the CRP proposition of academic success. How do I engage students in the dimensionality of academic success? Cultural competence? Critical consciousness? How do I continue to engage this dimensionality to further my own understanding as a White teacher educator—from the times and spaces I inhabit? What important textures come to the surface of these spatio-temporal dimensions when considering middle and secondary English language arts classes?

My goal is to achieve a mixture of teaching about CRP, i.e., communicating what it is; teaching with CRP in terms of designing assignments, activities, and discussions that unpack the dimensionality of the propositions; and teaching through CRP by thinking about how I teach, interact with, and imagine my college-level students who will one day teach, interact with, and imagine their middle and secondary ELA students. I envision CRP as a spatio-temporal fabric with

a warp and weft, i.e., CRP weaves throughout culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017); reality pedagogy (Emdin, 2016); culturally responsive (Gay, 2010), critical (Freire, 1970) and abolitionist (Love, 2019) pedagogies; a pedagogy of linguistic justice (Baker-Bell, 2020) and culturally and historically responsive literacy (Muhammad, 2020) (See Appendix). Throughout this scholarship is a commitment to educational equity in a racialized world where schools have often been, and continue to be, hostile spaces for students of color.

Memories of Movement and Dimensionality: Memories of the Future

One exercise of this rhizomatic self-study was to explore memories: to experiment with them, find something new. The memories below were written in temporal order and then reshuffled to detach them from a sense of narrative sequence. These memories do not add up to a cohesive story arc held together by causes and effects with a beginning, middle, and end. Each subsection of memories is the exact same size in truth but not in word count. The longest subsection appears first, followed by shorter ones in order to press toward an escape. Dimensions are everywhere in them: front/back, left/right, up/down, past/present/future, social spaces, personal spaces, interpersonal spaces, racial spaces, classroom spaces, imaginary spaces, headspaces, collegial spaces, spaces of desire and failure, spaces of change and affirmation. They are a way of remembering the past in service of the new—antimemory: memories undergoing deterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Deterritorialized memories. Memories as seeking. Memories of the future.

Memories of movement and dimensionality, 1

I remember organizing a dilemma to share with the Cincinnati Critical Friends group, but I didn't know how to express it. It was the first dilemma I shared, around 2017. The dilemma was about further orienting my young adult literature course toward interrogating racialized and patriarchal discourses of youth (Lesko, 2012). I wanted to find ways to deepen my practice: to engage my students in intersectional understandings (Crenshaw, 1991) about youth in the world and in young adult literature → to take up the youth lens as a method of calling forth discourses of youth circulating in young adult literature (Petrone, Sarigianides, & Lewis, 2015) and to expand the view to representations of youth in contemporary media and actual youth readers. I recall the difficulty in expressing why I thought that was such an important direction to go and why it was difficult to go there in my teaching. I recall having a difficult time getting the dilemma out of my head and into conversation. Despite this difficulty, the critical friends session was helpful, insightful, supportive of creative and critical work. I began more explicitly teaching about adolescence as a social construct originating in the United States with roots in the pseudo-science of eugenics (Lesko, 2012), connecting these origins to the privileges I experienced growing up as a White youth that have extended to my privileges as a White adult living in a racialized society. I recall organizing story upon story to share in class, moments from my teenage years revealing the ways my experience was, and continues to be, normalized: the ways in which adolescence becomes coded as White, heterosexual, male, abled, English-speaking—privileged as "innocent." I recall writing about this very thing the previous year (Sulzer & Thein, 2016) and feeling like a

failure in times when I was unable to push against the inertia of this discourse in my own young adult literature classes. I remember reading a student's final paper and being dismayed.

I recall the urgency of needing to push against what often felt like an immovable discourse of adolescence → I recall seeing Dr. Bettina Love speak on multiple occasions about abolitionist teaching around this time. I recall being inspired by those talks and Love's (2019) unapologetic faith in theory: "…theory helps us understand that our job is not to move mountains but to outmaneuver them" (Love, 2019, p. 133). The notion of "youth imaginaries" emerged in my teaching as an attempt to outmaneuver discourses of youth. I theorized youth imaginaries as spaces where the questions *Who are youth? And what is their place in the world?* are in an ongoing state of being asked-answered. Thinking this way, youth imaginaries were everywhere. The young adult literature market was a youth imaginary. Youth-serving institutions were youth imaginaries. Schools were youth imaginaries. A lesson plan was a youth imaginary. Any adult-youth interaction was a youth imaginary. An adult in conversation with a teenager on the street, even a brief and perfunctory interaction, was a youth imaginary. A police response to an incident involving youth was a youth imaginary. Youth imaginaries could be large or small; appear in multiple places simultaneously within a city block or school or country; they could stretch and change across time, for example, the youth imaginary of a classroom over the course of a semester; they could emerge in brief moments; they could be educative, inviting, safe, dialogic, authoritative, dismissive, violent. I remember listening to the high school students I was working with at an afterschool writing club, most of them Black youth, and how expert they were at navigating youth imaginaries throughout the day, detecting them, modulating with them.

I recall my hope for theorizing youth imaginaries with future ELA students in my young adult literature course: theorizing in this way might help them explore what it would mean for a teacher to have a youth affirming teaching philosophy and particularly a youth of color affirming teaching philosophy → teachers shaping their classrooms as youth imaginaries aligning with CRP where young people are believed in and positioned as smart, capable, and worthy (academic success), young people as deserving to learn about themselves and others through educational experiences (cultural competence), young people as critically engaged creators of culture, not just passive recipients of knowledge (social consciousness). I remember moving the course toward this theorization—a practice of imagining youth and noticing how youth are imagined in various spaces, being reflexive about our own imagining of youth. I recall encountering pitfalls, troubleshooting, working through memos and discussion with colleagues. I recall designing the final assignment for the class—a youth imaginary analysis of a young adult literature book with four components, an analysis of (1) the representation of youth in the story, (2) the marketing of the book, (3) the actual youth readership, which (4) all contribute to a creative leap about English education: Creative leap = a statement about the youth imaginary of young adult literature *leaping to* a statement about what kind of youth imaginary they, as future English teachers, would like to create in their classrooms, something we'd continue to explore in the next semester as these students became student-teachers. I remember continued adjustments, memoing, adjustments, memoing, better, always getting better, mixed with failures and dissatisfaction. I

remember the epiphany: *I'm not going to figure this out, am I? It's not a journey, is it? It's movement through times and spaces that never end, isn't it?*

Memories of movement and dimensionality, 2

I remember working with an anti-racism group in the summer of 2021, a racially diverse assembly of faculty and graduate students. We read articles, discussed anti-racism, and engaged in micro-teaching to deepen our practices (see Kroeger et al., 2022). I recall the vibrancy of the group, the energy for historicizing teaching practices across race, language, religion, gender, and class—the dialogue about how these histories resolve into particular teaching decisions in particular classes in particular moments. I wanted to think about / change / evolve an assignment in my critical literacies class. The assignment was a paper called "How Race is Lived," an autobiographical assignment examining positionality. The paper focused on storytelling: *Tell a story about how race has shaped your life; tell a story about how race has shaped your experience in school; tell a story about how you see yourself as a future ELA educator living in a racialized society, addressing the current moment in the U.S.* I remember framing the issue I wanted to work on: it's a paper, meaning the audience tends to be me alone; it should be a dialogue for future teachers to build capacity to talk about race, privilege, and lived experience as a cohort. I wanted to transform the paper into a story circle.

I remember the benefits of interracial dialogue in working out how that transformation interacts with my positionality as a White teacher educator, what it might mean for the White students in class, what it might mean for the students of color. I remember thinking in multiple directions → How do I create a story circle experience where White students practice racial literacy, building knowledge about themselves as raced individuals and thinking through the detailed ways in which privilege plays out in their lived experience? → How do I create a story circle experience responsive to a question raised by the anti-racism group, i.e., what if students, especially those who have experienced racism and have too many traumatic experiences to choose from, don't want to share their experiences in this setting? I remember sitting with these questions, situating them in a headspace: reflecting on calls from the National Council of Teachers of English emphasizing the importance for future ELA teachers to gain capacity to talk about race in a racialized society (Sealy-Ruiz, 2021) and the importance of engaging in ongoing critical conversations (Vetter, Schieble, & Martin, 2021) → balancing all that against the need to also support those who have experienced racism and their right to practice an agentive form of silence many students of color learn to practice in dominant education spaces (San Pedro, 2015; Haddix, 2012), including the class I was teaching: a class with a high proportion of White students taught by a White teacher educator in a predominately White institution. I remember this headspace as an important one to live in, one that interracial dialogue among faculty and students had created, one I would never find alone.

I recall thinking through multiple designs of the story circle, thinking through how I could design the circle in ways for students to choose what and how much to share, and eventually landing on a three-step sequence: (a) before class, write a brief response to Bishop's (1990) piece

on literature as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors; think of the response as a story about race, language, your reading history, and the identities you take with you as a future ELA teacher, (b) during class, describe your response to a small group, reading it in full or picking and choosing what you'd like to share, and (c) after class, write a reflection about two things you heard, two things you felt, and one thing you'd like to take forward in your journey as a teacher. I took from the anti-racism dialogue the importance of doing the story circle at the end of the semester, in order to first get to know the students, to build a classroom atmosphere supportive of the activity, and to arrange the groups purposively. In the weeks preceding the story circle, I remember thinking about what stories I would tell to model vulnerability and openness; how I might use humor to invite dialogue (see Shor & Freire, 1987). I remember sharing a story about a time when I accidentally made friends with a neo-Nazi in Germany, a misadventure only possible due to a language barrier and my skin tone and a bunch of assumptions. *Damnit! My skin! I'm wearing part of the uniform of a White supremacist!* was the moment of revelation in the story, the many meanings of which I continue seeking out as an educator. I recall the importance of doing the thing I was asking them to do. The importance of seeking, publicly, as an invitation. The importance of gaining capacity for cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995) by practicing it, not as a finish-able practice, but as a practice of becoming. I remember the class session of story circles, feeling a sense of affirmation by that session, feeling a sense of gratitude for the anti-racism group, the sensation of moving forward with the cohort. I remember being hopeful that the students in next year's class would also move forward through the story circle. And I recall checking my optimism, as part of me knows all too well about the unstable nature of affirming teaching moments. *What am I missing? Where is that other shoe that I've seen drop from the sky so many times?*

Memories of movement and dimensionality, 3

I remember sharing a dilemma about my Intermediate Methods course: some of my student-teachers who described their students in asset language, something we had practiced and worked on explicitly, but that asset language not materializing strongly enough in lesson and unit planning → asset language ≠ asset thinking ≠ asset action. I remember the pressing issue of time. I recall needing to cut, in the sharing of my teaching dilemma, to fit the critical friends protocol, Paris and Alim's (2017) loving critique of asset pedagogies, the superficial ways they become enacted and a reflection on my complicity in superficiality. I recall the class time lost with this cohort due to COVID – the limited class sessions left in the semester – the urgency of time – time gone, time left, a shortness of time to think/design/do better. I remember the time dimension as being the most vicious one of all: its capacity to control the depth of the spaces we traverse. I remember regarding the shortness of time as an enemy to culturally relevant pedagogy. Dominant pedagogies feed on the shortness of time, I remember writing in a memo, sensing my positionality, sensing that fatalism had entered into my headspace and sensing the need to snuff it out. I recall creating activities for the student-teachers to revise their unit plans in our remaining class sessions, cancelling planned activities, making decisions about time. I remember letting go of time—moving deeper into asset space. A realization that if the goal is a just teaching practice, *space organizes time.*

Memories of movement and dimensionality, 4

I recall an exercise of the Cincinnati Critical Friends group, a writing prompt about why we came to the group and why we stay. I remember writing:

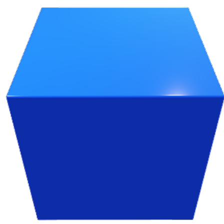
> Schools have been, and continue to be, shaped by the logics of racism and colonialism through practices of language, appearance, ways of knowing, representation, and so on. Sometimes it's nice to be among folks who don't need convincing about that. It saves time. I suspect that time is one of the main obstacles in creating institutional change. Like-minded folks don't find each other often enough or when they do, they don't have enough time together because the priorities of the institution become expressed through the labor of individuals who work there, and in that sense, institutions tend to make people into individuals rather than communities. I feel this acutely in this moment as a pre-tenure assistant professor, knowing full well that doing a project like this, one that takes lots of time and thought and discussion to develop, is not my straightest line to tenure. It's a risky space. It would be easier—and I've been given this advice many times since arriving in 2015—to separate teaching from scholarship.

Teaching space. Scholarship space. Individual space. Tenure space. Community space. A saving time space. Overlays of times and spaces. Proliferating movement and dimensionality.

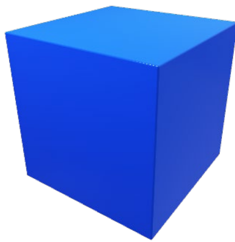
Memories of movement and dimensionality, 5

I remember being on Zoom for a session with the Action Research Center. An online space. A space of various professions and disciplines. An interracial space. A space to promote social justice through participation in community and reflective practices. A collaborative and critical space. I recall modeling the critical friends protocol with the Cincinnati Critical Friends group. I talked about a dilemma from my Intermediate Methods class, using an animated cube rotating through space. All the dimensions – length/width/height in movement through time. The cube was a way to call forth modalities of working with CRP; the rotation was a way to imagine the movement of the modalities, the hybrid possibilities with shifting angles:

← Angle of explicitness: Modality of teaching CRP explicitly, i.e., providing formal definitions and examples of student learning, cultural competence, and social consciousness



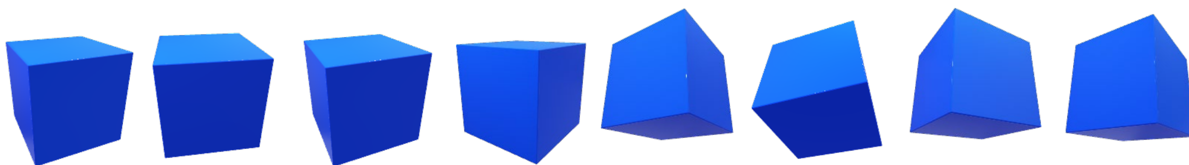
← Angle of application: Modality of teaching CRP explicitly + discussion, activities, assignments



← Angle of extension: Modality of teaching about CRP in the spirit of expansion, hybridity, heterogeneity by calling on related scholarship (see Appendix) + discussion, activity, assignments

← Angle of positionality: Modality of teaching about CRP with attention to positionality + all the other angles + discussion, activity, assignments

The rotating of the cube through time creates endless profiles. Profiles as combinations of modalities of working with CRP. Rotation → dimensionality → CRP as spaces through time.



Tesseract as Becoming

This rhizomatic self-study (Barak et al., 2020) was organized by impulse desire for seeking, moving, becoming → in contrast to the conditioned desire for resolution, conclusion, finality. This conditioned desire is strong in dominant paradigms of knowing in academic spaces (Wilson, 2008). I'm curious as to the extent that I have unlearned this desire—in my attempt in writing this self-study as an act of a pursuit rather than as an act of finding. I'm curious about the interplay of conditioned desire and my attempts to engage future ELA teachers in culturally relevant pedagogy. What boundaries appear for culturally relevant pedagogy through the conditioned desire for resolution, conclusion, finality? What patterns of representation—self-

representation, representation of lived experience, representation of culturally relevant pedagogy—does conditioned desire create? How might such desire interact with my positionality as a White teacher educator?

Leonardo & Zembylas (2013) write about Whiteness as an affective technology that produces multiple selves across time and space, the picking and choosing of which effects an "equilibrium for many white educators, which allows them to continue with anti-racist work with their identity relatively intact" requiring the presumption of "a location outside of racism to which White subjects have access" (p. 156). I wonder about my entanglement with this technology through dimensionality: spaces and times in service of the status quo. Ahmed (2007) writes about how the "desire [of a predominately White institution] to hear 'happy stories of diversity' rather than unhappy stories of racism" disallowed the circulation of "a report about how good practice and anti-racist tool kits are being used as technologies of concealment, displacing racism from public view" (p. 164). I wonder about the angle of view and the public-facing image inherent in publication. For example, in sharing attempts to deepen my practices with culturally relevant pedagogy in ELA teacher education, I have produced memories of movement and dimensionality and focused on the cube. I wonder what the cube reveals and conceals. An email to a colleague explains that through the cubic method, I'm focused on:

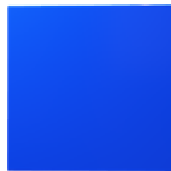
> …getting the profile of the cube "right" for particular class sessions or semester-long sequences or course sequences—that is, when considering CRP as a cube like that, I could change the orientation of the cube to create endless combinations of profiles (mixes of teaching explicitly, relying on other frameworks, and considering positionality that become balanced differently across time), and thinking in that way helps—me anyway—imagine how to proceed with a given class session or pass through a given dilemma. What I'm trying to do with this self-study is make this cube feel like an okay idea *but not immanent enough*—the cube needs to feel claustrophobic, small, unstable.

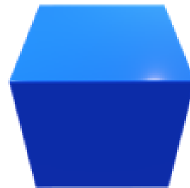
For that reason, this rhizomatic self-study (Barak et al., 2020) is an attempt to gather energies from the cube to move toward escape → to what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call the a "cutting edge of deterritorialization" (p. 244) → to destabilize dimensionality as an experiment in finding "the new" (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 6) → to imagine the presence of another dimension that does the ongoing work of producing "uncertainty, contradiction, even discomfort" (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013, p. 156) in my positionality → to approach immanence.

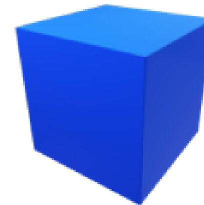
In their analysis of self-study research, Edge and Olan (2020) observe teacher educators in ELA tend to position their tensions as "texts" and call on disciplinary practices to make meaning of them, e.g., using literature to find insights. This rhizomatic self-study participates in that tradition by calling on Lui Cixin's (2010) *Remembrance of Earth's Past* trilogy to imagine an extra dimension. In this science fiction series, explorers named Morivich and Guan pilot a spaceship called *Blue Space* through an area of four-dimensional space:

> A person looking back upon the three-dimensional world from four-dimensional space for the first time realized this right away: He had never seen the world while he was in it…In Morovich and Guan's eyes, *Blue Space* was a magnificent, immense painting that had just been unrolled. They could see all the way to the stern, and all the way to the bow; they could see the inside of every cabin and every sealed container in the ship; they could see the liquid flowing through the maze of tubes, and the fiery ball of fusion in the reactor at the stern… Given this description, those who had never experienced four-dimensional space might get the wrong impression that they were seeing everything 'through' the hull. But no, they were not seeing 'through' anything. Everything was laid out in the open, just like when we look at a circle drawn on a piece of paper…Everything in the ship lay exposed before Morovich and Guan, but even when observing some specific object, such as a cup or a pen, they saw infinite details, and the information received by their visual systems was incalculable. Even a lifetime would not be enough to take in the shape of any one of these objects in four-dimensional space. (pp. 239-240)

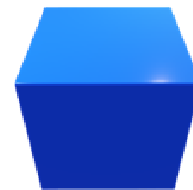
As Morovich and Guan exit four-dimensional space, finding themselves back in three-dimensional space, they experience claustrophobia. Everything feels closed in. Nothing seems stable. They sense the infinite details in ordinary objects that would take a lifetime to explore. They sense these details even though they can no longer see them. They sense the extra dimension that destabilizes all the others. A disruption of knowing. This sense seems important to the political project of becoming.

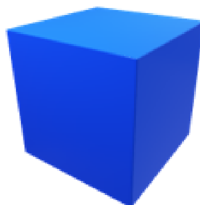




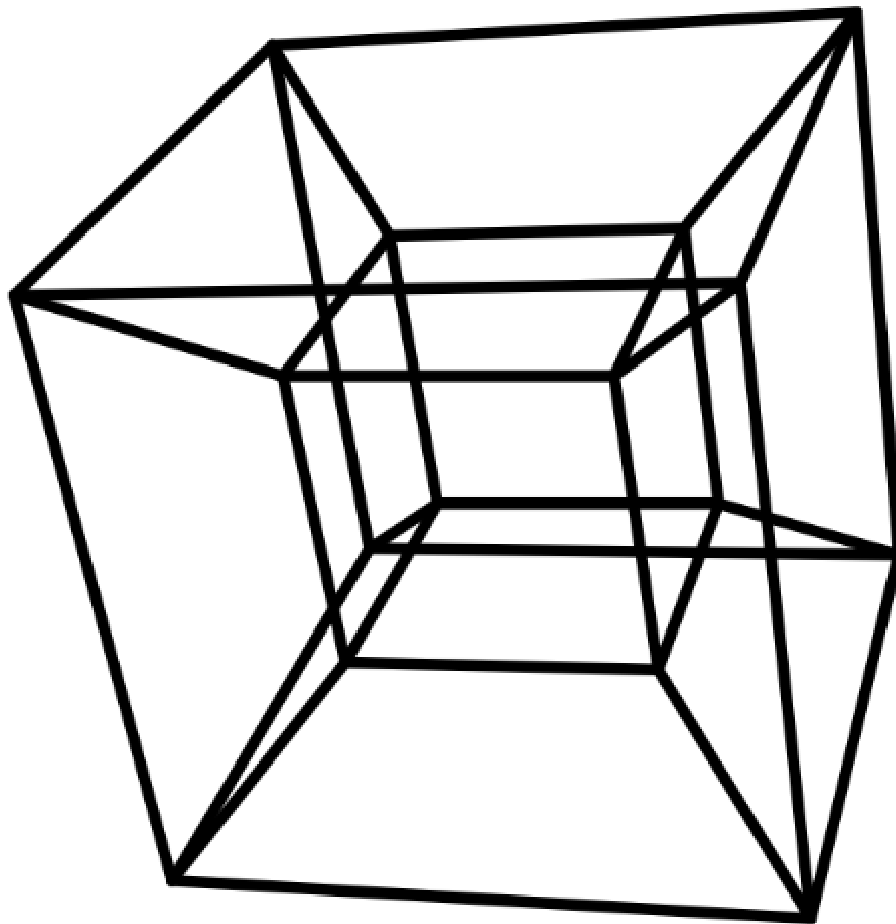


I understand I am restricted to the dimensions I inhabit, but, like the pilots of *Blue Space*, is it possible to sense another dimension curled all around me and set my imagination accordingly, to the infinite details of things?





Growing up watching *Cosmos* with Carl Sagan, I learned about the tesseract, a cube in four-dimensional space. It's impossible to see a tesseract in our world, but you can see its shadow. By holding up a hypercube to the light, a shadow of a tesseract appears. The image is below. Rhizomatic visualizations produce a rhizomatic mindset: I want to use the tesseract as a rhizome in an always-process of becoming; a method of destabilizing the rotating cube that I've used to imagine modalities of teaching about, with, through culturally relevant pedagogy; a method of destabilizing what I think I know and what I think I've learned; a method of destabilizing my positionality, to feel discomfort, uncertain, and claustrophobic in Whiteness. I can't see a tesseract, and I never will, but I can imagine how such a shape would lay out everything in the open, demonstrate the falseness of borderlines…so therefore, there is no beginning or ending, just intensities of the middle…



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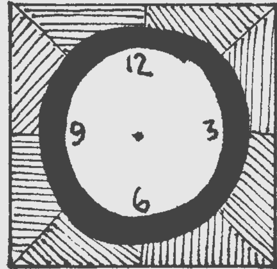
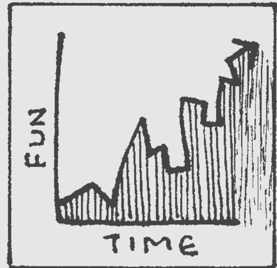
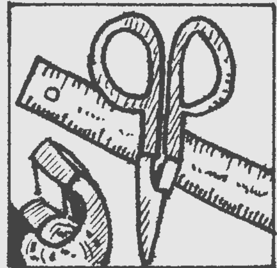
Appendix A : Scholars, Pedagogical Approaches, Areas of Emphasis (Not Exhaustive)

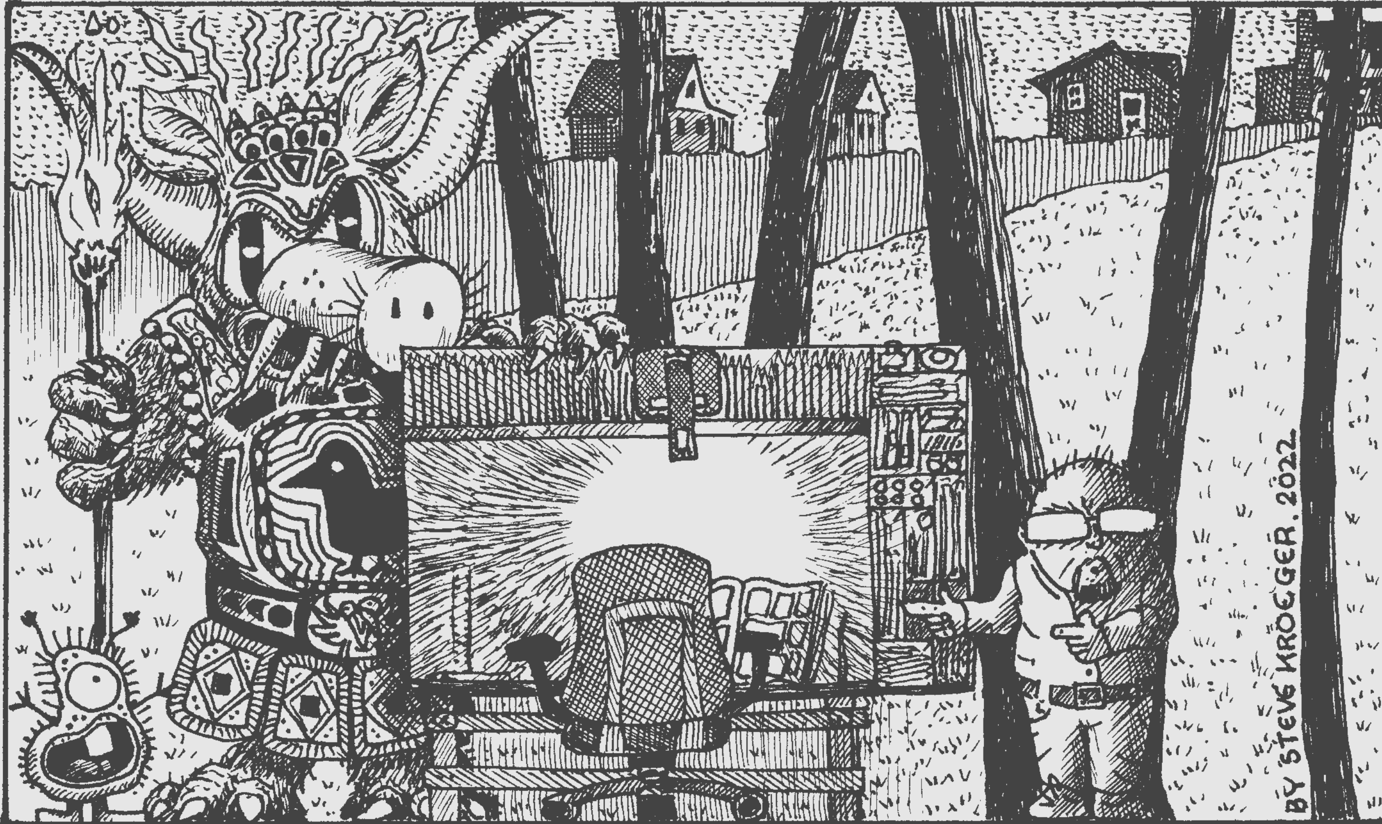
Scholar(s)	Pedagogical Approach	Areas of Emphasis
Ladson-Billings (1995)	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	• Student Learning • Cultural competence • Social Consciousness
Paris & Alim (2017)	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	• Sustaining linguistic/literate/cultural pluralism and "lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling" (p. 1) • De-centering Whiteness • Loving critiques of historical and present enactments of asset pedagogies
Emdin (2016)	Reality Pedagogy	• Meeting students on their own "cultural and emotional turf" (p. 27) • Teacher and Student Role Reversal • Co-construction of the classroom learning environment through co-generative dialogue
Gay (2010)	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	• Validating/affirming through integration of students' cultural heritages • Comprehensive sense of students maintaining identity and connection to community through "academic and cultural excellence" (p. 33) • Multidimensional: content, context, relationships, instructional techniques, assessments • Empowering, transformative, emancipatory in "releas[ing] students of color from the constraining manacles of mainstream canons of knowledge and ways of knowing" (p. 37)
Freire (1970)	Critical Pedagogy	• Awakening critical consciousness through "generative themes" derived through ongoing attention to the "human-world relationship" (p. 106) • Praxis: cycles of reflection and action • Problem-posing situated in dialogic practices (resisting anti-dialogic, banking practices) of becoming
Love (2019)	Abolitionist Teaching	• Acknowledge the U.S. and its policies as "anti-Black, racist, discriminatory, and unjust" (p. 12) • Build solidarity with communities of color and poor communities; interrogate Whiteness • Abandon teaching gimmicks; adopt an historical, intersectional lens
Muhammad (2020)	Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy	• Exploration of self-identities and others' identities • Development of intellect, i.e., knowledge, about topics, concepts and ideals • Skills and proficiencies aligning with dominant understandings of achievement that are taken up in order to build capacity for liberation • Criticality "signifies an ability and practice to understand and dismantle power and oppression and work toward antiracist, antihomophobic, and antisexist practices" (Muhammad, 2018, p. 138)
Baker-Bell (2020)	Pedagogy of Linguistic Justice	• Advocates for Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy (as opposed to Eradicationist and Respectability Pedagogies) • Interrogates White linguistic hegemony and anti-Black linguistic racism • Centers the "linguistic, cultural, racial, intellectual, and self-confidence needs of Black students" in language education (p. 34)

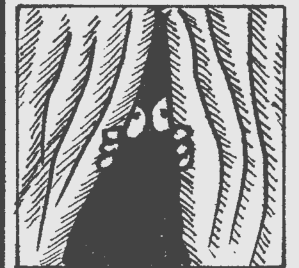
MY SELF

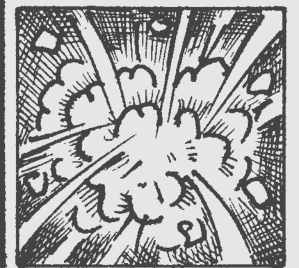


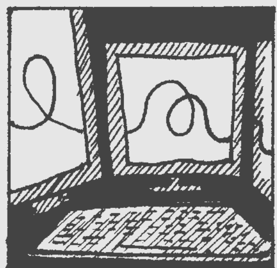




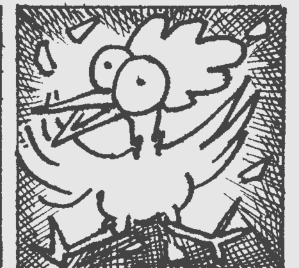


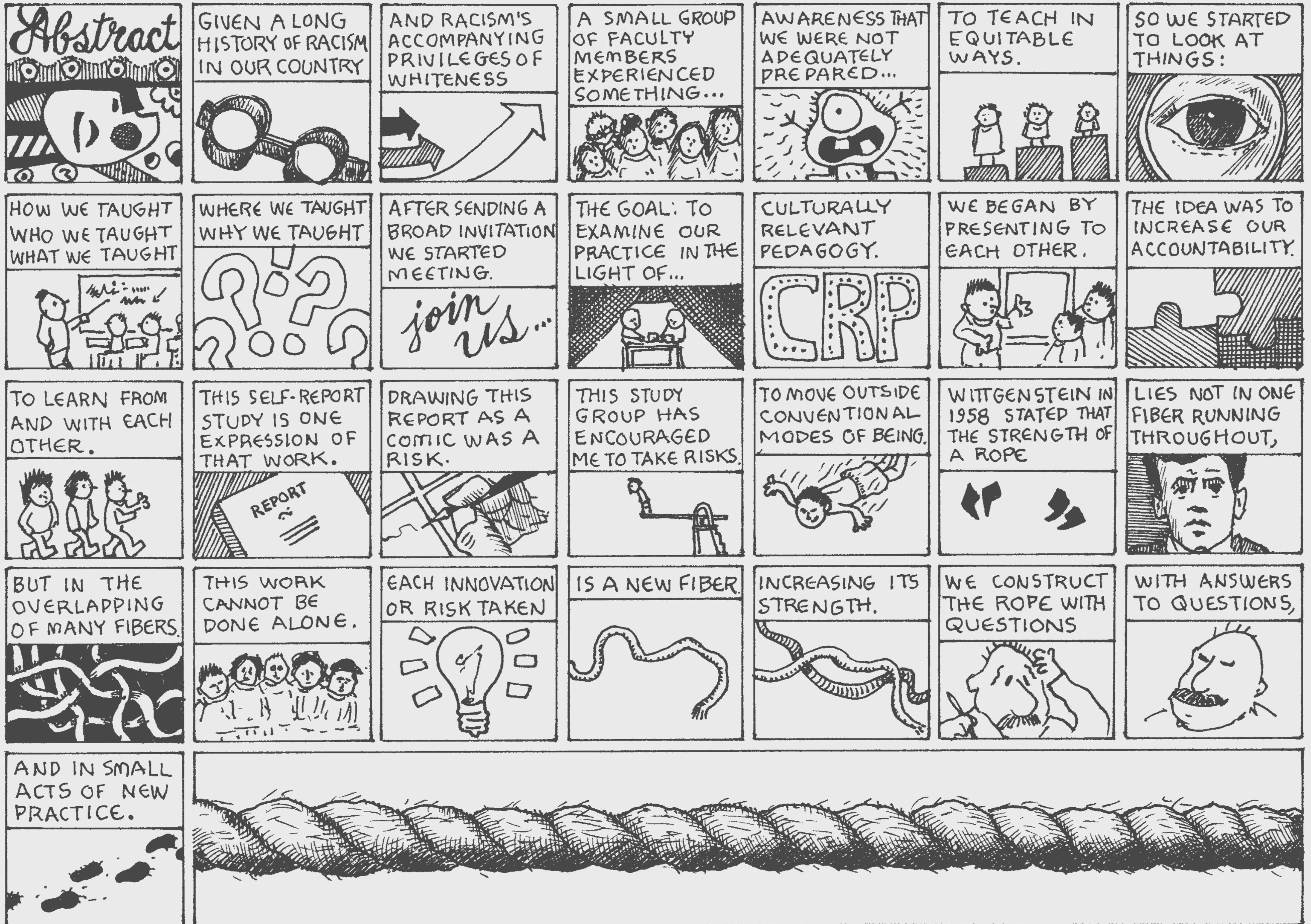


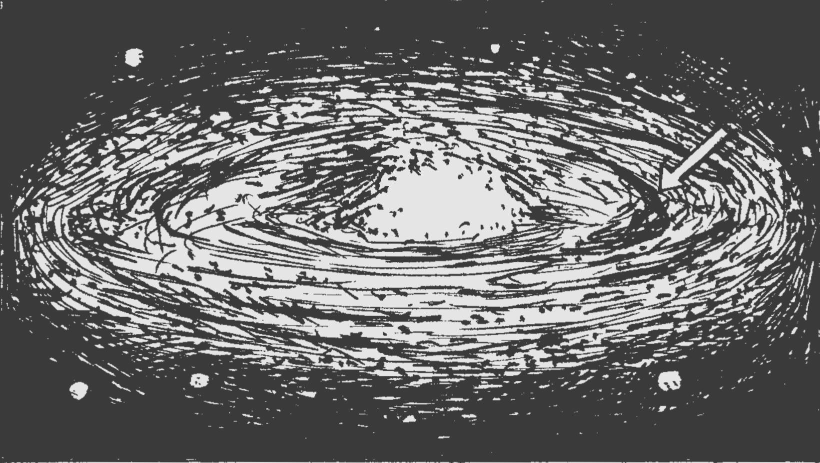


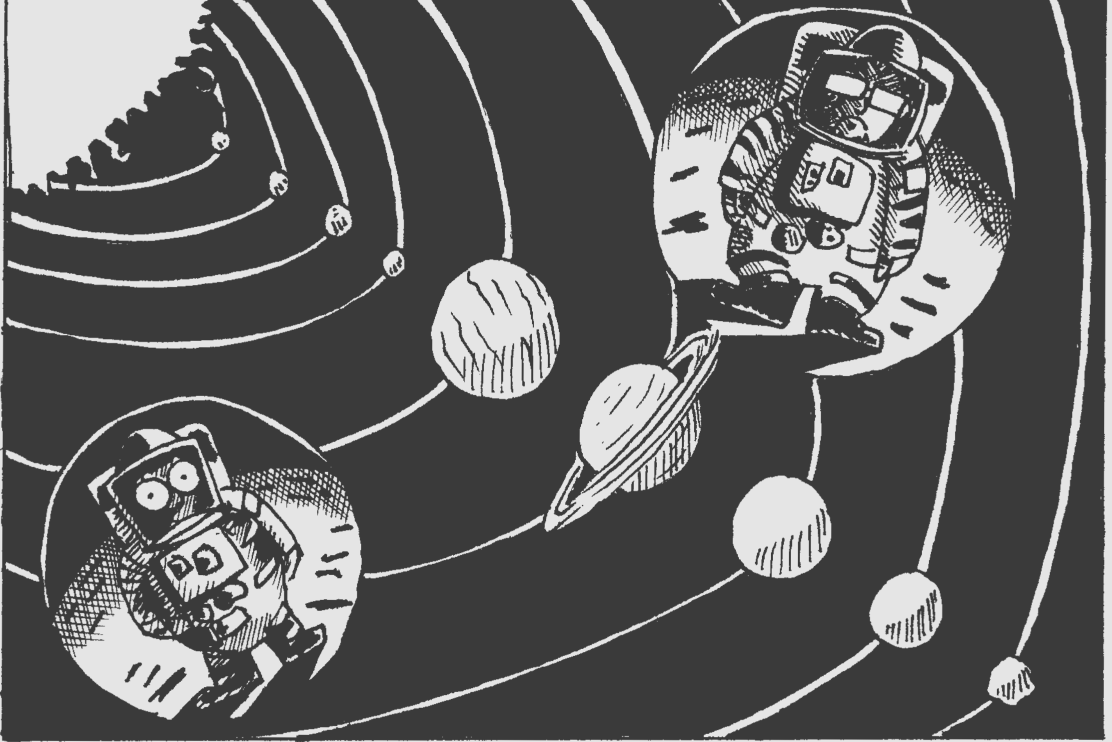


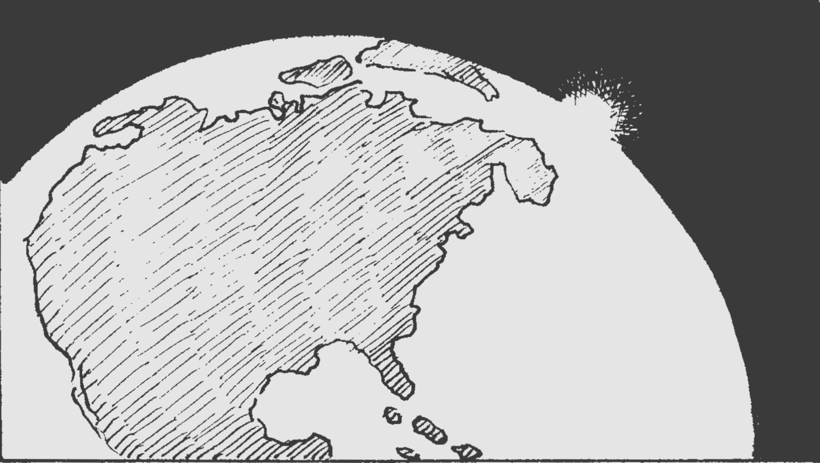
STUDY



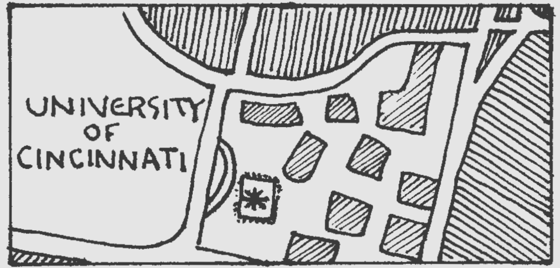

Abstract
GIVEN A LONG HISTORY OF RACISM IN OUR COUNTRY
AND RACISM'S ACCOMPANYING PRIVILEGES OF WHITENESS
A SMALL GROUP OF FACULTY MEMBERS EXPERIENCED SOMETHING...
AWARENESS THAT WE WERE NOT ADEQUATELY PREPARED...
TO TEACH IN EQUITABLE WAYS.
SO WE STARTED TO LOOK AT THINGS:
HOW WE TAUGHT WHO WE TAUGHT WHAT WE TAUGHT
WHERE WE TAUGHT WHY WE TAUGHT
AFTER SENDING A BROAD INVITATION WE STARTED MEETING.
join us...
THE GOAL: TO EXAMINE OUR PRACTICE IN THE LIGHT OF...
CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY.
CRP
WE BEGAN BY PRESENTING TO EACH OTHER.
THE IDEA WAS TO INCREASE OUR ACCOUNTABILITY.
TO LEARN FROM AND WITH EACH OTHER.
THIS SELF-REPORT STUDY IS ONE EXPRESSION OF THAT WORK.
REPORT
DRAWING THIS REPORT AS A COMIC WAS A RISK.
THIS STUDY GROUP HAS ENCOURAGED ME TO TAKE RISKS.
TO MOVE OUTSIDE CONVENTIONAL MODES OF BEING.
WITTGENSTEIN IN 1958 STATED THAT THE STRENGTH OF A ROPE
LIES NOT IN ONE FIBER RUNNING THROUGHOUT,
BUT IN THE OVERLAPPING OF MANY FIBERS.
THIS WORK CANNOT BE DONE ALONE.
EACH INNOVATION OR RISK TAKEN
IS A NEW FIBER
INCREASING ITS STRENGTH.
WE CONSTRUCT THE ROPE WITH QUESTIONS
WITH ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS,
AND IN SMALL ACTS OF NEW PRACTICE.


A SELF-STUDY HAS TO START SOMEWHERE, A SPECIFIC PLACE, A HOME. SELF-STUDY HAS A CERTAIN PERSPECTIVE AND A KIND OF HUMILITY.


SELF-STUDY IS AN EXPLORATION OF ONE'S PRACTICE, BUT IT IS NOT DONE IN A SILO, OR IN ISOLATION. BUT IT'S NOT GROUP-STUDY EITHER. I STUDY MY PRACTICE IN COMMUNITY - NOT JUST ANY COMMUNITY.


MY COMMUNITY IS IN NORTH AMERICA. THAT FACT ALONE WILL COLOR HOW I SEE MY REALITY, THE LANGUAGE I WORK IN, HOW I PERCEIVE RACE &GENDER

CINCINNATI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THE PERSPECTIVE JUST CONTINUES TO NARROW.

UNTIL YOU GET INTO MY HEAD AND THOUGHTS

AND THE HEADS OF MY CRITICAL FRIENDS.

EACH OF WHOM HELPS ME TO BE GROUNDED.

WITH A SENSE OF HUMILITY AND EXPERTISE THAT

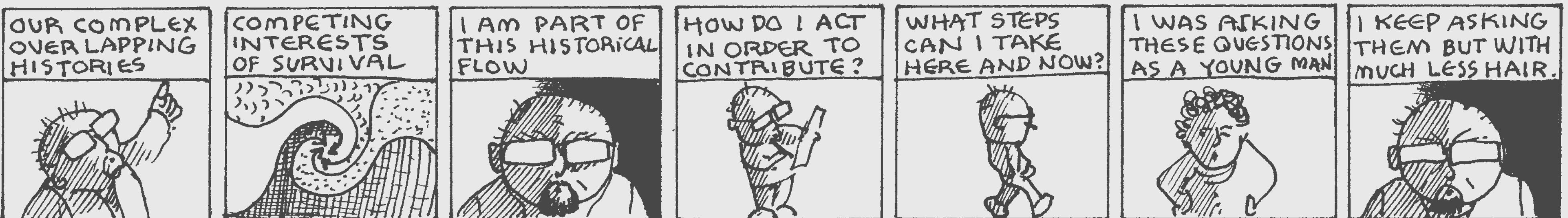
CREATES A SPACE THAT ENCOURAGES MORE HOPEFUL

CONVERSATIONS AND CRITICAL WAYS OF ACTING

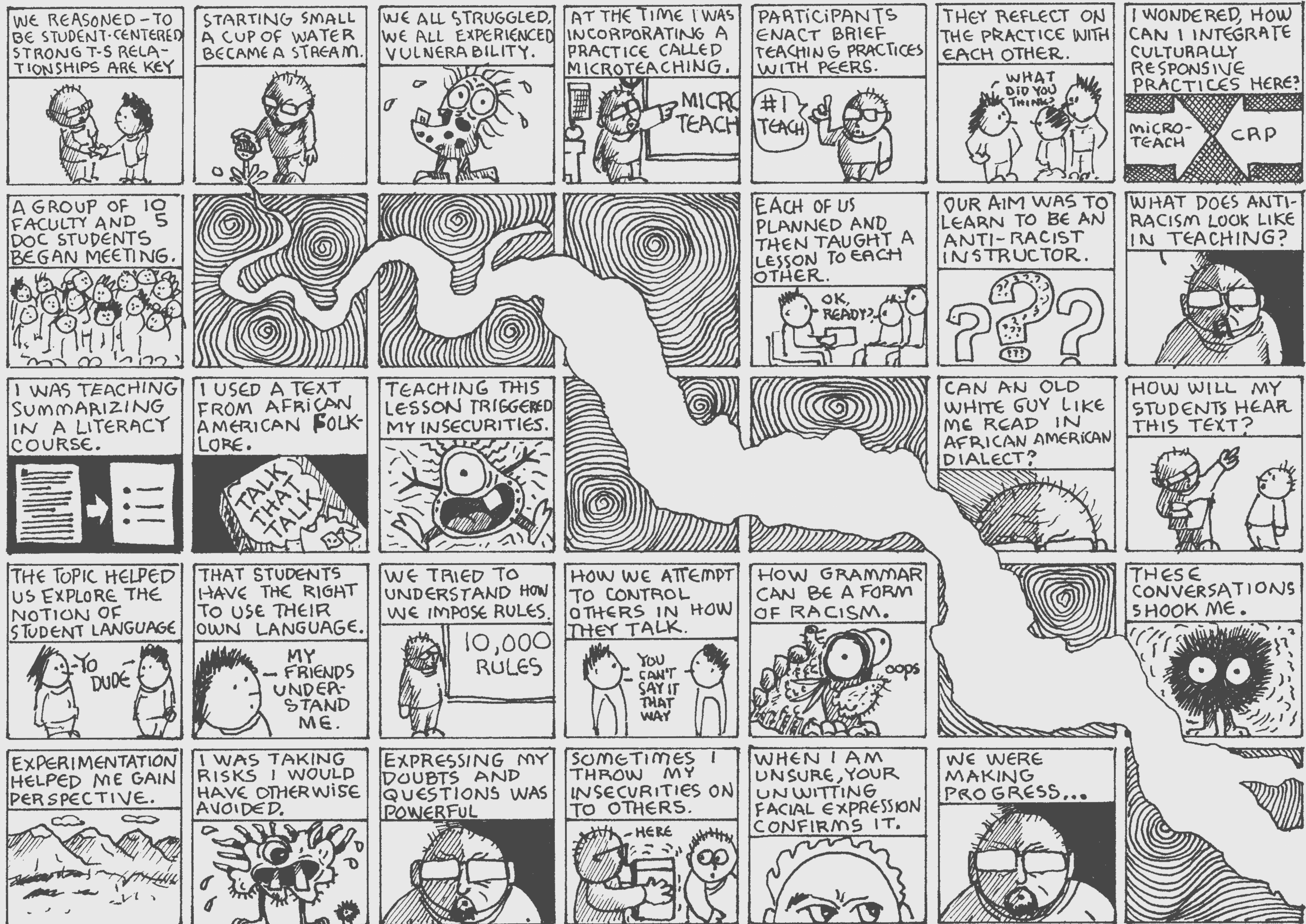
GREAT SOCIETIES IN AFRICA
SOUTH AMERICAN CIVILIZATIONS
INDIGENOUS & TRIBAL COMMUNITIES
COLLECTIVISM
SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY
EARTH FRIENDLY TRADITIONS
ORAL TRADITIONS
ENSLAVEMENT
EXCLUSION
EXTERMINATION
EXPULSION
PROPERTY
RACIALIZED INTERPRETATIONS
WRITTEN WORD - DOCUMENTATION
EXPLORATION
OWNERSHIP
EURO-CENTRIC PERSPECTIVES
IMPERIAL & COLONIAL TRADITIONS
CONQUEST & ENSLAVEMENTS
LANGUAGE DOMINATION
WHITE SUPREMACY MALE DOMINATION

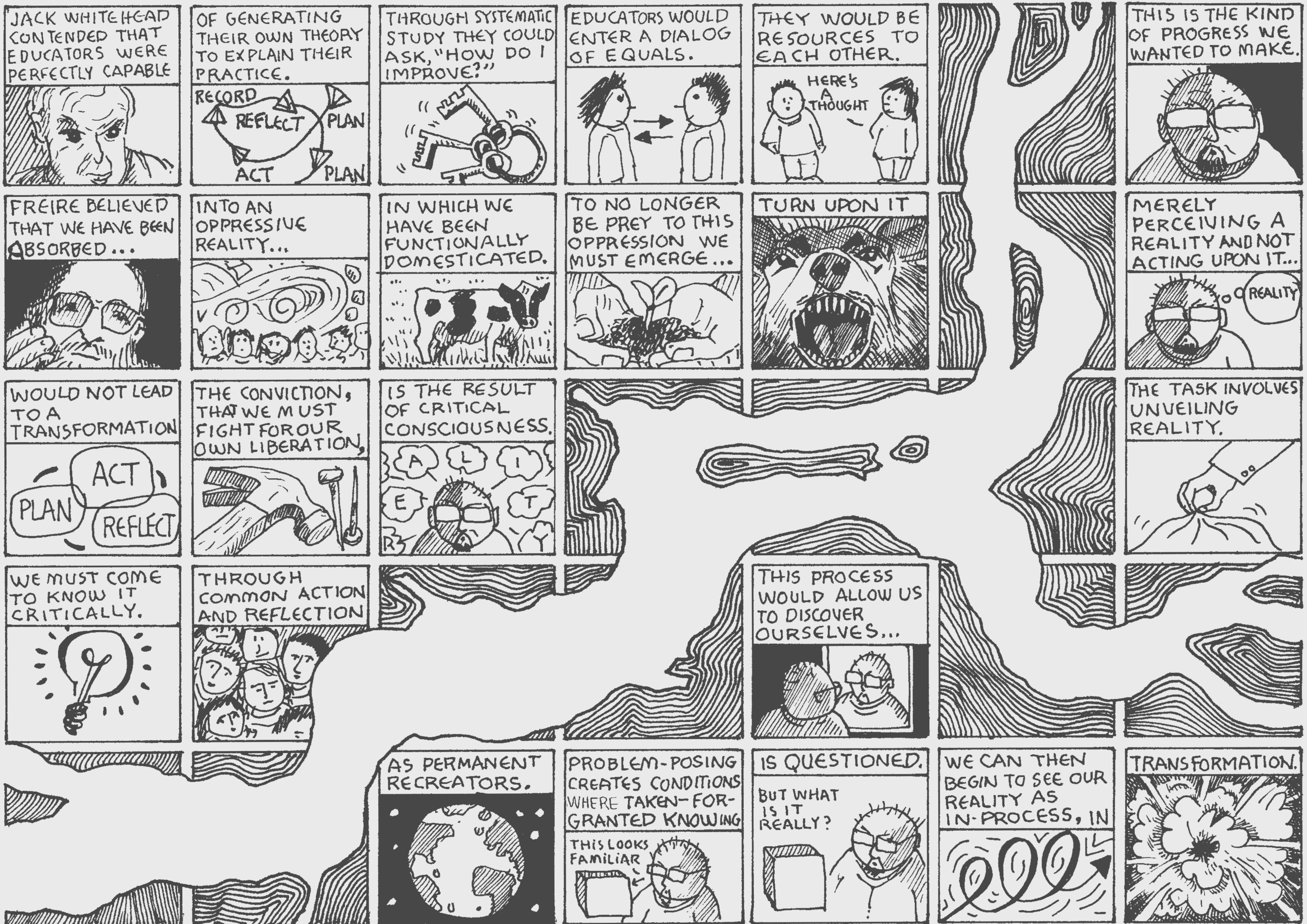
1500'S 1600'S
GREAT AND TERRIBLE
IMMIGRATIONS
INVASIONS
1700'S
We the people
CON-STI-TUTION
1800'S
CIVIL WAR
1860'S 1950'S
JIM CROW
1950'S 1960'S
CIVIL RIGHTS
I AM A MAN
1960'S 1970'S
IDEA 1975
DRS
1980'S 1990'S
BLACK LIVES MATTER
say their names
1990'S 2000'S
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
1
2
3

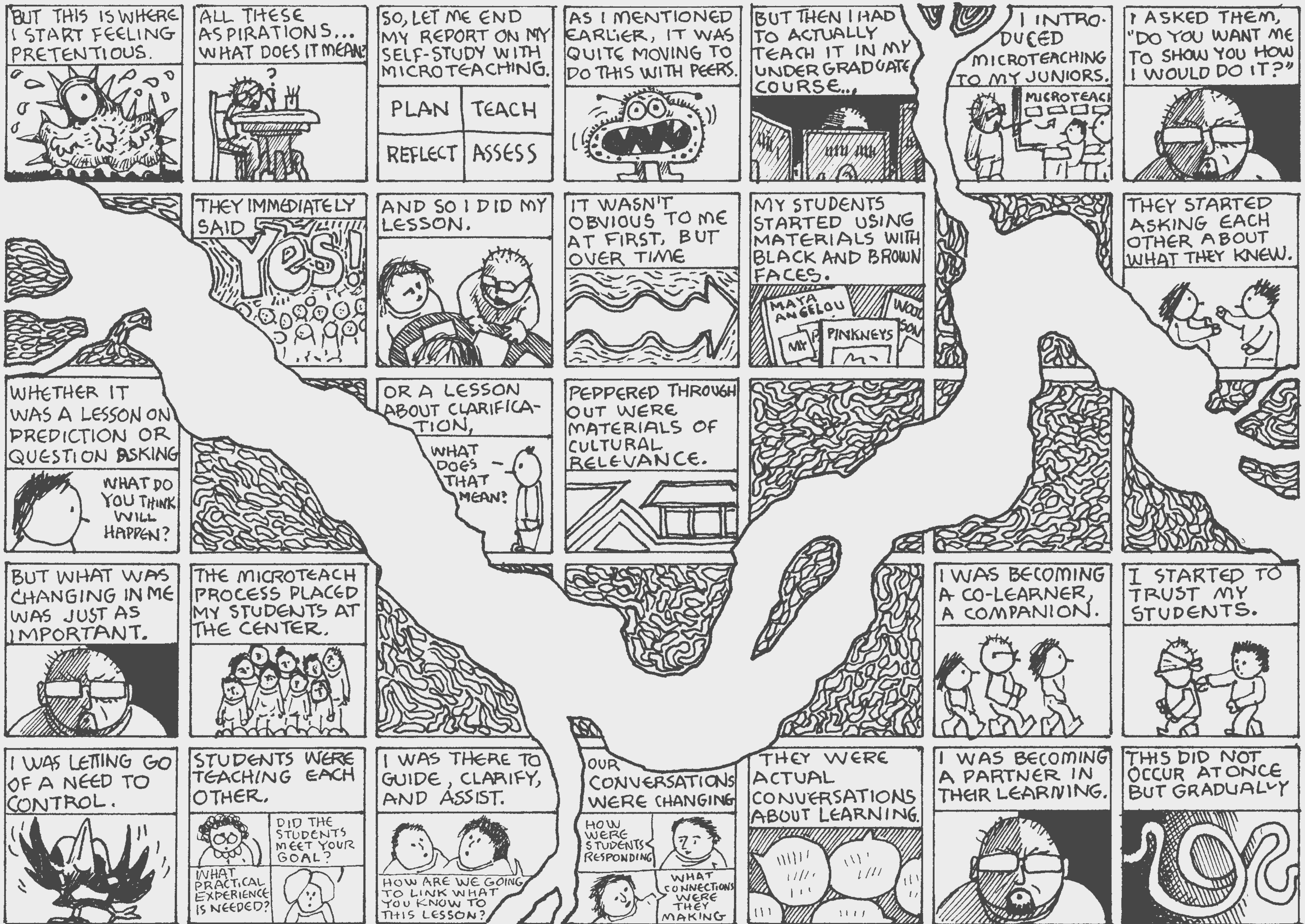
AND LOTS OF STUFF I DON'T REALLY SEE

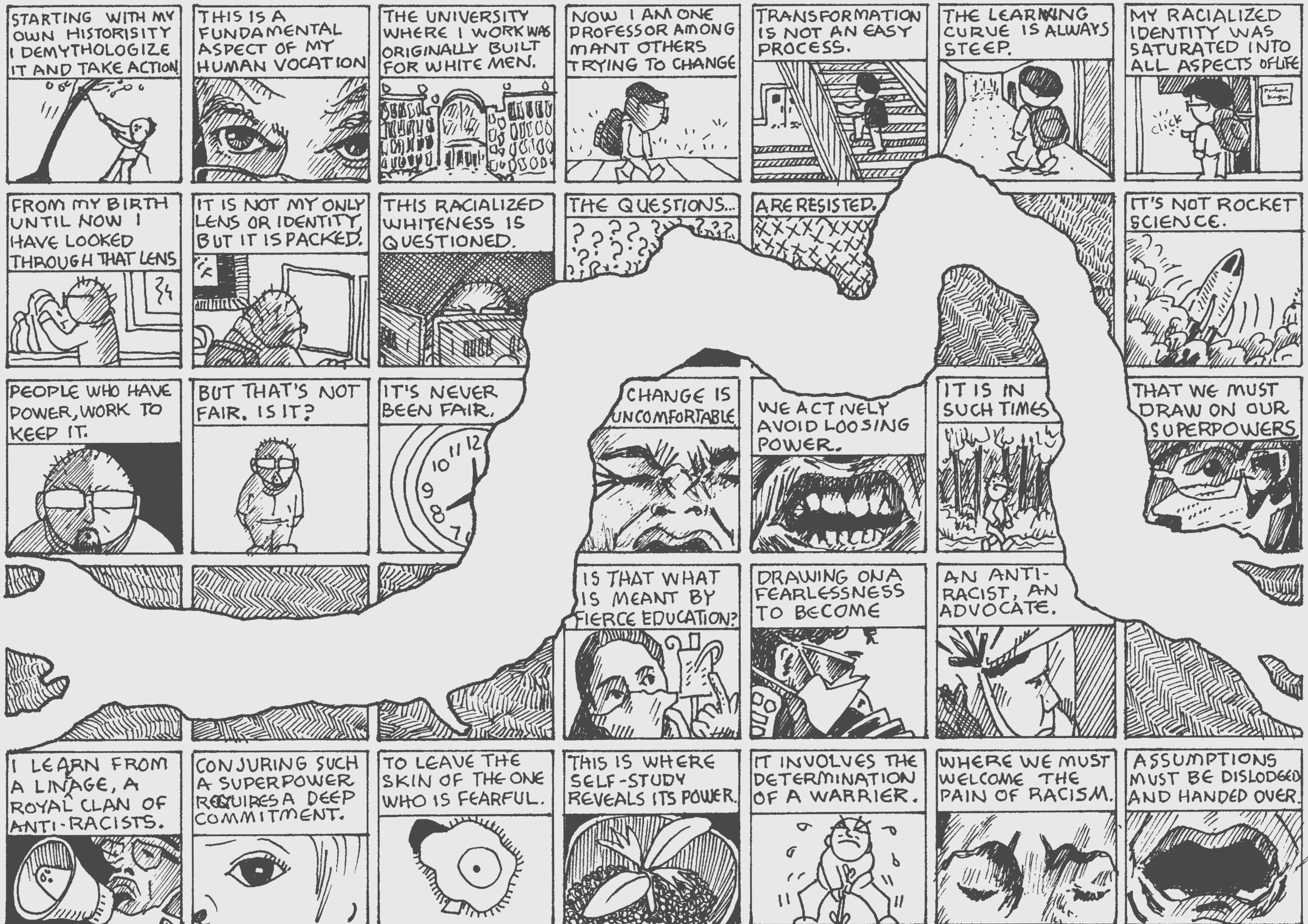


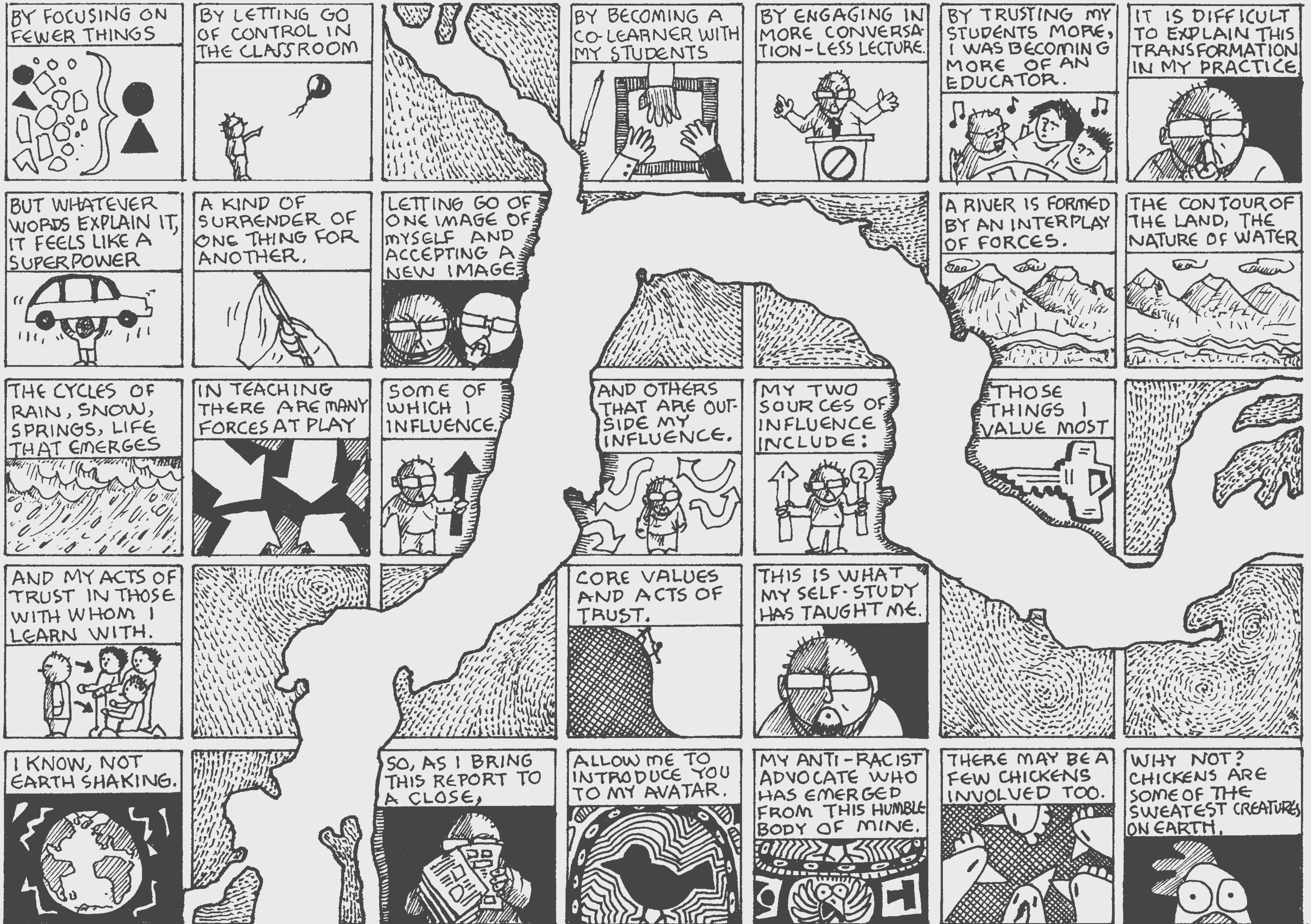
I WANTED TO PAY ATTENTION TO MY OWN PRACTICE. DID MY TEACHING REFLECT MY CORE VALUES? COULD I ANALYZE EVERYTHING I DID IN THE CLASSROOM?
I STRUGGLED TO TELL THE STORY.
QUESTIONS NAGGED AT ME. WHO CARES?
I FELT PRETENTIOUS EVEN THINKING ABOUT SHARING
CAN I EVEN USE FREIRE'S NAME IN MY SELF-STUDY?
PAULO FREIRE
SO WHAT IF I STUDIED MY PRACTICE EVERYONE DOES...
DON'T THEY?
WHO WOULD LISTEN WHO WOULD BE MY READER?
?
!
MY SELF STUDY
THE QUESTIONING NEVER STOPS. IT'S A BARRIER.
I CAN TALK MYSELF INTO A VERY DARK CORNER.
BRINGING THIS TO MY CRITICAL FRIENDS WAS A FORM OF LIGHT.
AND BY EXTENSION LIT THE REST OF OUR PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY.
SHARING MY STORY WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE IT TICK.
BEING VULNERABLE WAS KEY.
MY CRITICAL FRIENDS GAVE ME SPACE TO SPEAK
SPEAK
BANDURA CALLED THIS COLLECTIVE EFFICACY IN 1977
A GROUPIS SHARED BELIEF IN ITS JOINT CAPABILITY TO ORGANIZE AND EXECUTE
1 2 3
TO DETERMINE A COURSE OF ACTION REQUIRED TO PRODUCE GIVEN LEVELS OF ATTAINMENT
WE WERE DEEPLY COMMITTED TO EACH OTHER'S SUCCESS
WE REALIZED THAT WE HAD TO MAKE CHANGES
OUR STUDENTS WERE MAJORITY WHITE
LIKE ME, THEY BROUGHT RACIAL BIAS-SO MUCH A PART OF OUR CULTURE
I do it this way
CHANGING OUR CURRICULUM WAS A START.
BUT WE COULD DO BETTER.
TO DO THAT WE HAD TO MEASURE OUR OWN CHANGE
ANALZE OUR TEACHING WITH ONE ANOTHER
SO, WE DECIDED, LET'S SHOW EACH OTHER WHAT WE ARE DOING IN OUR CLASSROOMS
WELCOME
WE SELECTED PRACTICES IN OUR TEACHING AND PRESENTED
OK, LET'S GET STARTED
WE INVITED COMMENT, REFLECTION, AND ASSISTANCE
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
THIS STAGE WAS FUNDAMENTAL AS WE MOVED FORWARD.
WE RECORDED AND TRANSCRIBED OUR SESSIONS
THIS WORK LED US TO FOCUS ON TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS
T
S

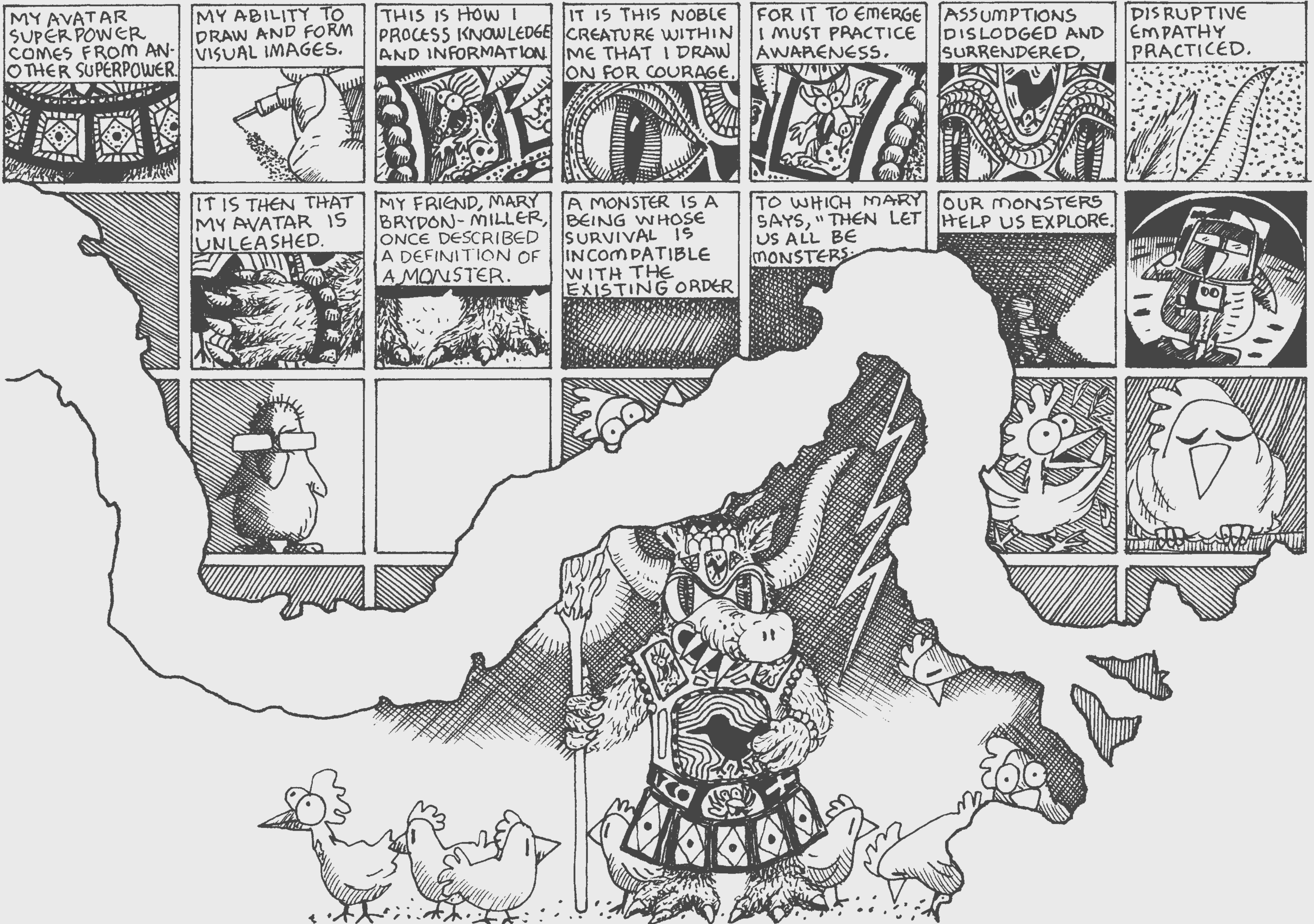

WE REASONED – TO BE STUDENT-CENTERED STRONG T-S RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY
STARTING SMALL A CUP OF WATER BECAME A STREAM.
WE ALL STRUGGLED, WE ALL EXPERIENCED VULNERABILITY.
AT THE TIME I WAS INCORPORATING A PRACTICE CALLED MICROTEACHING.
MICRO TEACH
PARTICIPANTS ENACT BRIEF TEACHING PRACTICES WITH PEERS.
#1 TEACH
THEY REFLECT ON THE PRACTICE WITH EACH OTHER.
WHAT DID YOU THINK?
I WONDERED, HOW CAN I INTEGRATE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES HERE?
MICRO-TEACH
CRP
A GROUP OF 10 FACULTY AND 5 DOC STUDENTS BEGAN MEETING.
EACH OF US PLANNED AND THEN TAUGHT A LESSON TO EACH OTHER.
OK, READY?
OUR AIM WAS TO LEARN TO BE AN ANTI-RACIST INSTRUCTOR.
WHAT DOES ANTI-RACISM LOOK LIKE IN TEACHING?
I WAS TEACHING SUMMARIZING IN A LITERACY COURSE.
I USED A TEXT FROM AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLK-LORE.
TALK THAT TALK
TEACHING THIS LESSON TRIGGERED MY INSECURITIES.
CAN AN OLD WHITE GUY LIKE ME READ IN AFRICAN AMERICAN DIALECT?
HOW WILL MY STUDENTS HEAR THIS TEXT?
THE TOPIC HELPED US EXPLORE THE NOTION OF STUDENT LANGUAGE
YO DUDE
THAT STUDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO USE THEIR OWN LANGUAGE.
MY FRIENDS UNDERSTAND ME.
WE TRIED TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE IMPOSE RULES.
10,000 RULES
HOW WE ATTEMPT TO CONTROL OTHERS IN HOW THEY TALK.
YOU CAN'T SAY IT THAT WAY
HOW GRAMMAR CAN BE A FORM OF RACISM.
OOPS
THESE CONVERSATIONS SHOOK ME.
EXPERIMENTATION HELPED ME GAIN PERSPECTIVE.
I WAS TAKING RISKS I WOULD HAVE OTHERWISE AVOIDED.
EXPRESSING MY DOUBTS AND QUESTIONS WAS POWERFUL
SOMETIMES I THROW MY INSECURITIES ON TO OTHERS.
HERE
WHEN I AM UNSURE, YOUR UNWITTING FACIAL EXPRESSION CONFIRMS IT.
WE WERE MAKING PROGRESS...


JACK WHITEHEAD CONTENDED THAT EDUCATORS WERE PERFECTLY CAPABLE
OF GENERATING THEIR OWN THEORY TO EXPLAIN THEIR PRACTICE.
RECORD
REFLECT
PLAN
ACT
PLAN
THROUGH SYSTEMATIC STUDY THEY COULD ASK, "HOW DO I IMPROVE?"
EDUCATORS WOULD ENTER A DIALOG OF EQUALS.
THEY WOULD BE RESOURCES TO EACH OTHER.
HERE'S A THOUGHT
THIS IS THE KIND OF PROGRESS WE WANTED TO MAKE.
FREIRE BELIEVED THAT WE HAVE BEEN ABSORBED...
INTO AN OPPRESSIVE REALITY...
IN WHICH WE HAVE BEEN FUNCTIONALLY DOMESTICATED.
TO NO LONGER BE PREY TO THIS OPPRESSION WE MUST EMERGE...
TURN UPON IT
MERELY PERCEIVING A REALITY AND NOT ACTING UPON IT...
REALITY
WOULD NOT LEAD TO A TRANSFORMATION
ACT
PLAN
REFLECT
THE CONVICTION, THAT WE MUST FIGHT FOR OUR OWN LIBERATION,
IS THE RESULT OF CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS.
THE TASK INVOLVES UNVEILING REALITY.
WE MUST COME TO KNOW IT CRITICALLY.
THROUGH COMMON ACTION AND REFLECTION
THIS PROCESS WOULD ALLOW US TO DISCOVER OURSELVES...
AS PERMANENT RECREATORS.
PROBLEM-POSING CREATES CONDITIONS WHERE TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED KNOWING
THIS LOOKS FAMILIAR
IS QUESTIONED.
BUT WHAT IS IT REALLY?
WE CAN THEN BEGIN TO SEE OUR REALITY AS IN-PROCESS, IN
TRANSFORMATION.


BUT THIS IS WHERE I START FEELING PRETENTIOUS.
ALL THESE ASPIRATIONS... WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
?
SO, LET ME END MY REPORT ON MY SELF-STUDY WITH MICROTEACHING.
PLAN
TEACH
REFLECT
ASSESS
AS I MENTIONED EARLIER, IT WAS QUITE MOVING TO DO THIS WITH PEERS.
BUT THEN I HAD TO ACTUALLY TEACH IT IN MY UNDERGRADUATE COURSE...
I INTRODUCED MICROTEACHING TO MY JUNIORS.
MICROTEACH
I ASKED THEM, "DO YOU WANT ME TO SHOW YOU HOW I WOULD DO IT?"
THEY IMMEDIATELY SAID
YES!
AND SO I DID MY LESSON.
IT WASN'T OBVIOUS TO ME AT FIRST, BUT OVER TIME
MY STUDENTS STARTED USING MATERIALS WITH BLACK AND BROWN FACES.
MAYA ANGELOU
PINKNEYS
THEY STARTED ASKING EACH OTHER ABOUT WHAT THEY KNEW.
WHETHER IT WAS A LESSON ON PREDICTION OR QUESTION ASKING
WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN?
OR A LESSON ABOUT CLARIFICATION,
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
PEPPERED THROUGHOUT WERE MATERIALS OF CULTURAL RELEVANCE.
BUT WHAT WAS CHANGING IN ME WAS JUST AS IMPORTANT.
THE MICROTEACH PROCESS PLACED MY STUDENTS AT THE CENTER.
I WAS BECOMING A CO-LEARNER, A COMPANION.
I STARTED TO TRUST MY STUDENTS.
I WAS LETTING GO OF A NEED TO CONTROL.
STUDENTS WERE TEACHING EACH OTHER.
DID THE STUDENTS MEET YOUR GOAL?
WHAT PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IS NEEDED?
I WAS THERE TO GUIDE, CLARIFY, AND ASSIST.
HOW ARE WE GOING TO LINK WHAT YOU KNOW TO THIS LESSON?
OUR CONVERSATIONS WERE CHANGING
HOW WERE STUDENTS RESPONDING
WHAT CONNECTIONS WERE THEY MAKING
THEY WERE ACTUAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT LEARNING.
I WAS BECOMING A PARTNER IN THEIR LEARNING.
THIS DID NOT OCCUR AT ONCE BUT GRADUALLY


STARTING WITH MY OWN HISTORISITY I DEMYTHOLOGIZE IT AND TAKE ACTION
THIS IS A FUNDAMENTAL ASPECT OF MY HUMAN VOCATION
THE UNIVERSITY WHERE I WORK WAS ORIGINALLY BUILT FOR WHITE MEN.
NOW I AM ONE PROFESSOR AMONG MANT OTHERS TRYING TO CHANGE
TRANSFORMATION IS NOT AN EASY PROCESS.
THE LEARNING CURVE IS ALWAYS STEEP.
MY RACIALIZED IDENTITY WAS SATURATED INTO ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE
CLICK
FROM MY BIRTH UNTIL NOW I HAVE LOOKED THROUGH THAT LENS
IT IS NOT MY ONLY LENS OR IDENTITY, BUT IT IS PACKED.
THIS RACIALIZED WHITENESS IS QUESTIONED.
THE QUESTIONS...
ARE RESISTED.
IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE.
PEOPLE WHO HAVE POWER, WORK TO KEEP IT.
BUT THAT'S NOT FAIR. IS IT?
IT'S NEVER BEEN FAIR.
CHANGE IS UNCOMFORTABLE
WE ACTIVELY AVOID LOOSING POWER.
IT IS IN SUCH TIMES
THAT WE MUST DRAW ON OUR SUPERPOWERS
IS THAT WHAT IS MEANT BY FIERCE EDUCATION?
DRAWING ON A FEARLESSNESS TO BECOME
AN ANTI-RACIST, AN ADVOCATE.
I LEARN FROM A LINAGE, A ROYAL CLAN OF ANTI-RACISTS.
CONJURING SUCH A SUPERPOWER REQUIRES A DEEP COMMITMENT.
TO LEAVE THE SKIN OF THE ONE WHO IS FEARFUL.
THIS IS WHERE SELF-STUDY REVEALS ITS POWER.
IT INVOLVES THE DETERMINATION OF A WARRIER.
WHERE WE MUST WELCOME THE PAIN OF RACISM.
ASSUMPTIONS MUST BE DISLODGED AND HANDED OVER.


BY FOCUSING ON FEWER THINGS
BY LETTING GO OF CONTROL IN THE CLASSROOM
BY BECOMING A CO-LEARNER WITH MY STUDENTS
BY ENGAGING IN MORE CONVERSATION-LESS LECTURE.
BY TRUSTING MY STUDENTS MORE, I WAS BECOMING MORE OF AN EDUCATOR.
IT IS DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN THIS TRANSFORMATION IN MY PRACTICE
BUT WHATEVER WORDS EXPLAIN IT, IT FEELS LIKE A SUPERPOWER
A KIND OF SURRENDER OF ONE THING FOR ANOTHER.
LETTING GO OF ONE IMAGE OF MYSELF AND ACCEPTING A NEW IMAGE.
A RIVER IS FORMED BY AN INTERPLAY OF FORCES.
THE CONTOUR OF THE LAND, THE NATURE OF WATER
THE CYCLES OF RAIN, SNOW, SPRINGS, LIFE THAT EMERGES
IN TEACHING THERE ARE MANY FORCES AT PLAY
SOME OF WHICH I INFLUENCE.
AND OTHERS THAT ARE OUTSIDE MY INFLUENCE.
MY TWO SOURCES OF INFLUENCE INCLUDE:
1
2
THOSE THINGS I VALUE MOST
AND MY ACTS OF TRUST IN THOSE WITH WHOM I LEARN WITH.
CORE VALUES AND ACTS OF TRUST.
THIS IS WHAT MY SELF-STUDY HAS TAUGHT ME.
I KNOW, NOT EARTH SHAKING.
SO, AS I BRING THIS REPORT TO A CLOSE,
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO MY AVATAR.
MY ANTI-RACIST ADVOCATE WHO HAS EMERGED FROM THIS HUMBLE BODY OF MINE.
THERE MAY BE A FEW CHICKENS INVOLVED TOO.
WHY NOT? CHICKENS ARE SOME OF THE SWEATEST CREATURES ON EARTH.


MY AVATAR SUPERPOWER COMES FROM ANOTHER SUPERPOWER.
MY ABILITY TO DRAW AND FORM VISUAL IMAGES.
THIS IS HOW I PROCESS KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION.
IT IS THIS NOBLE CREATURE WITHIN ME THAT I DRAW ON FOR COURAGE.
FOR IT TO EMERGE I MUST PRACTICE AWARENESS.
ASSUMPTIONS DISLODGED AND SURRENDERED,
DISRUPTIVE EMPATHY PRACTICED.
IT IS THEN THAT MY AVATAR IS UNLEASHED.
MY FRIEND, MARY BRYDON-MILLER, ONCE DESCRIBED A DEFINITION OF A MONSTER.
A MONSTER IS A BEING WHOSE SURVIVAL IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE EXISTING ORDER
TO WHICH MARY SAYS, "THEN LET US ALL BE MONSTERS."
OUR MONSTERS HELP US EXPLORE.

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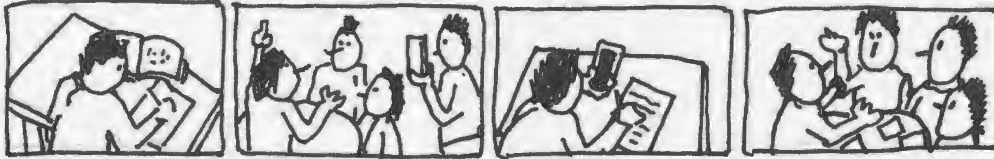
A PEDAGOGY OF ENNACTMENT

WHAT?

MICROTEACHING

DEFINITION: Microteaching is a system of controlled practice that makes it possible to focus on specific teaching behaviors and to practice teaching under controlled conditions. Allen & Eve, 1968



PURPOSE:
- TRAINING
- DIAGNOSTIC EVAL.
- EXPERIMENT WITH INNOVATION

PLANNING

- Lesson Objective
- Assessment and collection procedure
- Before
- During
- After
- Communication Skill
- Generalization
- Self-Directed Learning

DATA COLLECTION SHEETS: Resources & Materials: EBPs & HLPs

VIDEO RECORDING

- 5-15 minutes
- Content Area
- Evidence Based Practice
- High Leverage Practice

REFLECTIVE COMMENTARY

Min	What Happened	Meta-Cognitive
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

What Happened: Focus on what is actually occurring
Meta-Cognitive: Step back and reflect, make connections

COLLABORATIVE ASSESSMENT LOG

WERE OBJECTIVES MET? Evidence

If not... What... Did... What...	What... How...	Collab... Celebrate Improve

NEXT STEPS ...

SUPPORT NEEDED...

WHY?

THE LITERATURE: effect size = d = 0.88. 4 meta-analyses and 402 studies.

(Allen & Eve, 1968) FIVE ESSENTIAL FEATURES IN A MICROTEACHING SITUATION
- Actual Teaching
- Less Complex
- Specific Task
- High Control
- Feedback

(Fernandez, 2010) Lesson Study: our work needs to approximate practice so novices can learn.

(HARLIN 2014) CHANGED HABITS DUE TO SEEING SELF IN A VIDEO
- opportunity to speak
- increase focus on learning
- reduced control
- Build relationships.

(HATCH et al., 2016) Elements That Shape Learning: situation creates opportunity; multiple Representation; Z.P.D.

concept map by S. Kroeger, 2019

HOW DO WE KNOW WE HAVE LEARNED THIS?

- ACTUAL TEACHING TAKES PLACE
- STRUCTURED SUPERVISION
- REDUCED COMPLEXITY OF TYPICAL TEACHING
- FEED BACK FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES
- FOCUS IS ON A SPECIFIC TASK: practice skills, techique, mastery, demo.
- EVALUATION FOCUSES TRANSLATION INTO ACTUAL PRACTICE.